

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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~~THE~~ fundamental dogma of religion is the supernatural. ~~In the more primitive religions this usually took the shape of a belief in the plurality of gods, or, if one wishes to show off one's learning by translating it into Greek—Polytheism.~~ ~~At the more advanced religions have long since abandoned belief in plurality of gods, it is sufficient nowadays to discuss belief in God—one God.~~ We will merely add that if, as many religious writers assume, it is "natural" for man to believe in God, then history—and particularly the history of religion—indicates that it is still more "natural" for him (or her) to believe in many gods than in one.

In the present writer's opinion too much importance has been attached by Freethinkers in the past to the question of how gods originated. Such authorities as Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen have maintained that belief in immortality preceded belief in God; they taught that gods sprang from human ghosts. Michael Bakunin, on the other hand, argued powerfully, in his *God and the State*, that heavenly kings actually derived from their earthly prototypes. Such were the Pharaohs of Egypt and their kind. Such explanations do not necessarily disprove the modern belief in gods. An intelligent Theist can always point to the admitted fact that many authentic sciences spring from very humble and primitive beginnings, for example, Astronomy from Astrology! He can always say, with, indeed, considerable truth, that modern philosophical Theism has long parted company with its primitive origins. As a modern Rationalist author, Mr. Howell Smith, has relevantly observed in this connection, it is a far cry from the anthropoid god of the Book of Genesis, who came "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" and, subsequently, flew into a towering passion with Adam—a far cry, we repeat, to the god of Catholic philosophy, of whom St. Thomas tells us that even his existence can only be predicated from analogy, or, as a Muslim theologian added, "of the Divine World we know nothing except its name."

## Christian Theology

The writer of these lines is not well enough acquainted with non-Christian theological systems to criticise them in any detail. Christianity has, however, produced several theological systems which can claim, at least, logical consistency. It is a mistake to denigrate some of these old writers, who were men of great intellect and subtlety within their own current terms of reference. We remember once making a remark to this effect to the late Mr. Chapman Cohen, and that great thinker cordially concurred.

Probably the most logical of the Christian systems was that usually described as Calvinism, after the Protestant Reformer, Calvin (1509-1564). This system perhaps should be called after St. Augustine, who formulated its main essentials. As most people know, Calvinism was predestinarian. This has always seemed to me to be an easier and more logical position for a Theist to defend than the self-contradictory position of Free Will. To-day, however, Calvinism

is in the doldrums, as, indeed, are most of the old theological systems.

## "The Pure Act"

The Catholic System, based on St. Thomas, is, like its more heretical contemporaries, also making heavy weather nowadays. The present Pope certainly did not diminish the difficulties of his hard-pressed theologians when he added to the Articles of Faith that most obviously absurd of all dogmas, the *bodily* "assumption" of the Virgin Mary. However, the Church of Rome is a tenacious institution, which has survived both Voltaire and McCabe! It still with

imperturbable calm continues to put forward St. Thomas's famous "Five Proofs" of the existence of God, even in our age of evolution and relativity. Also, still following Aristotle, the Catholic Church continues to define God as "Pure Act," as a Being in whom no potentiality exists. In Catholic theology it is impossible for God to have a *new* experience: he has already done, felt, and thought everything that is rationally possible to do, think, or feel. Such a definition is flatly opposed to evolution; and how Catholic evolutionists can square it with a belief in evolution passes the capacity of the present writer to comprehend. Yet, somehow, they do! Faith, it seems, can work not only miracles, but acrobatics.

## God the Creator

Christian theology, both Catholic and Protestant, or, at least, orthodox Protestant, holds that the universe in its totality has been created by God. The contrary doctrine that the world is eternal was, indeed, held by some Christian heretics, and it was taught by Aristotle, whom the Catholic Church reveres as the greatest of secular philosophers and as its master in metaphysics. St. Thomas, indeed, who, so to speak, "baptised" the pagan Aristotle, explicitly concedes that the universe *could* be eternal, had not *Revelation* informed us that it is not. A most valuable piece of information from Heaven! Rather arbitrarily the Church teaches that God made the universe "out of nothing." Though, actually, the Book of Genesis, on which this dogma is based, does not appear to say so. If one reads *Genesis* literally, it seems to say that matter in an unorganised and shapeless form existed before the Creation? A number of early Christian theologians followed, it seems, this more literal interpretation. In which case God was the Architect, but not the *maker* of the universe, since he organised it from pre-existing materials. Might one hold that this was also the opinion of the original author of *Genesis*? That is what he actually seems to say.

## Pantheism

Pantheism is scientific theism; as Schopenhauer aptly commented, "it is an easy-going way of getting rid of God." God is lost in Greek! To-day most "Modernist" theologians are more or less pantheistic. Nevertheless, pantheism

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## The Belief in God

By F. A. RIDLEY

is really rather a roundabout form of atheism. As the Gilbertian phrase goes, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Where *all* is good, *nothing* in particular is. If, as Erasmus Darwin said, "Unitarianism is a feather-bed for falling Christians," one might add that "Pantheism is a feather-bed for falling theists—and theologians." In Buddhism man is eventually absorbed into the All. Nowadays God appears destined to a similar fate.

### Astronomy and Atheism

Hitherto theological problems, including the existence

of God, have been the subjects of logical argument, rather than of actual investigation. The present day science that describes the universe is Astronomy, and Astronomy has now arrived at a point where it has come, perhaps, within measurable distance of solving "The Riddle of the Universe"—how, or if, the Cosmos originated. Should its eventual findings negative the idea of any creation in, or of, Time, then atheism will no longer be a theory, but a fact. It will be the final and decisive victory of Science over Religion! "God" will then finally take his place amongst discarded hypotheses!

## The Origin of Life on the Earth

By G. T. MACKADAM, B.Sc.

THIS problem of the origin of life must interest all rationalists as there are two main alternatives for it, the Materialist and the Religious versions. The scientific idea is that it arose by chemical reactions, the spiritual idealistic viewpoint of the story requires various supernatural mumbo-jumbo happenings.

When we examine the origin of life, we see there must have been a number of stages in the development of matter from the most simple to the most highly complex organisms. The first stage must have been the origin of the organic substances of which life is composed, first of all the very simple substances and then later those of the most complex form with high molecular weights such as the proteins and other organic compounds. But this would not bring us to a study of the living organism, because living substance does not consist of isolated chemical molecules but of a system of proteins interconnected by orderly cycles of chemical reaction resulting in growth or as it is also called metabolism.

Our final problem then is that of the origin of protein bodies, these would be living substances which although not of a cellular structure are capable of metabolism and of adaption to environmental conditions. This final problem is really that of the origin of life in its simplest form. Later problems such as the appearance of multicellular organisms, and the development of consciousness do not really deal so much with the origin of life as with its development.

It is a recognized scientific fact that the various organic substances the sugars, proteins, etc., of which living organisms are composed only arise as the result of the vital activity of these organisms. All the great organic remains in the earth such as oil, coal, and peat were formed by living organisms of past ages, and still today the same processes are occurring. Such organic remains and compounds were and are due to photosynthesis, so that coal is often called "buried sunlight." This has led various religious leaders to claim that life cannot be created except by supernatural means. Such ideas, of course, only make it more difficult to solve the problem of the origin of life. Only recently have scientists realised such views are false and that organic substances were formed and are still being formed independently of living organisms, under conditions which preclude the very possibility of their existence. Astronomers have aided this knowledge by their investigations of stellar atmospheres, including the atmosphere of the sun, the study of the atmospheres of the giant planets (Jupiter and Saturn), the study of the meteorites that fall on the Earth from interplanetary and stellar space, all the research has shown that in all these objects, together with the simplest forms of carbon, occur carbonic organic compounds, particularly hydrocarbons.

If organic compounds can occur independent of life on heavenly bodies they can also originate on the earth, our

planet. An interesting connecting link between astronomical study and that of our earth occurs in the study of certain carbides—compounds of carbon and metal. Such compounds were first discovered in meteorites in the form of minerals called cohenites. In these, carbon is combined with iron, nickel, and cobalt. These cohenites which were once considered purely meteoric minerals, were later also discovered in the composition of the Earth as well.

Recent astronomical study has also led to the knowledge that stars arise out of gas and dust matter in interstellar space. In the formation of our planet from such gas dust matter we therefore now know that there entered into its composition water, ammonia, and hydrocarbons, in other words all the elements necessary for the formation of the simplest organic substances.

This leads to a very important conclusion, that organic substances in the form of hydro-carbons and their oxygen and nitrogen derivatives were already present on the surface of the earth at the moment of its formation.

Our next problem is to imagine how such simple hydrocarbons in solution in the water on the Earth's surface could have given rise to that great variety of organic substances of which life is made up, including the proteins. Advanced knowledge of organic chemistry today has shown that the compounds present on the Earth when it was formed, that is the hydrocarbons, ammonia and water would have been quite sufficient to give rise to the most varied organic substances. Various scientific workers in recent years have shown the formation of sugars from formaldehyde solutions, and also the formation of proteins from solutions of formaldehyde and potassium cyanide. Recent work by Miller, an English worker, and published in "Science" magazine in 1953 have also shown the production of amino acids is possible under various conditions from ammonia, methane, water and hydrogen. The Soviet chemist Bresler, in Leningrad, has shown the possibility of synthesizing proteins under conditions of pressure such as obtained in the depths of the ocean.

It is thus possible to see that in the early history of the Earth when it was covered with a dense cloud of water vapour, similar to that we now see on the planet Venus and under the various effects of solar radiation in those early days of our planet's history, that there was a stage of the formation of proteins in their chemical sense.

To understand the problem of the origin of life however, we also have to think of the origin of protein bodies from such proteins capable of growth which give us life, that is that process of growth that leads to perpetual self renewal and self restoration.

What lies at the basis of the chemical phenomena called metabolism? How did it arise? Why are protein substances so important for life? These are important questions which we must consider, because the problem of the origin of life is involved here.

# Is Ours a Scientific Age?

By R. READER

IN a world putrid with lies, one stench rises well above the rest: the frame-up of science.

Electrons can do most things, from producing chain reactions to blowing church-organs. Gamma rays can cure diseases, or, alternatively, and if more expedient, disease germs can complete destruction begun by gamma rays. But, such is the perversity of nature, the pious are as vulnerable as the rest. Hence the outcry, only superficially justified, that scientists should close Pandora's Box and proclaim that the application of their discoveries is responsible for contemporary world malaise. The lie is a subtle one, and can be exposed on the following lines.

Science is organised human knowledge. It therefore makes human mistakes, and is later obliged to modify its conclusions. But whether or not the sum total of scientific fact in the world at any given instant really is that chimera "ultimate truth" matters not a jot. The said sum total represents the closest approximation that humanity, with its five senses, has been able to achieve up to that particular moment. Furthermore, the supersession of scientific facts by later discoveries is only superficially true. The man wishing to master atomic energy must first master "classical" physics. He will later discard many of the concepts of the latter, but these concepts form indispensable stepping-stones to final results. Whatever its outward appearance of contradiction, scientific knowledge is basically a coherent whole, the advancement of its boundaries depending in every case on what has gone before.

It therefore follows that it is quite impossible to obtain a coherent result by using science partially, that is, by inventing, suppressing, or distorting facts. Yet this is precisely what mankind *is* trying to do to-day, one foot in the electrons and the other in Ancient Egypt. That lovely flower, contemporary civilisation, is, in reality, not a scientific bloom at all, but rather a hybrid, in which scientific method and discovery have been systematically prostituted to serve religious concepts of ignorant ages. In other words, it is not the "application of science" that is responsible for world malaise; it is the "*partial and deliberately restricted application*" that is working mischief. Words? Here are some examples—only a few of the many thousands that could be cited.

An article of genuine utility is invented. Finance is interested, but the device would make superfluous the present activities of well-paying companies. Quietly the matter is dropped—and stifled. So far as the benefit of humanity is concerned, the rest is silence. And this is an *intelligent age*?

A certain clergyman's reason makes him doubt much that he preaches. But people talk, other jobs are hard to find, and one has to eat. He struggles gamely, but ignominiously falls, a minor Lucifer. *Liberty of conscience*?

With a crash, a professor of economics follows him, writing, tongue in cheek, that the earth can comfortably support a population of 5,000 millions. *Scientific truth*?

The history book sets an imaginative schoolmaster thinking. The facts seem a little stretched here, a little compressed there. But he is careful not to let his thoughts express themselves. *Education, or merely a training in tradition*?

Here comes an eminent surgeon. To operate, or not to operate, that is the question. All his training and reasoning tell him that physical, mental, moral, social, and economic catastrophe inevitably await both the unmarried girl and the unborn child. But he must at all costs remain on the register—he must eat too. He is sympathetic and sorry—

but she must go elsewhere. *To her death, if need be, at the hands of unqualified meddlers. A scientific age?*

This judge's common sense pulls one way, the evidence the other. Conscientiously, he does what he can to redress the balance. But the penalties are based on evidence and pious emotion, not rational thought. The revenge of society is absolutely indispensable; the future prevention of a similar crime of rather academic interest only; and common sense of no importance whatever. *A scientific attitude to crime?*

Yet another learned professor, writing on genetics. The asylums, institutions, the public streets even, swarm with living proof of the vital rôle played by heredity in human make-up and relationships. But the professor must be careful. He must stress the effects of environment, say that the heredity factor is not fully understood, or has been exaggerated, explore all manner of learned and irrelevant side-turnings, formulate no clear conclusions—in a word, use less matter with more art. *Scientific method?*

Let us pretend, cheat, lie, and fight things out. But, in the name of sanity, do not let us say that we live in a scientific age! This review is far from complete, but the common factor making this superficially-diverse company of people renounce reason can be clearly discerned: religious neurosis. The human brain, with its unparalleled capacity for associating cause and effect, tries to look beyond death. Confronted by an impassable wall, many pretend it is not there, and construct a world-that-should-be out of the world-that-is. The former is infinitely more gratifying than the latter. They pleasurably contemplate and ruminate this world of their own creation, and, lo and behold, it becomes more real than reality itself. The delirium of any one of those thousands of wretched mystical degenerates that have stifled the better purposes of humanity appears as Holy Writ, and reason knocks thereafter in vain. And when we consider how many noble intellects have been drawn into the web—Blaise Pascal, the discoverer of atmospheric pressure and the inventor of a calculating machine, was one of many thousands—we can understand why so many philosophers, arriving at the last page of human knowledge, have closed the book, in tears.

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## For Liberty

ROBERT INGERSOLL

A believer is a bird in a cage, a freethinker is an eagle parting the clouds with tireless wings.

Our fathers reasoned with instruments of torture. They believed in the logic of fire and sword. They hated reason. They despised thought. They abhorred liberty.

Liberty cannot be sacrificed for the sake of anything. It is of more value than anything else. . . . Liberty sustains the same relation to all our virtues that the sun does to life. The world had better go back to barbarism, to the dens, to the caves and lairs of savages; better lose all art, all invention than to lose liberty.

The destroyers of the old are the creators of the new.

The history of intellectual progress is written in the lives of infidels.

"You must not reason. Reason is a rebel. You must not contradict—contradiction is born of egotism; you must believe. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Heaven was a question of ears.

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

## This Believing World

As far as we can see the only reason why there are priests, vicars and parsons objecting to the Rev. B. Graham, is that he is completely successful in attracting huge crowds while they find it difficult to fill even a small church. On "fundamentals" they are all practically in agreement. They all believe in God, in Jesus Christ as God, in miracles and, of course, in the Devil. If a parson like the Rev. T. R. Morton in a Glasgow journal tells us that "Billy Graham's methods and message are inadequate," one need only ask what about Mr. Morton's methods and message? How many "converts" has he made?

By converts we do not mean inducing Christians to go a little more regularly to church. We mean out-and-out unbelievers. How many of these has the Rev. Billy or the Rev. Mr. Morton converted? Even one? The convert who claims that at one time he was an Atheist but now sees the Light is, in nearly all cases, an unmitigated perverter of the truth. Ask him to put the case which made him an Atheist and that will be sufficient to prove him a liar. As for Scotland, where Billy Graham is going to conduct a six weeks' campaign—it will be, from the point of view of numbers, a huge success. A Scotsman, when he is religious, is always more *tearfully* religious than an Englishman, and turns up in bigger numbers.

According to an article in *The People*, Russians, everywhere behind the Iron Curtain, are turning to religion. And the writer adds that "for the time being at any rate there is nothing that the atheist rulers of the Soviet can do—or want to do—to stem the religious revival." The truth is that the mass of the Russian people were *always* religious, and you cannot compel people to renounce religion except by methods of tolerance and understanding. Force is useless. This is admitted by Krushchev himself who, in an article in the *Pravda*, says that religious people may be even better workers than those who insult their religion.

Both the Roman Catholics and the Baptists in Russia admit that they are not persecuted—and they insist that the Russian people are turning to religion again in increasing numbers; and even "members of the rigidly atheist Communist Party itself are becoming believers!" we are told. *Compel* them to come in is the slogan of Christians—not of Atheists. Our converts arrive at Atheism through reason backed by science and, except in very rare cases, once an Atheist, always an Atheist.

One would think that the art of prophesying these days had faded out but that is not so. The Vatican now prophesies that the Church of England will split in two—the High Church swallowing Rome—or rather Rome swallowing the High Church—and Presbyterianism swallowing the Low Church. Well, there is no doubt that the Church of England is in a bad way. It has great difficulty in getting young men to train as priests, and it has equal difficulty in getting congregations to fill the churches.

On the other hand, Roman Catholics are far more enthusiastic and are not in the least interested in "unbelief." They are told to believe, and they do so. They can put up 7,000 priests for 2,000 parishes, while the figures for the rival Church are 14,000 clergymen for 20,000 parishes. To the Devils and miracles of the Church of England, Rome adds dozens of modern miracles like Lourdes and Fatima, as well as cures always performed through Holy Water and relics. Rome, in short, offers far more miraculous

marvels than our own divided Church, and thus scores beautifully.

As another example, take the well-known Weeping Madonna of Syracuse. This statue weeps copiously, and all who believe in miracles must believe that this is due entirely to the Virgin Mary herself. She is terribly upset at the unbelief prevailing outside her own special Church. But two replicas of the statue are now also weeping buckets of tears and achieving many miraculous cures—so Caserta, where the statues are thus performing, has become crowded with the lame, the halt, the blind, and the sick. How can the Church of England cope with such competition? Why has it not produced Weeping Statues of Christ? No wonder Rome is beating the Church of England to a frazzle.

## FOR NEWCOMERS

### Agnosticism

AGNOSTICISM implies a suspension of judgment. To withhold a verdict on the grounds of inadequate information is, of course, an entirely sound scientific attitude. It is to say, honestly, "I don't know," when facts are lacking. If I am told a race of men ten feet high exist, I may doubt the veracity of the report, but at least the report does no offence to existing knowledge. I can take two concepts (a) man, and (b) ten feet, and by combining the two I can get a mental picture which comes within the bounds of a possible existent. I can then say, "I know what you mean, and as I have not enough evidence to disprove it I will keep an open mind."

But if a person informs me that "God" exists, I get no mental picture at all of a being whose existence would be consonant with known facts. I cannot therefore be "agnostic" about God, for there is nothing to be agnostic about. I cannot suspend judgment, because there is nothing to suspend it on. And if I am to keep an open mind on God, I must extend the same hospitality to water babies, leprechauns, mermaids and centaurs.

If the agnostic claims to know exactly what he is agnostic about he is some kind of Theist; if not, he is an Atheist.

The Christian notion of a being who is at the same time all-powerful and all-good carries its own disproof, since it is a contradiction in terms. To postulate two attributes which are mutually exclusive is as sensible as talking about a circular rectangle. G.H.T.

### Missing

They have not found him in his usual haunts,  
The Reading Room this student sees no more;  
He mounts no soap-box, facing jeers and taunts,  
Nor yarns in local, where he held the floor.  
No more he makes excursion to collect  
His evening paper and to take his tea  
In Lyons, or Express, or A.B.C.,  
Where servitors, who his grey hair respect,  
Just wonder—soon forgetting—where he's gone,  
Save one, whose life's brief tenure muses on.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

NEXT WEEK

### THE INADEQUACY OF THE GODHEAD

By C. G. L. DU CANN

# 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.

## 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.

Mr. F. A. RIDLEY writes: "In reply to Mr. H. Irving—perhaps he will give us chapter and verse where Mr. Chapman Cohen declares he is an 'irrationalist'?"

## 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, March 27, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

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

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 27, 6-45 p.m.: Open Discussion.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 29, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY: (2) "World Free-Thought Movements—Their Changing Pattern."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, March 25, 7-15 p.m.: Miss D. COULTHARD, "The New Bulgaria." (Illustrated by Films.)

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 27, 6-30 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "Facing Facts."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street).—Thursday, March 31, 7-30 p.m.: E. TAYLOR, "Man Makes Himself."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, March 27, 2-30 p.m.: CYRIL MAY (S.P.G.B.), "Scientific Thinking."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 27, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Work of Joseph McCabe."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, March 27, 7-15 p.m.: W. CARLTON, "The Dilemma of Ethics."

## Notes and News

WE are pleased to note that Freethinkers are maintaining the pressure in many provincial papers on the Mrs. Knight controversy, or issues arising out of it. Among other noteworthy efforts was a thousand-word letter from Mr. H. Irving in the *Barnsley Chronicle*, full of militant free-thought admirably stated. Mr. G. Hilbinger was given a long last word in the *West London Observer* to close the controversy.

Mr. Robert H. Scott (California), who has played a major part in the pressure for Freethought broadcasting in the U.S.A., sends his appreciation of

"... all that fine material on Mrs. Knight's broadcasts. Here in this land of the free (?) it was almost impossible to find a newspaper that gave space to the event, an event which, surely, deserved headlines. The cowardly and servile controlled Press of this country exasperates me.

(Continued at foot of next column)

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £808 15s. 4d.; Miss D. G. Davies, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; W. H. D., 2s. 6d.; Total, £809 18s. 10d.

Will subscribers please indicate "second contribution," "third," "weekly," etc., and it will then be acknowledged as such. The purpose of the Fund is to keep "The Freethinker" in existence.

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

## Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

SOME recent appreciations taken from letters accompanying the subscriptions.

"I should regret to hear *The Freethinker* had ceased publication and I hope you will get enough annual subscriptions to keep it going. I know something of the greatly increased cost of printing but I hope you will get, say, a thousand people to guarantee £1 a year each." (London.)

"To the memory of our dear comrade Chapman Cohen, the grandest man I ever listened to." (London.)

"For 34 years *The Freethinker* has been my contact with the world I am in sympathy with, for in village life the Church has still tremendous influence, although my village church has often only two or three attend the services." (Sussex.)

"To save *The Freethinker*, whose precious light must be kept burning brightly." (Burnley.)

"In honour of one who used his brilliant gifts for the greatest of all causes. I have found considerable enlightenment and enjoyment in reading *The Freethinker* and it would be a disastrous loss if it had to cease publication. I have ordered an extra copy weekly which I propose using for propaganda purposes." (Pinner.)

"I have a very vivid memory of him from the time I called at headquarters in 1939. Your teaching is missed badly in Canada." (Winnipeg.)

"It is small enough as an acknowledgement for the light and encouragement received . . . I am fully appreciative of the grand job you are making of *The Freethinker* these days and look forward to Thursday mornings sure of a breath of fresh air and vigorous sanity. All best wishes for *The Freethinker* for 1955 from one greatly indebted to the best of all the weeklies." (Mansfield.)

"I find *The Freethinker* a very educational journal and hope it will continue." (London.)

"What a stupendous achievement he (Chapman Cohen) has accomplished for freedom of thought and the mental emancipation of humanity." (Chiswick.)

"I became a member of the N.S.S. by joining the Pontypridd Branch in 1893 and I have rarely missed a copy of *The Freethinker* since that date. At 86 I have no superstitious hopes or fears and recognise that a few months may, a few years must, end my career on this good earth. My wife joins me in wishing the movement all the success it deserves." (Bournemouth.)

"I look forward to the arrival of *The Freethinker* and, having read it, either pass it on to friends or leave it in phone boxes or bus shelters. We hope to see you at your meetings when we return to London in 1956." (New Zealand.)

To my surprise, the only paper that came to my notice that had a full account of Mrs. Knight's truly significant broadcasts last month was a San Francisco newspaper which is the most reactionary of all in the San Francisco Bay area, the *Call Bulletin*.

I have made a file of all the material on Mrs. Knight's broadcasts, as I shall find it useful when I have again to deal with the F.C.C. in support of my own case."

# Where Stands the R.P.A.?

By H. CUTNER

(Concluded from page 87)

THE story about McCabe doing his best to persuade Haeckel to omit the bit about the "Jumping Gospels" in the *Riddle of the Universe* proves how very anxious the young ex-priest was to attack religion only with the best weapons. He may have read Foote's *Bible Romances* but he would never emulate that kind of criticism. But as he grew older, he began to see that the Churches were nearly always ready to accommodate themselves—and indeed did so—to scientific opinion.

Take for example Evolution. That distinguished convert to Romanism, Sir Arnold Lunn, and many Protestant writers like Mr. Douglas Dewar, fiercely oppose everything Evolution stands for and constantly write against it. But if you go to the pamphlets issued recently by the Catholic Enquiry Centre, an advertising body using "reasonable" arguments (they claim), you will find that Roman Catholicism is by no means opposed to Evolution in spite of Sir A. Lunn's vehement and angry denunciations. "As regards the human *body*," we are told, "we have a large liberty of discussion in the matter of Evolution . . . Genesis 2, 7, leaves us free to accept or reject the theory of Evolution as regards the *body* . . ."

Where Evolutionary Catholics can now come in is on the "soul." It is the human "soul" which "is directly created by God." That is the way in which Christians are "at liberty" to accept at least some kind of Evolution if they wish. You can now enter the Church if you are an Evolutionist so long as you don't include the "soul."

But Rationalism (or Freethought) whether propagated by our "aggressive" Secularists or by our scientific Rationalists, made such tremendous headway before World War I that the Churches were at their wits end to know how to combat the rapidly growing "infidelity" as they called it. Robertson's attack on the historicity of Jesus Christ brought an enormous number of books in reply, including the famous one by Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, often quoted by his admirers but rarely read by them. The form and price of the R.P.A. reprints were imitated by Christian publishers; and in such a paper as the *Clarion*, most of whose readers were Christian Socialists, Blatchford, taking the best from both sides, gave us his *God and My Neighbour* and allowed a large number of his religious comrades—and others, including G. K. Chesterton—to reply at length.

When that terrible war was over, both religion and Rationalism had to face a changing world—how very much changed those of us who knew it before know perhaps better than those who were born after. Apathy and indifference to both religion and Rationalism were the key-notes. And then suddenly the Churches were blessed with an ally unforeseen by Freethinkers which completely changed the situation. This was the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Up to the time of the success of the B.B.C. in broadcasting religion, many Church leaders had to concede the victory to Freethought on at least some important issues between them. It is possible to find eminent Churchmen who openly declared their disbelief in such Church dogmas as the Virgin Birth, in the Devils of Jesus, in Miracles, in the Resurrection and, of course, in the Adam and Eve story. The B.B.C., under the fundamentalist beliefs of Lord Reith, brought back to millions of British people the dear old Bible, every comma of which was inspired by God himself. The rapturous eulogies of Jesus as "our Lord"

on every possible occasion filled the air. Plays like "The Man Who Was Born to be King" were broadcast time after time. Jesus may have been the most despised and rejected of men, but, as Mr. Robert Graves would insist, he was King Jesus all the same.

And side by side with all this was the almost entire disappearance of any scholarly work in which Jesus was proclaimed a myth. John M. Robertson and his theories on the problem were laughed out of court not only by Christians but by Rationalists. Almost to a man these rallied round the old exploded position of Renan that there really was a Jesus, even if we knew little about him. The New Testament records were substantially true. The positions laid down by Cassels in *Supernatural Religion* were as far as possible ignored. And the Churches refused to discuss the historicity of Jesus when the "Rationalist Press" (as they called it) had already given up the absurd non-historicity thesis. This was the position up to the beginning of World War 2.

It took me many years to realise that the Churches were almost invulnerable so long as a belief in Jesus Christ as God Almighty Incarnate or even as a Great Man was unassailed. When I realised that they loved Freethinkers discussing the Age of the Gospels, the possibility of Miracles, and similar problems, so long as we left Jesus a great historical figure, I did my best to assail that. But I certainly never expected the vituperation with which, as Mr. Hawton knows, I was so savagely attacked—by Rationalists.

Yet if we are to make any advance at all it is no use writing fine "ethical" articles or talking about "Scientific Humanism." Christians have as much right to be called "Humanists" if they want to, as Rationalists.

If one looks through recent numbers of the *Literary Guide*, which (rightly or not) is considered by members to be the organ of the R.P.A., precious little of the old sturdy Rationalism of Robertson, McCabe, and a few others can be seen. As a purely literary journal it is possibly as good no doubt as any other—but as a fighting force against the immense power of the B.B.C. it is just valueless.

Many of the contributors to the "Rationalist" part are, if I may say so, not *Freethinkers* at all. They may be "anti-religious," but only because their particular ideology is anti-religious. Their attitude on Freethought is that it is outworn, and that the B.B.C. would have to toe the line if what they stand for were to come to power. I doubt if any of these writers could make converts as Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, Foote, and J. M. Robertson, made converts.

Messrs. Graves and Podro, whose huge book *The Nazarene Gospel Restored* I intend to deal with one day in these columns, have had some articles in the *Literary Guide*—but not in the Rationalist portion. It would be interesting, if not amusing, to know why? Was it because these two writers are very nearly as fundamentalist as Billy Graham (in their own way), and that it is their dearest wish to bring back Rationalists once again to the Faith?

I agree with Mr. Hawton that times have changed, but the old fundamentalism which Foote and Bradlaugh did their best to shatter has come back. It is alive and kicking. I have heard dozens of B.B.C. broadcasts which would have shocked the old warriors for their childish crudity.

And what can we—and by we I mean those of us who are convinced that Christianity is not true—now do? A different approach? Just a "cultural" approach in which

we are all in agreement that the religion of Jesus (which is, of course, true Christianity as opposed to Churchianity) must be restored? That if we all take Renan to our hearts again all will be well?

For fifty years the R.P.A. has been a living force for Rationalism—for the educative influence of Evolution and Science as opposed to the childish superstition of an old Oriental religion. To me it looks as if it has now succumbed to the enemy.

There may be members of the R.P.A. who feel substantially what I and other Freethinkers feel about religion. And if the Freethought of Foote and Ingersoll and Robertson and Bradlaugh means anything to them, I hope that they will rally round the old flag and help to keep it defiantly aloft.

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## NEWCASTLE NOTEBOOK

By GEORGE MILLER

A TINY letter was squeezed into the correspondence columns of the *Evening Chronicle*, in which "C.M." took offence at a Hebburn-on-Tyne parson visiting local public-houses and attempting to whip up religious froth in placid, contented fuzzlers. The writer asked what would be said if, in return for "pep-talks on religion," he was to invade the parson's church and vend bottles of brown-ale. The editor's purpose in publishing the letter was, one suspects, to rouse holy anger in the breasts of believers whose indignant letters the editor gladly canalized into print. Masterstroke—he seized the opportunity the following night to publish a photograph recording for all time the amicable Methodist minister seated with four laymen, each with a beer, and all, as far as their beers permit, absorbed in highly momentous and fateful games of dominoes.

One enlightened reader wrote: "We can worship God absolutely anywhere." Most interesting was the letter from the Rev. John Wall himself, challenging "C.M." to discard his pseudonym and come to church, where a Christian welcome awaited him, and would he, in future, speak his criticism in the pub itself?

\* \* \*

The *Evening Chronicle* supports the churches, without favouritism, because it is well aware of the beastly nastiness of which men are capable when religion is lacking. Not only men, but, as reported in its own columns, even boys hardly out of the "little darling" stage. Two South Shields brothers, aged 11 and 12, found guilty of indecent assaults on other juveniles, were pleaded for by an anonymous minister, who told the Juvenile Court that the boys now attend church regularly, for the cause of the mischief is obviously "a lack of religious education and background." The implication is that churchgoers are just incapable of this sort of thing; for non-churchgoers it is an ever-present danger. Pretty theories like this do not explain why overt anti-religionists have not so far been dragged into court on such charges, nor why an embarrassing percentage of those who are so charged *do* belong to a church.

\* \* \*

If we can worship God anywhere, why all these appeals for funds towards church repairs? The *Newcastle Journal* has actually proposed that a 1s. per week per worker should be deducted from the nation's wage packets and given as a gift to the churches "who have cleansed our hearts and minds."

\* \* \*

Patiently pursuing its policy of making the paper as much as possible, and as often as possible, like a parish magazine, the *Chronicle* still employs the services of the Revs. C. Haig

and —. Harriot. The Rev. Spencer Wade has been lassoed to continue the "Saturday Postscript" series. Wade's meaning, as a rule, is as clear as the filament of a gas-filled lamp viewed through frosted glass.

We note that the Rev. C. Haig is making himself remarkable by contributing occasionally articles which do not mention God or Jesus—secular essays indeed! This will not do for the Rev. Harriot, for whom all things reveal the deity, and dull, dull is he who cannot see it. From his article on Dublin city, we gather God lives there. Then we had him fulminating against modern art, stating quite uncompromisingly that religion has everything to do with art and that, without it, it is not art at all. He has the impression that the modern artist "hates his fellow men, hates his subject, and hates himself," which is all wrong, for the artist's true function is to be "like a priest, dedicated to represent the people at the altar of beauty." He finds the works of surrealists, cubists and futurists crude and ugly and *dreadfully* irreligious. So do I!

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## More on Hybrids

By PAUL VARNEY

IF Dr. A. W. Haupt states that a cross between two different types of humans such as black and white or yellow and white is a hybrid, then he is wrong.

I much prefer to take the ruling of the greatest biologist that the world has ever produced, Charles Darwin, that a hybrid is a cross between two distinct species of either animals, birds or plants.

Hybrids are not stable and they tend to sterility, whilst crosses between any varieties tend to greater strength and virility.

According to Professor Thomas Huxley, there are five varieties (not species mark you), of man. They are, the Caucasian, Mongol, Negro, North American Indian and the Malayan.

All these varieties can cross with a beneficial effect upon the reproductive organs, in fact it increases the fertility. There are no two species of man, only varieties.

Crosses between two distinct species, such as the horse and the donkey, results in the production of a mule, but the mule is sterile, and you cannot breed from mules.

This law applies to all living things. You may cross a canary with a finch, resulting in a hybrid, also called a mule, but the reproductive organs fail to function in the mule, for it is sterile.

It is a biological fact, that all crosses between distinct species, leads to sterility.

If as the popular writers on biology say hybrids and varieties are the same thing, then why use the word "hybrid" at all?

Just as there is only one species of horse, with a number of varieties of the horse, so there is only one species of man, with the variations as classified by Professor Huxley.

With the horse, the variations have been brought about by careful selection by man, with modifications by climatic and the general physical conditions of different parts of the world, whilst the variations of man have been brought about, not by careful selection, for idiots and physical degenerates are allowed to breed in all so-called civilised countries, and if a farmer bred his cattle, as civilised governments allow humans to breed, he would soon be in the bankruptcy court.

The variations brought about in the human species, has been brought about by accident and not by careful selection.

Climatic, and the general physical condition following his wanderings over the face of the earth, away from his cradle (which was probably the African continent), where

I suggest originated the tribe of *Pithecanthropus Erectus*.

Great care should be made by Freethinkers when reading the theories of modern biologists, for many of them for materialistic reasons, like Jeans in astronomy, are religiously fundamentalists, and for the sake of big sales and future knighthoods, put forth their subjective nonsense about the "Great Architect," and consequently bring about sterilisation of the intellect, and stagnancy to beneficial scientific progress.

To sum up, we must always remember that a cross between two distinct species is a hybrid; whilst a cross between two varieties of any species is what is termed a mongrel. The mongrel is quite unlike the hybrid, which is mostly sterile. The mongrel breeds and reproduces at a rapid rate. Absolute purity in any breed will not last for any great length of time, and an infusion of new blood has often saved a race from extinction.

## Correspondence

### HITLER'S RELIGION

There is some confusion among both Freethinkers and Christians as to the nature of Hitler's religious views. A book, *Hitler's Table Talk*, annotated by Martin Bormann, contains extracts from his conversation during the war which show him to be both anti-Christian and anti-Materialist. He considers that the three philosophers Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have no equal. Elsewhere in the book he states that the Communists are right in attacking Christianity but wrong in denying a Supreme Force. His "Supreme Force" seems to be something akin to Schopenhauer's "Cosmic Will" minus this thinker's pessimism.

Hitler may have been brought up as a Catholic but it appears that he broke away from this Church at an early age; though he may not have been officially excommunicated.

Nazism was itself a religion competing with all the others as well as against materialism.—Yours, etc.,

J. BATES.

[It is fantastic to suppose that the author of *Mein Kampf* could have mastered Kant, or even Schopenhauer.—ED.]

### THE SPANISH INQUISITION

If F. A. Ridley had written "The Spanish Inquisition was a purely Spanish institution" in his article in your February 18 issue, I should have mentally disagreed with him but not have bothered to write to you about it. What he actually wrote was "The Inquisition was a purely Spanish institution," so he ought to apologise to readers for his lapse and thank me for pointing it out. Instead, he tells me what I ought to read in order to agree with him. My authority, Lecky, he says, "wrote a long time ago." This is no disadvantage, for Roman Catholic apologists are always busy falsifying history on behalf of their Church. "In any case," Mr. Ridley adds, Lecky "was not a specialist on Spanish history." Neither is Cecil Roth, whose field is Jewish history.

Mr. Ridley recently poured scorn on Arnold Toynbee for his religious bias, but seems to have overlooked it in Roth, whose *A Short History of the Jewish People* ends with the following unhistorical judgment: "The Providence that guides the process of history had ensured that the Jewish future was safe."

F.A.R. next advises me to read an Ibanez book. I may do so, but not in order to improve my history, since I have never learned how to separate invention from fact in novels. I prefer to stick to Lecky until he is *proved* wrong. I am also advised to study the case of Carranza, and have read what four authorities have to say about him. I now know of his rapid promotion to the Archbishopric of Toledo, of the jealousy this aroused in the Bishop of Lerida, of a charge of heresy based on Carranza's *Commentaries on the Christian Catechism*, of his trial in 1558, of his imprisonment, of his appeal to Rome and of his transfer thither in 1567. There, where Papal power was supreme, he continued to be confined in the castle of St. Angelo until 1576. What my authorities do not tell me is that there were political reasons for anything that happened or that the Vatican made any efforts to protect him from the Inquisition, as Mr. Ridley states. Admitting my own lack of authority on historical questions, and noting that Lecky is somewhat out of date, I submit a statement of the late Joseph McCabe to indicate that I am not alone in my ignorance: "Equally monstrous is the Catholic claim that the Spanish Inquisition was political and that Rome actually protested against its severity."

I must also reject Mr. Ridley's endorsement of Roth's view that the Inquisition deserved credit for its comparatively tolerant attitude to witches. The obvious explanation is that the Inquisition was so busy smelling out and exterminating the most dangerous heretics (independent thinkers and Moorish and Jewish intelligentsia) that it had no time for a crazy superstition that did not undermine Catholic beliefs. The later outbreak of witch-hunting in Protestant countries arose from the fact that the Bible took the place of the Pope as man's infallible guide. Is this an "absolutely childish" viewpoint?

Ever anxious to learn, I invite Mr. Ridley to come back and put me right where I am wrong, without, I hope, again dragging in references to the ignorance, immaturity and cowardice of one who has a perfectly good reason for signing himself . . . Yours, etc.,

"VERITAS."

(Mr. F. A. Ridley writes: "Obviously, my article dealt with the Spanish Inquisition.")

### RE-ARMING GERMANY

It was only a few years ago that for the first time in our history our people were compelled to accept conscription in peace time. We were told then that a larger army was necessary to ensure peace. To-day we are being told, whatever risks may be entailed, we must rearm Western Germany in order to build a still larger army to ensure peace. What the next step will be I cannot tell, but I am sure if it is left to our strategists and politicians it will involve arming yet more people, also to ensure peace—if indeed peace still exists.

Apart from the futility and waste of this everlasting race in armaments, the whole atmosphere which it creates is pernicious. War and the preparation for war, like religion, have ever been the excuse for treating with contempt the common rules of reason, morality and prudence, to which the activities of Goebbels and McCarthy bear terrible witness. Free and rational thought can only flourish in a society devoted to peace.

To-day the whole issue hinges upon the rearmament of Germany. The National Secular Society is devoted to "securing the promotion of peace between nations and the substitution of Arbitration for war in the settlement of international disputes." Surely on this vital matter the voice of rational and free thought must be raised and heard.

D. MACDONALD.

### THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE

Why is it that people who would never dream of jeering and gawfawing at the literary survivals of pagan antiquity can express nothing but contempt and ridicule for the surviving remnants of ancient Hebrew literature?

The fact that we have no belief whatever in the gods of Greek and Roman legend does not affect our appreciation of the literature of those who did believe in them.

We do not deride and mock Sophocles and Plato, Virgil and Cicero, merely because we regard Jupiter and Apollo as myths.

Why, then, should we blind ourselves to the merits of the poets and orators and story-tellers of ancient Israel, just because we regard Jehovah as a myth?—Yours, etc.,

S. W. BROOKS.

[The point is well made, but Plato and company do not claim that what they write is "God's Divine Word."—ED.]

## N.S.S. Executive Committee Report 9th March

Present: Mr. Ridley (in the Chair), Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Griffiths, Ebury, Taylor, Hornbrook, Tiley, Shaw, Johnson-Barker, Cleaver, Arthur and the Secretary. Eleven new members were admitted to the Parent and West London Branches. The next E.C. meeting was fixed for 6th April. Re-affiliation to the World Union of Freethinkers was authorised. It was reported that the advertisement in *The Listener* had pulled a fair response in enquiries, and that both the Society and *The Freethinker* had gained support in consequence. Lecture reports by the President, Secretary and Mr. C. McCall were approved. An invitation to send a speaker to take part in a discussion on "The Origin and Use of Morals and Ethics" at Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff, on 12th April was accepted, Mr. Ridley being chosen to represent the Society. It was announced that 6th April was the closing date for the receipt of Conference Motions.

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