

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IN 1927 the religious world was stunned by a blow from the Presidential Address to the British Association at Leeds. The speaker was Sir Arthur Keith, who said that, in spite of many additions and modifications, the fundamentals of Darwin's outline of man's history remained unshaken and could never be shaken.

There was nothing new here so far as Freethinkers or educated Christians were concerned. What was discomfiting was that it reached a wide public. So long as scientists kept their heresies to themselves the Christian Churches were equanimous. It was quite another thing to shout heresy from the housetops. There followed frantic attempts by Christian

apologists to explain that the Garden of Eden was only symbolic, that God was the Director-General of Evolution, that there could be no evolution without an Evolver, that the Bible and evolution could somehow be mingled together as Evo-Creationism, and suchlike futilities inspired solely by the will to believe. For the years succeeding 1927 Keith, in one popular exposition after another, exposed these mythical interpretations of evolution (see *Concerning Man's Origin; Darwin's Theory of Man's Descent; Darwinism and its Critics*, etc.).

The death of Keith (at Darwin's home) on January 7th removes one of our foremost anthropologists. The house at Downe (Kent) had been bought for the nation by Buckston Browne, and made the headquarters of a Research Farm, of which Keith was Master, for the Royal College of Surgeons.

His Scientific Work

His first important work was *The Antiquity of Man* (1915), which was extended and elaborated in subsequent editions. His starting point was the theory (now amply confirmed) of Darwin, since whose death man has been traced back to the Pleistocene and the Pliocene. Keith was able to prove, as against the religious notion that an extra-natural "soul" had somewhere been infused into the evolution of man, that no new structure had been introduced into anthropoid development, and no new faculty interpolated. If all the fossils from the lowest ape to the highest man were arranged in serried ranks according to the respective periods at which they lived, we should have before our eyes an unbroken series linking the lowest with the highest.

It was Keith who suggested the Egyptian Oligocene ape *Propliopithecus* as very near to, if not actually on, the true line of man's ancestry. Its jaw and teeth indicate an animal smaller than the gibbon. Much of his later work was done on Palestine Man, in which he saw a new racial type, with chin now well defined and cranial vault relatively high.

In view of the Piltdown fake, it is rather interesting to note that Keith, at the time, pointed out that its acceptance would mean abandoning the idea that man had developed in a straightforward way.

With his painstaking accumulation of tested facts Keith was able to say that man shared 98 characters with the chimpanzee, 87 with the gorilla, 56 with the orang, 84 with the gibbon, 60 with New World Monkeys and 53 with Old World Monkeys.

The unkindest cut of all, for Christians, was Keith's refusal to exclude the Bible itself from the general scheme of evolution. "Everything living and dead," he said, "has been found to be subject to the law of evolution. The Bible itself has not escaped; scholars have dissected its books and found that their contents are the accretions of various ages." (*Darwinism and what it Implies*).

For the evolution of capitalism Keith found support in the animal realm. "In every branch of the animal kingdom the evolution of the highest forms has been made possible by exploiting the potentialities of capital, capital being represented by stores of surplus food." (*Concerning Man's Origin*).

Keith actually made a religion of his Darwinism. "The Darwinian's Bible is the Book of Nature. Creeds will come and go, but this is the book which will endure as long as life lasts." (*The Religion of a Darwinist*). His Darwinian religion, in a nutshell, is that Nature deals the cards and we must play them with zest: Darwinism helps us to understand the injustices and also encourages us to remedy them as far as we can. A harmless "religion," one might say, which will send no-one to his knees in worship, nor, on the other hand, cause any Freethinker to do anything different from what he is already doing, *without* a religion!

The Debit Side

Keith's Presidential Address and his subsequent firm championing of the cause of Darwinism against Special Creation make him a notable figure in the annals of free-thinking, but a sense of balance demands that he shall not escape some criticism. Opposing another scientist, Sir Ambrose Fleming, a Christian, Keith wrote, "I have never recommended Rationalism to anyone who can accept the salvation so freely offered by Christian and by Mohammedan preachers and prophets." (*Darwinism and its Critics*).

This statement, and others like it, are interlarded with a masterly demolition of anti-evolutionist arguments. We are therefore given to understand that his own arguments must be carefully shielded from the eyes of the faithful. But the faithful include Sir Ambrose Fleming and his friends, who are the butt of Prof. Keith's criticism. Here's a pretty kettle of fish, then. On Sir Arthur's own statement, these creationists—men "who can accept the salvation so freely offered by Christian preachers"—must not be permitted to see the attack on their opinions!

In that case, then, why make the attack at all? Why did Sir Arthur write the book, so full of deadly argument and a fine vindication of evolution, if it is only for the eyes of those who already believe in evolution, and so

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955)

An Estimate

—By G. H. TAYLOR—

need no conversion? In effect, Prof. Keith says, "Here are good reasons why Fleming's views, and those of his supporters, are false. But let us keep them a secret. Don't let us upset the equanimity of our opponents. It is best they should persist in error." Keith here seeks to assist the reconciliationists, in making possible by hypocrisy the extenuation of an obsolete creed, the upkeep of which has to be paid for, in more ways than one.

Now again: Prof. Keith adversely criticises Archbishop Temple's "Divine Spirit," the Archbishop of Armagh's "Universal Intelligence," Prof. Whitehead's "Principle of Concretion," and the deities of Eddington and Jeans. So far so good. But what have we here: "Whether we are laymen or scientists we must postulate a lord of the universe, give him what shape we will." Whose words are these? The archbishop's? No. They were written for the American journal, *Forum*, in 1930, by none other than Sir Arthur Keith himself.

Secular Education in New Zealand

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

(President N.Z. Rationalist Association, Inc.)

THE recent (Nov.) General Election in New Zealand resulted in the return to power of the National Party, under the leadership of Mr. Holland. The Government has, however, a reduced majority and in several magisterial recounts (marginal seats) the seats were won by Government candidates with the slenderest of majorities—in one instance, eight votes. The Social Credit League which made its political debut at this election and which was, up to polling day, contemptuously dismissed by both National and Labour Party speakers, polled surprisingly well, securing about eleven per cent. of the total votes cast. Although not successful in winning any seats (there is no preferential voting in New Zealand) the Social Crediters have obviously strong support in New Zealand and will come again next time, most likely with increased votes.

Freethinker readers will be interested to know what religious implications, if any, the elections held. It will first be necessary to state that in 1877 an Act of Parliament laid down that the state Education system should be "free, secular and compulsory." Apart from the fact that secondary and high schools (not envisaged when the act was passed), have breached the walls by introducing prayers to open school, the Act of 1877, has, to all intents and purposes, functioned as intended by its promoters. The primary state schools have no religious background. They teach secular subjects—and secular subjects alone.

The Roman Catholic Church has all along refused co-operation in the secular system. Indeed it has repeatedly denounced it—and it has, from end to end of the Dominion, a chain of Catholic schools staffed by Marist Brothers and nuns. The Bishops have made repeated demands for State Aid, and these demands have been refused by successive governments. The Protestant Churches, whilst being unsympathetic to any system of State Aid, Roman Catholic or otherwise, have become alarmed at the drift from the churches, at "the trend towards Paganism"; they see themselves losing the "fight for the child," notwithstanding the Sunday schools, and they have combined to present a demand for religion in the State schools. Such in brief was the position at the time of the election. The conflicting elements presented a dilemma to Parliamentary candidates who wanted, if possible, Catholic votes, Protestant votes, and the votes of Jews, Rationalists, Spiritualists—Godites and non-Godites.

The executive of the Association, shortly before the election, decided that a letter should be sent to all election

Then he alludes to Christianity as containing some of "the best kind of teaching"—after exploding its fundamental doctrines in the same pages.

His Timidity

What was the cause of Sir Arthur's emasculated, milk-and-water "rationalism"? Let us have the reason out of his own mouth: he says he "finds a strange reluctance" to set down his beliefs. "The real explanation," he says, "is fear, or cowardice, if you will." "I fear ostracism, and court it, perhaps deserve it, when I break the seal of my inner sanctuary and expose the beliefs which rule my conduct and dominate my outlook." (*The Forum*.)

There is, I imagine, some excuse for elementary precaution where one's bread and butter is concerned, but how could this apply to Sir Arthur? Must the fighting front always be manned by the poor? Can they never hope for a lead by those more safely placed?

candidates with a request that they declare themselves on the issue—would they support the continuance of secular education if returned to Parliament? Unfortunately the letter was mailed rather too close to polling day to obtain the best results but nevertheless a number of replies were received. Some of these unhesitatingly affirmed allegiance to the present secular system, others were not prepared to divulge their attitude, "except at meetings"; some others gave conditional support whilst a few made no secret that they wanted religion put into the school. There was little reference made by the writers to State Aid. On the whole the weight of opinion was definitely in favour of a continuance of the present system—secular education. It was gratifying that the Prime Minister (who was written to not as the Prime Minister but as candidate for a seat) telegraphed that he was in favour of continuing the present system. He has in his cabinet an Education Minister, Hon. R. Algie, who did much pre-election kite-flying on the matter of bringing "spiritual values" into the schools. When he was a university lecturer, he allied himself with a Defence League to *preserve* secular education.

Further to complicate matters, or perhaps it would be better to say "clarify matters," the Roman Catholic Archbishop for New Zealand has since the election made an astonishing (if near subversive) statement that "we are tired of being fobbed off" and he "would be inclined to call on our (Catholic) men to stay at home while those who deny us justice here can do the fighting overseas." As was to be expected the Archbishop's remarks came in for strong editorial comment in the Press and it can be taken that we have not heard the last protests relating to this prelate's outburst. It would seem that in 1955 there will be a "Battle for the Schools"—a battle to preserve our secular system. Those who laid the foundations of education in New Zealand so wisely are long passed away. Their good work has prospered over four-score years. It will be the duty of every Rationalist in New Zealand to play his part in helping to retain our present system. I believe we shall have many allies—strong and determined allies who desire to see our schools kept free from religious distractions and sectarian bitterness. As for the Catholic challenge so crudely put forward by its head in New Zealand, there are many who think that its very vehemence has already defeated its purpose. The Protestants are in a majority in New Zealand, and they do not appreciate any ecclesiastical threat.

Abyssinian Christianity

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE recent visit of the African potentate usually, if inaccurately, described as the "Emperor of Abyssinia," has drawn public attention to a little-known land. Abyssinia or Ethiopia to give the land its own proper designation, has rather dropped out of the news since its sensational conquest by Mussolini in now far away 1936. The "goodwill" tour of that remarkable man and unusual emperor, Haile Selassie, "King of the Kings of Ethiopia," to give him his proper title, will again call attention to Africa's last remaining independent monarchy.

The ancient Kingdom of Abyssinia, or Ethiopia, has pursued an independent existence since, at least, the sixth century of the Christian era. Actually, it can trace its cultural, if not its political descent from the pre-Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia, contemporary with the Egyptian Pharaohs and, incidentally, mentioned both in the poems of Homer and in the Old Testament. Even in those distant times the ancient Ethiopians were a most religious people, "the Ethiopians amongst whom the gods love to dwell," as Homer himself characterised his African contemporaries. Modern Ethiopia inherits the piety, though not the precise gods, of its ancient predecessor. Converted to Christianity at an early, though undetermined date, the Ethiopian State may be defined as a feudal theocracy of the mediaeval pattern. Along with Tibet and Saudi-Arabia, perhaps, we can now add Spain?—religion is all-powerful in modern Abyssinia. Even the present modernising emperor takes his title from mediaeval theology: "Haile Selassie" being the Amharic equivalent of "Holy Trinity."

Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, is not only an independent state politically, but has also its own native form of Christianity. For, as and when judged by the standards of Christian orthodoxy, the Abyssinian form of Christianity is heretical. Heresy, it is true, is a little difficult to define except for specialists in theological hair-splitting! For the subjects of Haile Selassie belong to the Coptic persuasion, and their Mother-Church, the Coptic Church of Egypt, broke away from orthodox Christianity in the fifth century of our era. Their particular heresy, later imitated by their Ethiopian converts, was the almost unintelligible heresy of "Monophysitism"—that is, the dogma that in Christ there is only *One Nature*. Presumably, this means *something*, though exactly *what* only Christ knows!

However, despite its abstruse character, the Monophysite "heresy" created a deep schism in the Christian Church; a schism which is still perpetuated in and by the Coptic Church in Egypt and its Ethiopian offspring. Though the Ethiopians have some local peculiarities, officially they represent an offshoot of the Coptic Church of Egypt. The past and present connection between the two Churches is extremely close; the "Abuna," or Archbishop, who is the official head of the Church of Ethiopia, is always an Egyptian monk, ordained and selected by the Coptic patriarch of Egypt. Once installed, however, as "Abuna" in Abyssinia, the foreign-born prelate has great influence not only in the religious but equally in the political sphere. When, for example, the present emperor, Haile Selassie, declared war on Italy in October, 1935, the Abuna signed the actual declaration of war along with the emperor. A state of things reminiscent of "The Ages of Faith."

Politically and economically, Abyssinia, like its fellow-theocracy, Tibet, remains a feudal theocracy. The country remains dominated, as in mediaeval Europe, by a land-owning hierarchy. Amongst the land-owning hierarchy as also in mediaeval Europe, the Church is *facile princeps*.

Mediaeval statistics are notoriously inexact, as anyone knows who has ever studied the mediaeval literature of Europe. But it is usually accepted that the Catholic Church in mediaeval Europe and in Latin-America, held at least a third of the arable land in a predominantly agricultural civilisation. A similar position appears to be occupied by the present-day Church of Ethiopia. Another point of comparison between mediaeval Europe and modern Ethiopia lies in the almost complete cultural predominance of the Church: Abyssinian literature, again like that of the Europe of "The Ages of Faith," is an almost exclusively theological literature, written mainly by priests and, in particular, by monks who are very influential in the Abyssinian Church. Until recently, at any rate, when the Italian invasion (1935-6) shook the country out of its traditional isolation, Africa's last empire was a hermit-land cut off by an impenetrable "Iron Curtain" against modern knowledge and modern ideas.

One of the titles of the "Emperor of Abyssinia" is "The Conquering Lion of Judah," a dramatic touch of which the popular press has taken full advantage! Like his predecessors, Haile Selassie claims descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba: though we doubt if the College of Heralds would confirm this genealogy. Abyssinian Christianity has, however, a strongly Judaic character, perhaps due to the "Black-Jews" (*sic*) who conquered Ethiopia in mediaeval times. Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and Sunday, the Christian one, are both kept as holy days by the Church. The Jewish rite of circumcision is also observed, and special veneration is paid to the Ark. A more sinister feature of Judaism was displayed when the Abuna and his colleagues declared that slavery represented a Divine institution specifically sanctioned by the Mosaic Law—as it undoubtedly was! Whilst largely Jewish in character the Coptic Church is fiercely opposed both to Islam and to Roman Catholicism, both of whom have in the past conquered Abyssinia and sought to convert it to their respective creeds by force.

Rival Christian Churches are *not noted* for Christian charity towards each other! Dr. Adrian Fortescue, the learned Roman Catholic historian of the Eastern Churches, penned this unkind but, no doubt, accurate description of the Church of Abyssinia!

"However, all travellers seem to agree that Christianity in Abyssinia is in a very low state. The people are, at best, half-civilised, the clergy almost as illiterate as the laity. I can certify that all the Ethiopians I have seen, and their Churches, are appallingly dirty." This Church, concludes our author, "is now considerably the most backward part of the whole Christian family."

Sad, but no doubt, true! However, our Roman Catholic historian might reflect that there have been times in the history of his own Church, too, when dirt was by no means an Abyssinian monopoly! When, indeed, in *all* Christian Churches, cleanliness ranked not far short of heresy, and when the practice of bathing ranked as a pestilential custom of heathen origin!

The present emperor is a reforming monarch who has abolished slavery, and is gradually breaking down the feudal system. Presumably, the current importation of Western techniques and ideas will lead in time, in Africa as elsewhere, to the infiltration of modernist and rationalist ideas. We may even live to see the light of Reason spread to "Darkest Africa." Perhaps we may even live to see a branch of "The World Union of Freethinkers" established in Addis Ababa?

This Believing World

Something awful happened on the radio the other week. As our pious contemporary, the *Daily Express*, screeched, "A woman makes a remarkable radio attack on religion for children." It was bad enough for Mrs Knight (a lecturer on psychology at the University of Aberdeen) to attack religion as being of no earthly use—but no use for children. . . ! Really, what is the B.B.C. thinking about? And Mrs. Knight, who wanted to replace religion with scientific humanism, did not pull her punches. She hit hard and straight—no wonder the B.B.C. Director of Religion refused to comment. He couldn't.

It is probable that Mrs. Knight had millions of listeners who were too stunned to reply. They heard her say that Christian beliefs do not satisfy "the ordinary criteria of reason." There was a lot more in the same vein and the *Daily Express* could only feebly comment that if Mrs. Knight is right then she has "torn a hole of doubt in 10,000 and more beliefs." You bet she has. In all intellectual circles there has always been a hole of doubt about Devils, Miracles, and the rest. But only very rarely has this doubt been allowed to be expressed on the radio. Perhaps a way has at last been opened for many more similar broadcasts. In the meantime—congratulations to Mrs. Knight for her courage and success.

The Bishop of Chichester is, of course, perfectly right when he says that the Church and the artist work so well together. The Church during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was the great patron of the Arts—it was powerful and rich, and artists had to live. But—and this should be remembered—artists were as willing to paint the "amours" of Jupiter just as realistically as they painted the Crucifixion. Wealthy noblemen, as a matter of fact, preferred to have portraits of Venus on their walls rather than portraits of Jesus—and with amused tolerance, they agreed that for the "vulgar," that is, the people, it might be better to allow only Bible pictures to be seen.

All the same, many of the unknown workmen building mediaeval churches would insert stone carvings or images horrifying in their "broadness" in more or less hidden parts of the stonework. Some of these can still be seen all over the continent; and they prove the close connection which religion had with sex motives. Nowadays, everything is "cleansed" through the purifying influence of Christianity—or so we are told; but it was not always so. The Christian "purifying influence" is really a myth. It is the general advance in manners and morals due to a finer concept of "civilisation" which has changed us from the grosser habits of our ancestors—not Christianity.

We often wonder who listens these days to any message from the Pope, especially to those given to a hoped-for expectant world at Christmas or at the New Year. Nowadays, he is forced to talk about "co-existence" and implores everybody to live happily together "in fear of God"—whatever that means. There was a time when his Church was powerful enough to make people live in fear of "excommunication," or in fear of prison or the stake. Now, it is in "fear of God." The only people we know who are always trembling in fear of God are Roman Catholics (especially converts), Calvinists, Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Billy Graham fans. And none of them matters much.

A grant of £250 was recently made in Croydon to the Family Planning Association, some 500 women having

attended the clinic—and, of course, the local Roman Catholics are up in arms. It is against their conscience! These people (who are in a small minority) headed by a priest who is a bachelor, have the impudence to dictate to the majority of Croydon's citizens; and it is surely time to tell them to mind their own business. There is not the slightest compulsion on any R.C. to go to the clinic, and they have no business whatever to interfere. But one can well imagine the "freedom" we would enjoy if the Roman Church ever got into power again. Talk about Totalitarianism . . . !

Another method has just been discovered of "healing" the sick. Instead of laying on of hands by a priest, parson, or Spiritualist, a lady healer has had miraculous cures "by laying a Crucifix on the sick person." She is not a Spiritualist, but all the people so far cured are—and what better proof of survival can you have than that? In any case, we are sure that the cures would even be more miraculous if the Crucifix were made out of the original Cross, the wood of which has been doing similar service for nearly 2,000 years. How marvellous are the ways of Deity!

Why Fret?

Could I call back the years that have greyed me
To the days when your dark eyes had made me
Your lover for once and for all;
Would the tones of your voice now remind me
How the spell of your presence could bind me
Your smile all my senses enthral?
Would the sheen of your dark hair suffice me
Would its glamorous lure now entice me.
To touch while forbidden by fear?
Would the joy of your presence that filled me
Or caress of your hand that thrilled me
Come back as of old when you're near?
Would the long hours of waiting now tire me,
Or the thoughts of your coming inspire me
To ineffable dreams of you?
Would the void when you came not oppress me,
Would the pain of your absence distress me,
Would the night of despair ensue?
Would the fear of those others restrain me
Would the mocking of those who disdain me
Bring blushes to mantle my brow?
Would the thought of what might be delude me
Or the thought of what must be elude me?
I know not, and care little now.

W. H. HORNIBROOK.

"Help Thou Mine Unbelief"

IT is puzzling to know why, if you do nothing, your agents should invoke your name to threaten punishment, for it is they who advise me always to lay my troubles before you. But they accompany this advice with the information that laying my difficulties before you will be of no avail unless I do so with a "believing heart." That gives me pause. How can I honestly cry "Oh Lord, help thou my unbelief," if I have to believe in you before I say it? How can I ask you to remove my doubts if I must get rid of my doubts before you will do so? If you can only remove my doubts after I have got rid of them, the position seems hopeless.

CHAPMAN COHEN, *Letters to the Lord.*

—NEXT WEEK—

JOSEPH McCABE (1867-1955)

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

JOSEPH McCABE (1867-1955)

With profound sorrow, which will be shared by our readers, we have to report the death of Joseph McCabe, world-famous Freethinker, at his home at Golders Green on January 10. A secular service was conducted at Golders Green Crematorium on Friday, January 14, by Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, of the National Secular Society and *The Freethinker*. Tributes to McCabe and his glorious work for human enlightenment will be appearing in forthcoming issues of *The Freethinker*.

To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

W.A.—Chapman Cohen wrote some 2,700 articles for *The Freethinker*, including some under noms-de-plume (which, with his distinctive style, are easily traceable).

F. CARTER.—An excellent pocket armoury on the subject is H. Cutner's *Sabbath Day*.

R.L.H.—We didn't say a Rationalist arrived at no conclusions: we said a Rationalist *as such*. When he has formed opinions he has become something more definite than a Rationalist.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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, January 23, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, January 23, 7 p.m.: E. RAVENHILL.

"Should the Death Penalty be Retained?"

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, January 23, 6-6.45 p.m.: GEO. LIGHT, "A Socialist Looks on Religion."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 25, 7 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND.

"Poetry and Political Propaganda."

Glasgow Secular Society Branch N.S.S. (The Lellan Galleries).—J. P. MORRISON, "Ethical and Religious Education in Schools."

Junior Debating Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, January 28, 7-15 p.m.: Miss A. K. WILSON, "The Lure of Jazz."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 23, 6-30 p.m.: C. BANDOCK (former Editor *Pioneer*, Leicester): "About the Press."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street).—Thursday, January 27, 7-30 p.m.: R. D. MARRIOTT, "Faith Healing."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, January 23, 2-30 p.m.: COLIN McCALL, "Irrational Intellectuals."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, January 23, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "The Cult of Isis."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, Wanstead House).—Thursday, January 27, 8 p.m.: P. TURNER, "Fatalism and Freethought."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, January 23, 7-15 p.m.: Lt.-Col. READ-COLLINS, F.R.G.S., "Malaya—Profit and Loss."

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £707 5s. 2d.: H. Blewett, 4s.; Miss F. Warne, 10s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. B. Edgecombe, 6s.; P. Shawe, 10s.; A. R. Williams, £1; A. O'Keeffe, £2 2s.; Miss D. G. Davies, £1; R. Hartley, £1; H. Milne, 10s. 6d.; A. W. Coleman, £1 10s.; A. Hepworth, 2s. 6d.; J. D'Arcy, 2s. 6d.; N. Nicholson, 10s.; W. Kent, £1 1s.; D. J. Corral, £2 2s.; Leon Smith, 10s.; J. W. Stott, 10s. 6d.; Thos. Owen, 5s.; W. J. Pye, 7s.; John Forest, £1 1s.; James R. Howes, 2s.; Maurice Bryn (in memory of Chapman Cohen and John Seibert), £1; R. McK. Campbell, 10s.; J. Lillcrap, 10s.; J. R. Williams, 5s.; H. Gale, 10s.; C. Bridger, 2s. 6d.; John S. McPhail, £1; E. W. C. Oatham, 5s.; W. E. Everett, 5s.; H. S. Waters, 10s. 6d.; G. E. Bond, 2s. 6d.; A. N. Richmond, 6s.; Henry Wilson, £1; B. B. Pinder, £1; F. Kennedy, 10s. 6d.; Mrs. M. Watson, 5s.; N. Charlton, 7s. 6d.; J. H. Budd, 10s.; Mrs. J. Stupart, £1; V. E. Myson, 10s.; T. Murphy, 5s.; A. G. Bedane, 9s.; Miss M. A. Blue, 5s.; T. Walmsley, 5s.; H. C. Smith, 2s. 6d.; Wm. MacKee, 3s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; P. Kay, 6s.; P. Bride, 10s.; F. Keyes, 7s.; Mrs. A. Kean, 1s.; C. Morris, 5s.; G. E. Smith, 10s.; Ian Marsh, £1 9s. Total to date, £738 0s. 2d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

Farewell Address to Joseph McCabe

By F. A. HORNIBROOK

WE meet here to-day to pay our last respects to Joseph McCabe, a man who represented the last of the Freethought giants of his time.

At the express wish of Mr. McCabe's family I am making this talk as brief as possible, a difficult task when speaking of a man who was an international figure.

Joseph McCabe was not only a man of high intellectual attainments and erudition, but a man of great courage and steadfast principles. After twelve years in a monastery he turned his back on doctrines which he had discovered to be false and went out to face a new and strange world, no longer a preacher but a teacher.

For over fifty years he laboured unceasingly to rid men's minds of ignorance and fears. For this he was continuously attacked by the forces of superstition. To-day his attackers are forgotten but McCabe remains and will live on in his writings.

It is not only we who hold unorthodox views, who owe him a debt of gratitude. The very churches who attacked him owe him even more, for McCabe helped to a great extent to civilise their very Christianity by exposing the lies of hell, eternal torment and those gospels of fear which had held men's minds in bondage and terror for centuries.

Had it not been for the work of Joseph McCabe and many other advanced thinkers, it would have been impossible for men like Bishop Barnes and Dean Inge to write in the way they did, challenging the so-called truths of Holy Writ as Freethinkers had done years and years before.

It is customary to speak well of the dead. That is the easiest part of my task, for although I am no orator, the words I use are sincere. I feel sure that Joseph McCabe has influenced the thinking of many of you here even as he has influenced mine. I met him first some forty years ago when he visited New Zealand where he conducted a series of lectures, often to audiences of well over 1,000. What a magnificent lecturer he was—clear, incisive, logical. In Australia, Canada and the United States he lectured with brilliant success while his literary output throughout the years was immense.

Much of this may be familiar to many of you but I like to think of McCabe, the man. Like the majority of great men he was simple and unaffected—too big to be little; grateful for any little consideration; of a kindly nature; widely travelled; a keen observer and, as one would expect, an interesting conversationalist.

Although to-day is naturally a time of sorrow knowing that we shall never see or hear our old friend again, it is with gratitude and pride that we remember that for over half a century the Freethought Movement had the affection, loyalty and valuable help of Joseph McCabe.

“Science in History”—2

By H. CUTNER

IN the “Index of Names” in his *Science in History*, Prof. Bernal gives us over 800 names. In the Subject Index, there are probably 600 items; while his Bibliography gives us the titles of about 570 books. But I trust that I am not unfair if I say that I doubt very much whether he has really read all these books or knows much more about some of them than their titles.

For example, I find the name of Paine in the index and am curious to see how Prof. Bernal treats him. He is called “Tom” Paine, and all we get is a reference to his *Rights of Man* with the comment that he “attacked the whole conception of the ordered civilisation of the eighteenth century from Locke to Burke, challenging it as corrupt and tyrannous.” Not a word about *The Age of Reason* or its vast influence; and not a word—of course—about Paine as a “scientist.” He invented an iron bridge—one of the first, if not the first, made of iron—and all his life he was interested in science.

And all we get when we look up d’Holbach is his name coupled with that of Diderot as asserting “materialist views.” Diderot gets another mention with the famous *Encyclopedie des Arts, Sciences et Métiers* (1751-72) which, as a tremendous landmark in the history of science, might well have received a more extended notice. Anyone, even a layman without reading it, might have described the *Encyclopedie* as “the bible of the new liberalism, uniting freethought with science, manufactures, and *laissez-faire*.” It was a great pity that Diderot was unable to mention Marx.

A student of Social Science, perhaps anxious to have an authoritative pronouncement on Malthusianism and looking up Malthus, will find the *Essay on the Principle of Population* mentioned as well as “parson” Malthus. We are told that in the 1798 edition of this work Malthus, dealing with the utilitarian object of giving “the greatest happiness to the greatest number,” thought “that there were far away too many of the greatest number anyhow, and that those who could not become petty capitalists and practice self-restraint were doomed to be periodically cut off by famine, plague, and war, as he explained in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798.” This surely should be added to the other extract given by the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer and called by him “so much rubbish.” Malthus could not possibly have talked of “petty capitalists”—but I do not need defend here the Malthusian theory. It is now accepted by all economists with any reputation to keep. In the January 1 number of *Picture Post*, the eminent surgeon, Mr. Kenneth Walker, dealing with the “end of the world,” comments, “The biologists usually envisage the end of the world of humanity in terms of starvation, for already the world’s population is too great for its available food supplies.” There may be an answer to this from science but it has not yet been

discovered. And thus the student who wants to know a little about the world’s greatest problem will find in *Science in History* only a cheap and vulgar sneer.

On the other hand, any reader who wants to know the “achievements” of Russia in every field of human endeavour will find hundreds of pages devoted to that subject. Since its Revolution, everything in Russia is superlatively great. Only the insane jealousy of the bourgeois-capitalist countries has prevented them from recognising that nothing can possibly go wrong in Russia dominated as it is by complete Totalitarianism. Prof. Bernal fills page after page on these lines.

Where can you find superlative education? Only in the Soviet Union. In Tiflis, with a population of four millions, Prof. Bernal found more students in physics than in the university of London; “of these,” he adds, “350 were women, compared with seventy who take it in London.” If that does not prove the superiority of Tiflis over England what does? Page after page is filled with similar “facts”—though a humble bourgeois like myself seems to remember reading that what struck Socialist visitors to Russia recently more than anything else was the way in which women in Russia were made to do the dirtiest and in some cases the heaviest work. There is nothing about this in *Science in History*.

In passing, I came across the name of Marconi, and this is how Prof. Bernal deals with him. To begin with, we get a paragraph on “Wireless and the ionosphere” in which we are told about the work of Lodge in England, Popov in Russia, and Bose in India, “among many others.” Unfortunately, it was not to these trained scientists that “full commercial success” came but to the “gifted and optimistic amateur.” Prof. Bernal continues,

A sound physicist would have said at the beginning of the century that it was quite impossible to send electromagnetic waves over any large distance. They would simply go off the surface of the globe through the air and not come back. Nevertheless Marconi, who was not enough of a physicist to believe this, tried to send wireless signals across the Atlantic and they were *actually* received on the other side.

I have italicised the operative word. If it had been Popov instead of Marconi, the above would have been no doubt differently worded. I believe I once read somewhere, however, that Marconi pinched all his ideas from Russian scientists.

Marconi’s was a “spectacular and unexpected success”—and that is all we get in this book on the man responsible for one of the greatest achievements in the whole history of science, revolutionising world communication, and helping to give us the radio and television. The magnitude of “wireless” discoveries is something we are apt to take for granted these days; but in its proper perspective, it is perhaps the most wonderful of all discoveries of the marvels of Nature.

But apart from his own belief in the absolute necessity of Totalitarianism in Social Science which colours everything Prof. Bernal writes, there is a great deal in *Science in History* which one can read with profit. Science in itself, without highly individualised asides, makes a thrilling subject; and if Prof. Bernal is not to everybody’s taste, he no doubt will still have hosts of appreciative readers.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST. By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

THOMAS PAINE, A Pioneer of Two Worlds. By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s.; postage 1½d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.

The Virgin of Covadonga

By BAYARD SIMMONS

[Our contributor has long been known as the Poet of Free-thought—but readers have also noted that he is equally at home in prose. Here is an article he himself thinks as one of his best in that medium.]

ALTHOUGH I was fashioned by a man, I am a woman, a virgin. Or to speak more precisely I am the image of a woman. No ordinary woman either; nothing less than the Madre De Dios, the Mother of God. But although I am a mother they all call me a virgin. How they make that out I don't know, but, as I said, I am no ordinary woman. Perhaps my maker could explain, but he never did; and now he is dead, so we can't ask him. But what does it matter? What they call me can't hurt me, and it pleases them. At any rate, in my old home thousands upon thousands came to visit me each year. I must be well worth looking at, for they light candles before me the better to see me; and they bow down before me and do funny things with their hands. What these signs with their hands mean I cannot tell, but these exercises seem to give these simple folk pleasure, so what of it?

My house, you must know, is among the grim mountains of Asturias in the North of Spain. No ordinary place either. The eldest son of the King of Spain is called the Prince of Asturias, like the son of the English King, when he achieves one, is called the Prince of Wales. His Most Catholic Majesty Alfonso did achieve a Prince of Asturias, though it was not a very successful achievement. But I though honoured when the young man, on renouncing his royal rank to marry that Cuban charmer, took my name, and became the Count of Covadonga. I have wondered sometimes whether the Cuban senorita, like me, was—but we'll let that go. Certainly she did not, like me, live in a basilica.

Yes, I suppose I am no modest violet; on the contrary, I was proud of my basilica. It was no ordinary basilica, was mine. It was erected ever so many years ago to commemorate King Pelayo's great victory over the Moors. This good king, I have been told, was the first Christian monarch of Spain, unlike the Caudillo, who will be the last. But they resembled each other in one thing; they both had dealing with Moors; Pelayo defending the Spaniards against them, and Caudillo defending the Moors against the Spaniards. Well, time marches on, and as the Caudillo's friend Monsieur Bonnet says, "Autres temps, autres mœurs." I cannot say that I know much about Moors, but from what I have heard during the last three years it would seem that quite a number of Spanish virgins have had to deal with Moors, and they have, perhaps, been wondering whether Pelayo or the Caudillo took the more reasonable view of events.

Whatever may be the answer to this conundrum, there is no doubt that these Moors have been very tiresome to the Spaniards. During their latest invasion of the Peninsula, in company with certain people who delight to call themselves Aryans because their skin is different from the Moors, I was compelled to leave my basilica, and carried away by certain Spaniards to the country of M. Bonnet. The city to which I went has a reputation of being gay, and is not noted for the number of its virgins. But I had anything but a gay time on the banks of the Seine, for, for many a weary month, I lived in the cellar of a house, which was called an Embassy. In certain respects an embassy resembles a basilica; in both men are not trouble about the truth of things, in both men deal in fantasies. I was much grieved to leave my mountain top for a mildewed cavern, but in time all unpleasant things come to an end, and I am now on my way home to Covadonga. I do so hope the Moors also have gone to their home.

When I left the bowels of the Embassy for the bright sunlight of Asturias I made a strange discovery. The Caudillo, who is not only a soldier, but, like Pelayo, is a "Christian Gentleman," had a bright idea. To compensate me for my long sojourn in a mouldy cellar he has made a decree that I am entitled to full military honours. Just like himself; just like Alfonso; just like Pelayo. Ah, yes, and just like my husband-father-in-law-son in the Land of Eire. When my husband-father-in-law-son, in the shape of a biscuit, is carried through the streets of Dublin, a military guard, with fixed bayonets, acts as an escort, so that he may be duly eaten by men and not by mice. I, too, being a woman don't like mice, so I am glad to have my military guard. Also, I think it only fair that the Mother of God should have the same honour as her son, for without the mother there would be no god. It stands to reason: no hen, no egg.

It is a long, tedious journey back to my basilica, but the military gentlemen are doing their best, and in due time I shall arrive. I have already crossed the frontier bridge into Spain at Irun, and there, and at San Sebastian, full military honours were accorded me. I am to have, they tell me, a slow journey along the northern coast of Spain to my basilica, and I am not surprised, for those Aryan Moors seem to have knocked the old place about a bit. I shall, however, be glad to be home again, and I must say that I feel a little hurt that the good Caudillo did not secure my return earlier. He had a chance, I am informed. They say that my guardians in Paris offered to exchange me for a Republican who had been condemned to death, but that the Caudillo said, "Nix on the Virgin!" Fancy leaving me in my cellar for the sake of a lousy Republican, who, it seems, was killed with full military honours. It makes me wonder whether these honours are so desirable, but then I am not versed in these matters, being only a simple virgin, while the Caudillo is a "Christian Gentleman."

A Reply to Mr. Cutner

By JAMES H. MATSON

FOR whom my article was written Mr. Cutner is quite unable to imagine, but on reading his article that follows this statement no lack of power to imagine anything is discernible. After describing me as naive he states that "we are still the freest nation in the world." Let me say it is just in opposition to this attitude and the spirit it represents that I and, I believe, a majority of freethinkers are opposed. It is and ever has been the cry of reaction everywhere. When he follows this by a sneer at those of us who are opposed to censorship with the question as to how many of us have read the *Decameron*, etc., we are forced to realise where he stands. We are not fighting merely against censorship of books we have read or agree with. We do not hold that because others are in a worse condition or more backward than ourselves, this is a reason to sit back or abate our fight. We know that the struggle for mental freedom and justice was not finished in the battles of the yesterdays of the past, but is a living issue that must be faced by us today if we are to prove ourselves worthy to benefit by the amount of liberty we are now enjoying and which we feel it both a duty and a privilege to pass on.

He raises a number of questions not merely not dealt with but not even edumbrated by me. He asks me "would I rush" to read passages from certain books "to classes of schoolchildren"? This is a leading question not to be

answered by a simple yes or no, and it is not expected to be. He himself makes clear by the remarks which follow that our standards should not be judged by suitability for children. He goes on to say that surely there must be some standard and refers to writers whose names I do not know but with whom Mr. Cutner seems to be familiar. This has no relation to my article, the aim of which was to show that all forms of reaction are using, as they have ever done in the past, the plea of obscenity to start a censorship which is then extended to all matters not approved of as threatening their power, the reason being the public ignorance on this subject and the prejudice thereby engendered makes it easy to so use it.

I do not myself hold, either as regards religion or sex, that the present systems are *fundamentally right* but need *patching*. On the contrary I regard them as *false* and should be abolished and replaced by knowledge based on free scientific inquiry, thus freeing humanity from prejudice and all the evils resulting therefrom inherited from the past. Let me quote again. "The authorities step very warily now on such questions. Any books declared obscene are sure of a fair trial. Lord Russell's book on the bestial Nazis was allowed to be freely published and you can buy an unexpurgated *Decameron* anywhere. So where is the censorship?" I deny this statement in toto, and appeal to your readers as to its truth. To have the impertinence to say of Lord Russell's book that it was allowed to be freely published is an insult to its author. He gibes at others for not having read the *Decameron*, and then states that an unexpurgated edition can be bought anywhere. This statement can be easily tested. Let him tell your readers where. It is evident to me however that Mr. Cutner's real object was not to criticise my article but to make it a forced excuse for a virulent anti-communist attack on Russia.

[Mr. Cutner writes: My criticism was simply that there was little censorship in England and little else in the Totalitarian countries. To that no reply is made and nothing would be gained by further controversy.]

Correspondence

SOME QUERIES

The Freethinker, January 7, "This Believing World," prompts a few questions for elucidation.

1. "The cry for censorship comes from voluble Totalitarians." What is the writer's definition of Totalitarianism? Does this include the Catholic Church? How do we know what may have been the fate of Europe with any continuation of political cut-throats?

2. Why he considers the B.B.C. did not succumb to the objectors? How far this may have been influenced by the R.C. Church?

3. May we know precisely the "Party" Orwell subscribed to, and where he ever said he was a Socialist?

4. How does the writer square the position in accepting the word of any politician, from past experience, whose position is to lie and deceive and why discount the word of the Arch. Cant.?

Referring to the last paragraph: would Bradlaugh, Foote or Cohen not have protested against man's inhumanity to man, whether on TV or elsewhere especially when it was propaganda?

J. W. BARKER.

[H.C. writes:—

1. *Complete* power in the hands of a few people. Certainly, the R.C. Church is Totalitarian. We don't know what would have been the fate of Europe with "political cut-throats."

2. The B.B.C. has some independence. We do not know if the R.C. Church had any influence.

3. All Orwell's early books proclaimed his Socialism. He could have been a Socialist outside a "Party."

4. This question is too vague for me to understand.

5. Bradlaugh, Foote and Cohen certainly protested against "man's inhumanity to man."]

THE "IRON CURTAIN"

In your issue of January 7 ("This Believing World") you state: "One Labour Member of Parliament, Mr. George Brown, has admitted that Orwell exaggerated nothing. He recently saw for himself behind the Iron Curtain exactly what Orwell had depicted in his book."

Will you please explain why the people responsible for this "Iron Curtain" permitted Mr. Brown to "see for himself"?

PETER JONES.

[Many visitors to Russia have been allowed entry. So what?—ED.]

IS THE R.P.A. SUICIDAL?

Your reviewer, H.C., may well ask: "Is there any Freethought at all, except by implication, in the 1955 *Rationalist Annual*?" The answer is "No"—and very little implication!

But there is an even worse state of affairs to be noted, namely: What is happening to the R.P.A. official organ *The Literary Guide*? First, I purchased a copy of the magazine from a book-stall as on sale to the general public. This contained not a single word or hint of Atheism, Agnosticism, Secularism or Freethought. It appeared to be careful, unobjectionable matter for religious people! Secondly, I saw another copy as sent out privately to subscribers. It purported to be the same but it had an inset headed *Rationalist Review* which contained a few excellent articles and a little freethinking matter by Prof. Heath and others.

Now what on earth is the good of confining propaganda to the already converted and carefully keeping it away from the non-converted and the general public? This is sheer suicide for freethought. What can Mr. Hector Hawton, the editor, and his directors be thinking of? And what can secularists think of this self-stultifying and suicidal policy? The R.P.A. must be trying, one supposes, to make the best of both worlds, to draw revenue from religionists and irreligionists alike. But will they not fall between the two stools—and deserve to?

As an ordinary reader I resent the concealment policy as it seems to be double-dealing. As an unimportant Freethinker I am revolted because it seems to be, as I see it, treachery to the "Best of Causes." Surely this sort of thing cannot be anything but the most grievously-mistaken policy ever contrived: I repeat, mere suicide. What do R.P.A. members think of it?—Yours, etc.,

M. B. DRAPIER.

LECTURE REPORT

On Sunday, January 2, Bradford Branch members and friends came in good numbers to hear Mr. F. A. Ridley, President of the N.S.S., lecture on "The Catholic Church and World Politics" in the Mechanics Institute. The speaker said that right from the moment this institution found itself in a position to do so, it employed intrigue, exploited fears and loyalties, and by every instrument at its command, attempted, very often with success, to influence the political life of Europe in particular, always with the purpose of strengthening its hold in the courts, the parliaments, and the councils, and indeed wherever this end might be served.

Literature and the other arts, trade and commerce, were all carefully manipulated, miracles arranged, history distorted, rivals repressed or liquidated, and every device employed to obtain and hold a dominating position in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.

The scope of these activities extended and widened as the influence of the church spread itself, until to-day very little that goes on in any part of the world escapes the attention of its hierarchy.

Mr. Ridley's well-informed exposition of the position, past and present, his forecast of what future trends will be, and his suggestions as to how Freethinkers might help in the struggle for democratic liberty and freedom of the intellect, were followed by an hour of keen discussion.—W.B.

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