

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXV—No. 13

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IT is an innate and familiar tendency in mankind to improve their gods. This pleasing trait in human nature is well exemplified in the improvements by Western Christianity in the God of the Old Testament and the Jesus Christ of the New. The process is gradual and unconscious; but it is caused by the irresistible pressure of more civilised thought outside religious circles, influencing religion itself.

No English person, it is safe to say, worships the Jehovah depicted in the Old Testament, to-day, though some still think they do. Moderns cannot even respect him.

Very few English people, indeed, are intimately acquainted with that savage

literary character with his ogre-like propensities; and of those who imagine that they still worship him, most would vigorously repudiate the horrible blood-lusts attributed so generously to him in the Bible. Christians have long changed the character of the capricious, jealous, savage, murderous tyrant into his opposite, a merciful, loving Father, the more readily since the Four Evangelists depict Jesus as having begun the improving process for them.

But Jesus himself is undergoing the improvement process. Modern folk are bound to regard the intemperate, uncompromising, and vitriolic denunciations of political opponents—good religious men in their fashion—such as Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and lawyers, and the like, as in the very worst of taste, and too extreme for our palates, accustomed to gentler and politer styles of disagreement. It is all so one sided too: the retorts of the castigated are never heard. Then, too, cursing the fig-tree for not having figs out of season, and that ill-treatment of those inoffensive Gadarene pigs (just to teach them for being pigs!) does not go down well with modern standards of reasonable behaviour. Such happenings, like the idea of eternal Hell-fire, make modern English folk quite uncomfortable.

So these, and others like them, are ignored. As the Scottish tectotaller remarked of the episode of changing water into wine: "As it only happened the once, we can overlook that lapse, but if it had occurred again, mebbe I'd have had to take a more serious view of it."

By a rigorous selection of those stories of him which suit our own preconceptions and prejudices and concentrations, the pretty, the sentimental, the romantic, pictures of Jesus and his character can be rendered acceptable to most of us, like Royalty or a film-star. But not to all. Some few will always find Jesus inadequate or worse.

There are indeed startling inadequacies in Jesus Christ as depicted in the Four Gospels, and decidedly the pictures of him given in the New Testament Apocrapha do nothing to atone for these deficiencies. The puerilities of the little-known Gospels of Thomas, of Peter, of Barnabas, and the rest are beyond belief and the Church rejects them.

To moderns, the main inadequacy of Jesus is that, in spite of emphasised Christian claims, he is deficient in goodness. He falls far below the highest modern standard.

for instance, in respect to womanhood and animal life. Never does he impress the duty of kindness to animals; he ate their corpses, which nobler souls scorn to do, and acquiesced in their wholesale slaughter for gain, as in the episode of the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes." It was the desecration of a lifeless building, the Temple, and not the slaughter of the doves and other innocent creatures, that

moved him to "cleanse" the Temple of its tradesmen whom he denounced as "thieves," and not animal murderers, as a more sensitive Buddhist might have done.

Christ seems to have accepted tamely the lowly inferior status of womanhood in the Palestine of his

era. No woman was invited to the Last Supper—no doubt the women followers supped in the kitchen, if at all. So no woman was bidden to eat his flesh or drink his blood "in remembrance"—and Christian women, unlike the men, therefore have a valid excuse for not attending Holy Communion to-day. No woman was "called" or numbered with the Twelve Apostles—which gives the Church its excuse for retaining the inferior status of women before a masculine Triune God by not permitting them to be bishops or priests even in 1955. No woman received the "gift of tongues" (perhaps because they had it already by nature) or the Fire of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. The Church has modified this oversight or omission by allowing young girls of to-day to receive the Holy Ghost (like young boys) at Confirmation. Little English girls may preen themselves that although, unlike the Apostles, they receive the Holy Spirit only at second-hand (the hands of a modern bishop), they are more highly favoured than the holy women who "ministered unto" Jesus.

The late Dean Inge, an admirable man, was fond of drawing attention to the non-democratic nature of Christ. The "salvation of Jesus was not for all; "many" says the word of Jesus, shall seek it, "few" shall find it. The gate to Heaven is "strait": the way narrow. "Many are called; few are chosen."

There is nothing of your modern democratic nonsense about that. Hell-fire for the theological proletariat; bliss for the theological eclectic few. By modern standards, the idea of Jesus was selfish, class-conscious, and destructive of all democratic equality, as also was the personal favouritism shown to Peter, James and John.

The view Jesus took of humanity at large, was not merely childish and melodramatic, but quite false to modern minds educated in psychology. He represented Omniscience like himself as dividing mankind into two classes only: the sheep and the goats, the righteous to be saved and the wicked to be damned. Such a rigid, clear-cut distinction does not exist in life and is repudiated even in the cheapest fiction of to-day. And the worst human beings, nay even the lowest animals or bacilli, do not merit the fate of eternal burning. This, moreover, is to be done at the fiat of a so-called "Father," who created the creature to be tortured endlessly.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Inadequacies of the Godhead

By C. L. DU CANN

If the Hell promised by Jesus is repugnant, the rewards of Heaven and eternal life are inadequate to satisfy modern aspirations and longings. We moderns do not want to live for ever "to inherit eternal life": many of us are satisfied with the ordinance of Nature for all life, human, animal, and plant, which ruthlessly scraps us when her purpose is fulfilled. We are content, in Swinburne's words:

That no life lives for ever;  
That dead men rise up never;  
And even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

The unconsciousness, the nothingness, before our birth, we are willing to have repeated after our death. We may sigh for a life ended, but recognise the necessity and beneficence of the individual death, knowing the race will live.

Nowadays, the Christian churches implicitly recognise the inadequacy of Jesus, and in his Name depart from him. Increasingly, the two Archbishops of the Anglican Church talk for publication about community salvation in this world instead of the Jesus-theme of individual salvation in the next. The hell of the atom bomb here and not the hell of Satan and his fallen angels, thereafter, is their pre-occupation. Their sermons are now political and economic speeches, not distinguishable from worldly-politicians, except by an added unctiousness. The Pope of Rome equally tends to talk materialistic economics and politics in sharp contrast to Christ's liliaceous taking no thought for the morrow.

Mostly certainly it is crystal clear that neither the God of

the Old Testament already deposed from his throne by Westernised Christian thought, nor the God of the New, is adequate to the intellectual and emotional needs of Western modern man. The human Jesus Christ does not seem any more adequate either. There is still the Holy Ghost for Christians to fall back upon, and perhaps this Spirit is, from the paucity of concrete details, the least vulnerable to criticism of the Three Persons of the Triune Godhead of orthodox Church Christianity. Decidedly to many human beings, he is the most attractive of the three: only his name, which sounds unattractive to modern ears, especially to women and children, who tend to dislike ghosts, being against him. It is strange that modern Spiritualists do not adopt his cult more wholeheartedly than they do.

Perhaps his presentation as an algebraic theorem, as in the extraordinary Creed of Saint Athanasius or as an especial danger since unforgiveness is laid down only for the mysteriously unspecified "sin against the Holy Ghost," has been inimical to the spread of a cult in his favour. I have always felt that as contrasted with the immense *réclame* given to the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, the Third, although theoretically co-equal, has been unjustly allotted a definite Third place.

Those moderns who distrust the savagery of the Father and feel disinclined to rely on the sentimentality of the Son, may not be lost to Christianity if the Churches fall back, as they may, upon the Holy Ghost. He surely, properly presented, would be the least inadequate, and the most acceptable, of the Three.

famous Freethought orator of America. We also know that George Bernard Shaw condemned the practice root and branch."

"I mention these matters to show that no one has a monopoly of good intentions on the subject, therefore our appeal should be to all humane persons whatever their *credo* . . ."

STEPHEN YORKE

## Freethought and Vivisection

[The March number of *The Anti-Vivisection News* contains an article entitled 1955—*A Challenge* by an obvious Freethinker, who adopts the pen-name of "Mr. Manchester." It is a vigorous and ably-argued plea for the repeal of the Act of 1876 which allows the conduct of vivisection of animals for research purposes. In the course of his arguments the writer stresses that religious people, such as Lord Wilberforce and Lord Shaftesbury received little help in the Anti-Vivisection cause from many who held the same religious belief as themselves. The writer adds that during many years of anti-vivisection propaganda he has found that the majority of the clergy are cowards whenever this subject is mooted.

We quote a few paragraphs in which this earnest campaigner praises Freethinkers and Humanists for support of his cause, which, of course, is also the cause of the National Secular Society.]

"On the other hand," Mr. Manchester writes, "we often find so-called pagans, heathens and unbelievers on the side of humanitarianism: yet we find no praise for such help in many of the journals issued by A.V.S. bodies. Why?"

"Personally, I am very Catholic in my views and tastes. For example in Sir Arthur Heep's book on 'Animals and Their Masters' I find Voltaire and Bentham condemning vivisection in no uncertain manner, both being noted for their irreligious views. It is safe to say, without the fear of contradiction, that the Christian Church has never recognised any 'Rights' in animals, although individual Christians have asked that they should be treated mercifully."

"On the other hand, I find an agnostic, like Henry Salt and the other rationalists of the Humanitarian League waging war on all who inflict suffering on any sentient being, directly or indirectly."

"A past-president of the Secular Society, G. W. Foote, wrote: 'Vivisection, I regard as the ultimate horror of man's unjust dealing with animals. I believe that secularists are prepared to support legislation for its entire prohibition. The practical objects of our Society has the following: "An extension of the moral law to animals, so as to secure them humane treatment and legal protection against cruelty". Further, no one denounced vivisection with greater eloquence and sincerity than Colonel Ingersoll, the

## Chapman Cohen on the Problem of Evil

IT is often said that Atheism offers no explanation of the origin of evil. We agree, but Atheism has no problem of evil to solve. That belongs to religion, it is created by religion. The Christian Theist assumes the existence of an all-wise, all-good deity who made everything and then looks round at the world and asks the Atheist to solve the "problem of evil." Good and bad exist for Atheists as well as for Theists, but the task here is to understand their nature and reduce their impingement on human welfare, not to harmonise existence with the requirements of an unnecessary theory. The Theist reminds one of a man perplexing himself with the difficulty of accounting for a triangle with square sides, and then complaining that geometry leaves this problem unsolved.

The "problem of evil" has meaning only so far as we try to harmonise the existence of a wise and good God with the world as it is. Dismiss the belief in God, and the "problem of evil" disappears.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(*An Atheist's Approach to Christianity.*)

—NEXT WEEK—

### THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY

#### 1. Ancient Astronomy

By F. A. RIDLEY

# Erotic Christianity

By F. A. RIDLEY

CHRISTIANS are supposed to believe in a God of Love. At least, that is what they tell us! That "God is Love" can be found written in the Bible; along with many "acts of God," which, at least at first sight, seem scarcely loving in character. However, the Divine emotion of Love has not always been construed in a "spiritual" fashion by Christians: the record of, what one could, perhaps, term, erotic Christianity, constitutes an interesting—and intriguing—side-line of what has been described as "The Varieties of Religious Experience," this being not the least interesting, or instructive aspect of modern psychological research.

My attention was recently drawn to this—shall we say—glamorous aspect of religious practice by a most interesting article which appeared in *The Evening News*, and which recounted the bizarre story of the allegedly Christian sect, usually described as "The Abode of Love." The leader of this sect was the Reverend John Hugh Smyth-Pigott, and he and his flock furnished the present century with one of its earliest scandals. I must confess that I had forgotten all about "The Abode" and its scandalous "goings-on," until our contemporary refreshed my memory. I thought that the "Abode of Love" had long since joined "the snows of yester-year," along with the "Edwardian era" which it so scandalised. It appears, however, that I was wrong. For the "Abode of Love," though much fallen from its high estate, is still among us. One link, at least, remains with the heroic—if that is the appropriate word?—days of the Reverend—or, rather, ex-Reverend—Mr. Smyth-Pigott.

Not only does "The Abode" still pursue a shadowy existence amid the chill discomforts of old age, and the cynical disregard of a less easily shocked generation, but Londoners can still see in their midst an imposing relic of the sect. For, deserted but, apparently, still intact, the Agapemonite Church "of the Ark of the Covenant" still stands, near the gates of Clapton Park, with its impressive motto carved over the porch: "Love in Judgment and Judgment unto Victory." Similarly, those who, "far from the madding crowd," wander amid the attractive byeways of Somerset, may stumble on the village of Spaxton, where the "Agapemone"—*anglicæ*, "The Abode of Love"—still stands, as in the now far away days when Pigott and his "Spiritual Bride" made it a "nine-days wonder" in the prim England bequeathed by Queen Victoria to her successor. "There," we are told, "live the remnants of the sect"—in "a triple-gabled mansion with a host of out-buildings behind a high surrounding wall." Behind this feudal façade, Anno Domini is quietly, but effectively, extinguishing the last human relics of "The Abode of Love."

Originally known as "The Lampeter Brethren," the sect appears to have begun about 1890, as a result of a schism in St. David's College, Lampeter, a theological seminary still, I think, in use by the Church of Wales. The first leader of the Lampeter sect was an English clergyman, the Reverend Henry James Prince, then curate of the rural Somerset parish of Charlinch. It was Prince who, with the aid of a legacy from his wife, built both the Clapton church "of the Ark of the Covenant," which was dedicated in May, 1896, and, also, the Spaxton "Abode of Love," near to the Reverend gentleman's former "cure of souls," in Charlinch. The new sect obviously had a new and profitable "line" in religious advertising. Converts, and money, poured in, and Prince, as the Lord's anointed, rode abroad in a coach and four. Though the "Love" manifested in the "Abode" was of the purest "spiritual" character, it

is noteworthy that, from the start, Prince's women disciples out-numbered the males in the "Abode."

At first, all went well, until, in 1899, Prince died—despite the inconvenient fact that the personal immortality of the Founder was one of the sect's articles of Faith! Nevertheless, "The Abode of Love" survived the shock. Prince was buried at the Agapemone" at Spaxton, and another ex-cleric was elected to succeed the deceased as head of the community. The new "Vicar of Christ" was the Reverend John Hugh Smyth-Pigott, under the original leadership of whom the sect moved forward into the new century—and into a fame or, at least, notoriety, which, so far, it had never attracted to itself.

Up to this time the British public had not taken any particular notice of "The Abode of Love," regarding it, no doubt, as just another of those queer sects which seem to be a recurring phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon Christianity. But, on September 7, 1902, the "Abode" became news—with a capital N! For on that day, Smyth-Pigott proclaimed that he was God! His congregation received the news with enthusiasm, and prostrated themselves before the new Divinity. The British public received the news with rather less enthusiasm. But for police protection, the new Messiah would probably have shared the fate of his Mormon predecessor, Joseph Smith. A crowd of more orthodox Christians attempted to lynch him. As a contemporary report stated:—

"This self-styled Messiah would probably have been thrown into the pond at Clapton Common but for the protection of the police!"

Scandal Number One—Blasphemy! To be followed soon by Scandal Number Two—sexual misconduct—that most terrible of all "crimes" in the eyes of an England reared under Queen Victoria and Mrs. Grundy! For God, alias Smyth-Pigott, now retired to the country, where the flow of recruits, chiefly feminine, continued to come in. In July, 1904, "a very attractive girl" called Ruth Annie Preece, of independent means, arrived at "The Abode of Love," where Smyth-Pigott was now living with his legal wife, whom he had married in 1886. On July 25, 1905, Somerset House records the birth of a male child to "Ruth Annie Preece, of independent means, and Hugh Smyth-Pigott, clerk in Holy Orders." The name given to the boy was "Glory." On August 20th, 1908, "Sister Ruth" gave birth to another boy, and the birth of "Power" was duly noted by the Somerset Registrar.

This was a little too much for even the easy-going Church of England to stand. His Lordship, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, took appropriate action, and Smyth-Pigott was "unfrocked" by the Consistory Court in Wells Cathedral in March, 1909: Virgin Births were all right in the first century, but had gone out of fashion in the twentieth! At the same time, one wonders what the Bishop would have thought, had the culprits been named, say, Joseph (appearing for the Holy Ghost) and Mary?

However that may be, this was not the end of this shocking affair, for "Sister Ruth," now styled "Spiritual Bride in Chief," and Mrs. Katherine Smyth-Pigott continued to live in separate apartments, and on May 5, 1910, "Sister Ruth" registered as before, the birth of a daughter named "Life."

Nevertheless, the life of "The Abode" and of its Founder were themselves numbered. The stream of converts, and money, dried up. "The old inhabitants" died off: Smyth-

(Continued on next page)

## This Believing World

We note that the B.B.C. claims that the figures for the number of people who listened in to Mrs. Knight's lectures on religion and morals "were disappointingly small." This may be, but they caused protests from all parts of the country including leading articles in our national journals, and many angry protests from our very tolerant bishops. However, on April 13 in the Home Service, the B.B.C. has staged two more speakers to discuss the subject. These are the Rev. D. Goodchild, rector of Horsham, and Professor Jeffries of Birmingham University who is speaking as an "educationalist." Mr. Goodchild is speaking for "the man in the street"—which almost savours of cheek. Quite a high proportion of the men in the street are *unbelievers*.

All our condolences and sympathy are showered on the Birkenhead vicar—as reported in the *Liverpool Daily Post*—who says that he has heard of "school teachers who, having given instruction from the Bible," closed it with the words, "There it is, I don't believe it anyway." But what can a poor teacher do? The Bible teaches that the Universe was created in the year 4004 B.C., and this is laughed out of court by Science—which has also to be taught by the teacher. The Bible teaches belief in Hell and the Devil—in Elijah flying to Heaven in a chariot, and in Jesus performing the same aerial expedition but without even a chariot. What can a bewildered teacher make of the complete contradiction between such fairy stories in God's Precious Word, and the now almost universally accepted discoveries of Science? The Birkenhead vicar should call in Billy Graham!

Not only was the Rev. B. Graham enthusiastically cheered when he arrived in London, but 1,000 people stayed all night in two London churches praying for his success in Glasgow. And there is no doubt that he will be successful. More and more Christians are being converted to Christianity, and Scottish Christians will profess their faith in Christ in their thousands when they hear the simple and beautiful truths of Christianity put before them with all the pious eloquence of the American evangelist. But will rank and blatant unbelievers be converted? Not on your life.

Very curious—but we saw no protests either in the national press or by B.B.C. speakers at the Third Programme's fine lecture by Mr. A. Clark Smith on "Hume's Challenge to Religion." The lecturer made no bones about Hume (who is generally considered one of our greatest philosophers) denying the existence of God with arguments which have "never been finally answered." Put into simpler words and delivered in the Home or Light programmes, Mr. Clark Smith would have been assailed, no doubt whatever, with the bitterest vituperation, and the B.B.C. attacked for its "partiality" to unbelievers. What a pity that the greatest evangelist of all time, the Rev. B. Graham, does not answer Hume!

According to the "British Weekly," our Free Churches are still losing members at the rate of 8,000 a year. Once a stronghold of Methodism, Yorkshire is so no longer. And, according to a recent article in the *Observer*, more than a quarter of the men and about a sixth of the women in England have "no religious affiliation at all." Of course there are still millions of Protestants and Catholics, and many thousands of people who belong to all sorts of fancy religions like Christian Science, Theosophy and Spiritualism. Two-fifths of our population, however, regularly

pray, naturally, the women much more than the men. Three-fifths of our population no longer believe in Hell—though among these are many who still believe in the Devil.

Shortly to be published is *Exploring English Character*, by Geoffrey Gorer, in which will be found a detailed account of Religion in England based on an analysis of 5,000 questionnaires; and it should prove very illuminating for all those who optimistically believe that a revival campaign will ever succeed in bringing back "true Christianity" as envisaged by Billy Graham, Cardinal Griffin, or the Archbishop of Canterbury. The people who still believe in God and Jesus very often believe just as much in magic, astrology and fortune-telling. Mr. Gorer is obliged to admit that a quarter of the population believe in a "mechanical" Universe—and that must surely lead to utter unbelief and eventually to Atheism. In other words, to Secularism and Freethought.

## Guided Missile

I do not love this "Scientific Age"  
Where screening rules, defence is all the rage:  
Not in "security" can free men thrive;  
They need no help from snooping Emmy Fife.  
We are aggressors for the Truth we want,  
Not passive slaves, still listening to cant,  
Until that day The Brass will press the button  
And we shall be, instanter, dead as mutton.

B. S.

## VISIT OF N.S.S. PRESIDENT TO LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

Recently the Leicester Secular Society celebrated the 74th anniversary of the opening of the Leicester Secular Hall. The guest of honour was Mr. F. A. Ridley, who is (we are proud to say) a life member of the L.S.S., as well as being President of the N.S.S.

After the business meeting in the afternoon, about 30 members sat down to an excellent tea, which was provided by the Secular Hall manageress, Mrs. Stevenson; after which, in place of the usual Sunday night lecture, members and friends were entertained by Godfrey Abbot and company, who gave first-rate renderings of solos, duets and trios from the "Mikado," "Gondoliers," and various other Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Mr. F. A. Ridley rounded off a very pleasant day with an interesting talk on the recent Freethought conferences held in Brussels and Luxemburg, also touching on the forthcoming Conference in Amsterdam. His talk, as usual, bristled with witty remarks, and his audience much enjoyed them. Mr. Ridley said that while visiting the Antwerp Zoo with Mr. G. Kirk, the L.S.S. President, he was most surprised to see a group of Roman Catholic priests gathered round the monkeys' cage, discussing Evolution. We hope Mr. Ridley will visit us again soon.

C. H. H.

## Erotic Christianity

(Concluded from page 99)

Pigott himself in 1927, his legal wife in 1936, his successor, Douglas Hamilton, in 1942. Only some fifteen survivors of the strange sect now inhabit the big house at Spaxton. "Sister Ruth," now a very old woman, is the present Head of a dying sect of some fifteen aged people. Soon, "The Abode of Love" will represent merely an intriguing memory for the curious student of the bye-ways of religious eroticism.

Such eroticism seems to be an authentic "variety of religious experience." Muhammed had thirteen wives—four by Canon Law, nine by special revelation! Brigham Young's harem ran into dozens! Smith-Pigott did not rival these illustrious predecessors in the number either of his converts or his wives! But he deserves his place in the tangled records of religious eroticism. He was quite a Biblical character.

# THE FREETHINKER

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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.

- T. M. MOSLEY.—It will interest you to know that, when visited by Mr. Taylor in November, McCabe remembered you by name, and without any prompting.
- H. WARHURST.—Thanks for copy of your pungent letter to the Bishop of Coventry.
- G. HILBINGER.—Thanks for copies of your two useful letters in local press, which drew parsonic reply.
- H. J. DERRETT.—Glad your lengthy letter in local press on "Women, are they Human Beings?" drew blood from Christian anti-feminist. We hope your excellent rejoinder was printed.
- JEAN TOUDIC.—Pleased to read "An Old Boltonian's" article on Billy Graham: most amusing. We like his heading, "Once is Enough for Me."
- F. C. ASHDOWN.—More "Billy." If B.G.'s salary is £5,000 a year, he hath somewhere to lay his head.
- MAJOR RIPLEY WEBB.—Thanks for your pamphlet "What is Man?" Ask your God, and read *Hamlet*, "What a piece of work is a man!"
- A. B. MITCHELL.—Thanks for sending copy of "Pagan Grandma's" letter in the *Lancs. Evening Post*. It is excellent, and we hope it will make the rumpus among the Pious that you anticipate.
- R. S. ASTBURY and ANON. (Chester).—Thanks for cuttings.
- W. J. PYE.—Yes, God does move in a "mysterious way," he produced "Billy."
- G. MANTON-RENSON.—We note that you are an off-and-on reader. May we suggest that you become a regular reader, then you may perhaps find something more to your taste. And what are we to think of a critic who thinks that interest in Mrs. Knight's broadcasts is "as dead as mutton"?
- L. I. CUNLIFFE.—Minor Bishops who dabble in journalism are not conspicuously brilliant, but the one you mention may have it to his credit that he helped you to make a convert to Freethought.
- P. TURNER.—We are entirely of your way of thinking. It is all a question of size of our journal. We want both kinds of article; we try to balance now; a larger *Freethinker* will contain both kinds of appeal in each issue.

## 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, April 3, 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, April 3, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Marx and Spencer."
- Dagenham (214, Fitzstephen Road).—Saturday, April 2, 7-30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "The Necessity of Secularism."
- Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, April 1, 7-15 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, April 3, 6-30 p.m.: F. A. CORINA, "From Savagery to Space Ships."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 3, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "Erasmus Darwin, Scientist and Poet."
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, April 3, 7-15 p.m.: Miss D. PURCELL, "Impressions of Poland, 1952."

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £809 18s. 10d.; Bradford Branch N.S.S., £6; J. Gordon, £2; North London Branch, £1 1s.; I. J. Newman (South Africa), £1 1s.; J. Barlow, 10s.; W. H. D., 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s. Total to date: £820 14s. 4d.

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

"I hope this Fund will soon top the £1,000 mark; it certainly deserves to." (S. Rhodesia.)

"A brother and myself find your paper very interesting. I can now do battle with a decent armoury." (Loughton.)

"I always appreciate the arrival of *The Freethinker*. It is quite a tonic after what one reads in the Press and hears over the radio." (Australia.)

"Should I ever find myself ploughing through a bog of pound notes the C.C. Fund shall have as much as I can scoop up." (Durham.)

"In memory of a great man and witty writer." (Wallsend.)

"For clearing away mental fog commend me to C.C." (Hawick.)

## Notes and News

As the time for our Annual Conference approaches many of our members will be making plans for visiting London, where the Reception, Conference and Public Demonstration will be held, with a probable outing, weather permitting, on Whit Monday. We should like to hear from London members who could give accommodation to visitors.

After the public meeting on "Mrs. Knight and the B.B.C." held at the Conway Hall on March 16 by the N.S.S., the following resolution was passed by the audience and submitted to the B.B.C.:—

"This meeting applauds the action of the B.B.C. in promoting the broadcasts of Mrs. Knight on 'Morals Without Religion,' but protests against the continued lack of facilities for minority movements: the N.S.S. has never been allowed to put the Freethought position before B.B.C. listeners, and we claim the right to answer the everyday attack on our opinions by Christian advocates."

Mrs. A. B. Mitchell, whose letters in the local Press are sometimes signed "Pagan Grandma," writes:—

"Every time I see a letter in the press from a religious person I promptly send him by post a pamphlet by Ingersoll and a copy of the *Age of Reason*. All Freethinkers should do likewise, and you should put the suggestion in your wonderful paper."

An excellent suggestion. Our Sales Manager hopes that many will act on it.

Could any readers assist us to acquire, for office use, volumes of *The Freethinker* for 1883, 1898 and 1902?

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

I sincerely believe that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies; and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale.

# The Illusion of Life Hereafter

By G. I. BENNETT

WITH the general run of humanity the hope of life hereafter dies hard. The creeds of the churches may perish one by one; but as long as human beings cherish belief in God they will cherish belief in an after-life. And in so far as they think about death they will persist in holding blindly and unreasoningly to the idea that it spells not the end, but a continuance of personal consciousness—yet so purged of profane cares and sorrows as to constitute, in effect, a new and glorious beginning.

What is it that makes men cling so tenaciously, so stubbornly, to belief in self-survival? Partly it is a natural, atavistic revulsion from the thought of extinction. Of all beings, man is the only one endowed with understanding and self-awareness, and the only one that knows he must die. But death has an implication of finality that he dreads, and so he fools himself with a chimerical immortality that his heart craves but his reason will not sanction.

Yet it is not simply that man is repelled by the idea of extinction. He yearns for another life in the hope of gaining in that his fill of happiness, which may ever elude him on earth. And there is something more. The irremediable separation by death of those whom one loves is usually more than the grief-stricken creature can bear. A re-union there must be! This feeling is well-expressed by Southey:—

"What a world were this,  
How unendurable its weight,  
If they whom death has Sundered  
Did not meet again!"

Against all rational promptings man cleaves to his illusion of life made splendidly anew in a world-to-be. I say "against all rational promptings," because a little reflection should suffice to show that the mind—poetically call it the soul or the spirit if you will—must cease when its organ, the brain, stops functioning at death.

But when longings for Heaven enter one's being, that which is most implausibly fanciful has a way of appearing true and of sustaining one in a world whose impersonal reality only the spiritually brave dare face.

R. G. Ingersoll in the sorrow of bereavement could say that "life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights." Henley, incurably invalid as he was, could exclaim:—

"Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid."

H. G. Wells, in the feebleness of old age, could equanimously regard death as a "soft, dark, restful curtain (falling) for ever upon the personal life." And even poor Amiel, the obscure Genevese thinker, could view the imminent prospect of his own end with quiet resignation; without at last, I think, any consoling faith in a future life. So much seems evident from a perusal of the published pages of his *Journal Intime*. But in any case, we have Mrs. Humphry Ward's opinion that "like Keats he passed away, feeling that all was over and the great game of life lost for ever."

These men, however, were of a different and still all-too-rare calibre. The majority must have their comforting myths to cheer and solace them along their way. He who must struggle for bread in this world longs for another in which he shall struggle no more. He who has known suffering and ill-fortune on earth anticipates a redress in Heaven. He who has found all happiness and sweetness here below looks for a continuance of his joys elsewhere.

And both rich and poor, both high and lowly, crave to behold and embrace again those whom death has wrenched from them. They do not see, as Richard Jefferies saw so clearly, that "a loved one gone is gone, and as to the future—even if there is a future—it is unknown. To assure ourselves otherwise is to soothe the mind with illusions."

The view widely held is that, without hope of Heaven, our sublunary existence is meaningless and purposeless. But the fact is overlooked that an indefinite or eternal survival of personality in even the realms of paradise (if such there were!) would not invest life with greater value and significance than it has now. There is no purposiveness in mere being. Only an awareness of participating in an enterprise or endeavour *larger* than oneself, and contributing (in howsoever small a measure) to a perceivable end, can endue living with mission and meaning. "I am afraid the next world does not interest me," wrote that great Indian statesman, Pandit Nehru. "My mind is full of what I should do in this world, and if I see my way clearly here I am content."

When the ordinary human motives and springs to activity are gone, what remains? A timeless sojourn, bereft of object and aim, in the Elysium Fields, where a flat, dull happiness were the lot of all, would be insupportably tedious and lacking in savour. Perhaps none has seen this better than Havelock Ellis. In his diary he wrote: "To live a full and rich life in this wonderful world . . . and to fade away when—or better, before—one has exhausted all one's powers of living, should surely be a fate splendid enough for the greatest. What has always come home to me is that with the dissolution of the body the reasons for desiring the non-dissolution of the soul fall away."

This notion of a Life Beyond not only adds nothing of worth to human existence here and now. It actually detracts from it—as Bradlaugh, that doughty champion of the oppressed, persecuted, and poor, knew full well. For to treat this world as but a prelude to another and infinitely greater is to discourage efforts to improve it. Not always perhaps, but mostly certainly, does the missionary zeal of the true humanitarian emanate from the belief that we all live only once; that death, in truth, is finality; and that in the space of three score years and ten—a few more or few less, as may be—man must do his work before perforce returning to the eternal oblivion of all-effacing time.

## Glasgow Lecture Report

On Sunday, March 6, Glasgow Secular Society was honoured by a visit from Mr. Colin McCall, when he spoke under their auspices in the Central Hall, Bath Street, on "Freethought in the Modern World." Mr. R. M. Hamilton occupied the chair.

Mr. McCall stated that in these times of international tension, with the threat of the atom and hydrogen bombs looming over the destiny of mankind, the religious world added to the confusion of thought by playing on the natural fears of the common people. It had been said that science had failed and had brought humanity to the edge of the abyss. Science, Mr. McCall maintained, had not failed.

All ages had been fraught with danger, and our present dangers and difficulties were a greater challenge to mankind.

The questions and discussions which followed showed the audience had been impressed by Mr. McCall's thoughtful and stimulating lecture.

JIM BARROWMAN,  
Hon. Secretary, G.S.S.

**CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND?** By G. H. Taylor.  
Price 4s.; postage 3d.

# Three in One

By BAYARD SIMMONS

IT HAS been suggested that readers of *The Freethinker* would be interested to learn which three books most influenced a writer of an article in his, or her, young days, in such manner as to lead him to become a reader of, or writer in, our journal. Or put another way: What three books made one a Freethinker, Secularist, Rationalist, or Atheist? Or, briefer still: Why did you join battle with the god-idea? The answer looks easy, but believe you me, chums, it ain't. Perhaps, however, I should say it is not so for me. For I was born without a religion. I remember well that Sunday morning breakfast when my father informed me that there was no God, my mother saying nothing in dissent. This was when I was at the tender age of between, say, five or seven years. Since then, although I went to day and Sunday-schools, where I was taught religion, it "didn't take," my anti-god vaccination holding firm against contagion. I read my Bible, and at school won all the prizes or certificates for "Divinity," but never moulted a feather of my unbelief, nor offered up one piping-treble prayer to "Gentle Jesus." As the poet wrote, "It is the unbeliever knows his Koran best."

"I read my Bible," you notice. That gives me Book No. 1 for my short list. I am not sure that reading this book, at such an age, was not the greatest influence against the Almighty. I was horrified that grown men and women could be on speaking-terms with such a blood-thirsty monster—and cad. Later, when I left school and read Shelley, I felt that that adored poet had said all that need be said of Jehovah—"An Almighty Fiend." I did not know of Foote and his celebrated "Bible handbook," which is such a help to people of the present generation who never open the Good Old Book—that would disturb the aspidistra that sits on it.

Here I must make a short break to explain that in my youth and young manhood I never read *The Freethinker* and only met one member of the N.S.S. This was George Standring, a fellow Fabian, the printer of Clerkenwell Green, whom I heard was a "Bradlaughite." It was not till I was 45 years of age—1927—that I sent my first contribution to our journal—characteristically, a poem—and I joined the N.S.S. about three years later.

The reader may wonder what I did in the quarter-of-a-century before I joined the N.S.S. I think the answer is obvious when one realises that when a person throws over the pie-in-the-sky idea it is for pie-here-and-now. The Christian asserts that this world is a Vale of Tears. "Endure it," say the pious, "your reward is in Heaven." "Mend it," said I, being a young hopeful. So, for 25 years I sought to mend and amend. I joined every progressive league, society, and body in London. I was a vegetarian for three years, a Fabian Socialist, Social-Creditor, and went to quod for Votes for Women. But why go on? It is an old story: youth in a hurry, "the surprise, first vague shadow of surmise," disillusion, the contemplation of the half-gods, until at length light dawns and one can say with Emerson, "Heartily know, when half-gods go, the gods arrive." In other words, the half-gods were the careerists, climbers, leading such movements. "The gods" can be equated with the disinterested searchers for truth in science. Truth is more likely to be found in individuals, not in parties and organised movements, the latter being so prone to trade principles for power.

And so I came to a body that sought science and truth, which, indeed, are one. I came to the N.S.S., called a Society, but, in reality, a consortium of truth-seekers and

truth-preachers, an association of birds of a feather flocking together. I had come home.

I do not wish to suggest that I did not learn much from my early days in company with Fabians, Suffragettes, Esperantists, and so forth. I did learn, and am grateful for all I was taught. Especially to those two great writers and Fabian Socialists, H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw (in that order). I suppose I have read over 90 per cent. of their books. But now I must choose one book from each. The reader must remember that this is a case of a book that influenced a young man. Naturally, in my case, they will be such books as were published in my early 'twenties. Therefore Book No. 2 shall be *A Modern Utopia* (Wells) and Book No. 3 *Man and Superman* (Shaw), both books being published in the first decade of this century. As the latter book, though bound in one cover, is practically five books—a play, a G.B.S. preface (and we know what that is!), a dream, the *Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion*, and *Maxims for Revolutionists*, perhaps I am not playing fair. If this bundle is no more a book than my volume of *Shakespeare's Plays*, rip the Shaw volume out and replace by Sigmund Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*, though I did not read that till years afterwards. It deals with, in a strictly scientific way, the future of all religions, called by the *maestro* of Psychoanalysis the "Universal Neurosis."

All these three writers were to me bringers of light—Lucifers. They died firm in their anti-Christian faith, leaving in me a memory that still brightly glows. We shall not look upon their like again, I fancy, for a long, long time. But our movement marches ever forward, leading the world out of the Dark Ages of Religion to the sunny uplands of Truth, when, to pinch a good phrase from the enemy, men shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

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## Wisdom Well

Every advance in science, every improvement in the command of the mechanical forces of nature, every step in political or social freedom, has risen in the first instance from an act of scepticism.—J. A. FROUDE.

He who loves not books before he comes to thirty years of age, will hardly love them enough afterwards to understand them.—CLARENDON.

The Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse assert the existence of the Devil, of his demons, and of Hell, as plainly as they do that of God and his angels and heaven. It is plain that the Messianic and the Satanic conceptions of the writers of these books are the obverse and the reverse of the same intellectual coinage.—T. H. HUXLEY.

Every innovator who presents himself with new fangled notions, a creative intelligence, and ideas contrary to custom, becomes either a creator or a martyr; but lucky or not, he acts and the world changes.—ELISEE RECLUS.

When our first parents were driven out of Paradise Adam is believed to have remarked to Eve, "My dear, we live in an age of transition."—DEAN INGE.

Man alone knows that he must die, but this very knowledge raises him.—SANTAYANA.

It is not very easy to get rid of any book once it is published.—AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

Literature—the most seductive, the most deceiving, the most dangerous of professions.—BURKE.

## Tribute to Joseph McCabe

By WILLIAM MCCARTHY

MCCABE is dead. Joseph McCabe will no longer throw the spear of truth into the Catholic balloons of ignorance and superstition, or explode the Protestant's bubbles of fear and deception. The Catholics' years of prayer for his ending have been answered and the Protestants are rejoicing.

Joseph McCabe was the greatest atheist that ever lived. For 60 years he spread the doctrine of truth. For 60 years he was our greatest promoter of truth and reason as opposed to faith and the chicanery of clergy.

To this great scholar and thinker, God—all gods—existed only in the imagination of man. To him no god ever created anything, but the hundreds of gods were all created by men, and the god idea was used by ignorant men and cunning charlatans to filch from the ignorant their hard-earned coin of the realm.

He wrote nearly 200 books against the Church, particularly the Catholic hierarchy and translated more than 30 writings, mostly relating to religion. He delivered more than 2,000 lectures, including seven lecture tours in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada. He debated with all the priests and clergy that dared to suffer defeat at the point of his intellectual sword. He died, as for 60 years he lived, an intellectual militant and confirmed atheist.

—(Progressive World.)

After leaving the Church McCabe jumped the intellectual chasm from Rome to Rationalism—perhaps the widest in human thought. The output of this scholarly mind was immense. I first heard him lecture at Nottingham in 1912, and he spoke at the "Cosmo" a number of times.

He was always courteous and scrupulously fair in controversy, and I quote the following from his *Haeckel's Critics Answered*: "Truth is a frail spirit that must be sought with calm and patient investigation. Its pursuit should be conducted with dignity, and especially with a scrupulous honesty."

T. M. MOSLEY

## Correspondence

### DISCRIMINATE BIRTH-CONTROL

The article "Reductio ad Absurdum" in this week's issue seems to be directed to the wrong audience, at any rate so far as birth-control is concerned. It is very desirable that the present rapid increase in the world's population should cease, but surely Asia is the place where this reduction is most needed, and not the West. It is in Asia that we find the hundreds of millions of people scraping a bare existence, and also breeding prolifically (the natural checks of famine and disease having been reduced by the efforts of Europeans and Americans), while it is in the "North West" that we find a lower birthrate, a higher standard of living, and (I think) the origin of almost all the techniques (and freedoms) on which modern civilisation is based. It would indeed be tragic if these reduced their numbers while the Eastern millions continued to increase.—Yours, etc.,

G. W. CLARK.

### AN ATHEIST'S APOLOGY

Even Freethinkers are sometimes down on Atheism as negative, bleak, hopeless. They like something "nicer." Well, the old saying, "Where ignorance is bliss . . ." has its points, as getting drunk has, but the thinker is out for truth, sweet or sour. Atheism is true by process of reason, the only true guide amid all the distractions of the ego. Gods are now seen to be home-made, each for its own market, though no one *knows* that they don't exist. By definition they must forever remain unknown. How odd that disbelief in their existence should be regarded with abhorrence! What sort of philosophy is religion, which calls belief in the incredible a virtue?

"Holiness" is a pose greatly respected. Atheism, always honest, is detested. A strange world, truly! Truth never was the pursuit of man, only the few. The mob rules, and the folks go to church for appearances' sake rather than from principle. It takes guts and principle indeed to be an Atheist—there's no premium on hypocrisy in that line.

"Still, why preach Atheism and upset the bemused and duped majority and thus bring on corruption and anarchy?" A parrot-cry. The mob is *not* duped. To-day no one really and truly believes these old tales—they just think so. Would the jails be full of them if they did? Not with hell all heated up and ready. We are all atheists to-day, whether we realise it or not, under the impact of the realism of the age. We live Atheism, and we profess godism. Bemused, yes, but not duped. This is an age of transition, with superstition "on the skids." The atheist, one jump ahead, is all.

Hell has been found out, so there can be no harm in saying so. No one will "go haywire." And away with hell goes God and heaven, inevitably. Only the wishful-thinker will disagree. The up-to-date clergy know the truth of this.

I think it good to clear the air and do away with cant, so I say my little say. Hypocrisy is a bad social disease.—Yours, etc.,  
Toronto, Canada.

J. F. K.

### A "TOM PAINE" IS A RUSH-MAT

In "Country Questions" on the B.B.C. the following question was asked by a North of England listener: "Why do people in the North of England refer to rush-mats as Tom Paines?" The panel could give no answer.

Here is the answer. Such a hatred was developed throughout the whole of Britain against the great reformer Thomas Paine that the working classes studded the soles of their boots with hob-nails. These bore the name "Tom Paine," so that they could stamp his name underfoot, also wipe their feet on his name. These untutored wretches, who could not read, write, or think, were so influenced by the Christian Churches that they would have burned him alive, had they caught him.

The name Tom Paine for a rush-mat still lives amongst ignorant clod-hoppers in country towns and villages. So now, Mr. Wightman, and the others, you know, if you are readers of *The Freethinker*, why a rush-mat is called Tom Paine.

PAUL. VARNEY.

### BIBLE FAKING

Having just purchased the latest edition of Admiral Beadnell's "Picturebook of Evolution," where time is counted in millions of years, I remember that, as Tom Paine first pointed out, the New Testament (Matt. I, 6 and Luke III, 23) gives us two different—and therefore mutually contradictory—pedigrees showing how "Jesus son of David" descends from Adam, *via* David and Joseph, as prophesied in the old Testament. From these the date of creation has been calculated by Holy Church (inspired by God) as B.C. 4004. This is the date given in my Bible, and so must be true!

Later on, when the "conceived by the Holy Ghost" idea (copied from Buddha, Mithra and the other, previous, Saviour gods) was adopted and interpolated in a convenient blank space, the industrious but not very bright compilers unfortunately forgot to delete these pedigrees, self-evident fakes that simply cannot be explained away or "re-translated." Meanwhile, the fourth Commandment, long ago debunked, still casts its blight over our weekly holiday.—Yours, etc.,

M. C. BROTHERTON,  
Commander R.N. (Ret.).

### THE B.B.C. AND THOMAS PAINE

Bayard Simmons writes that there is little likelihood of the B.B.C. ever mentioning Thomas Paine.

About two years ago in Broadcasts for Schools there was a 20-minute talk on his life, in the Senior History series. Up to a point, it was quite good. There was the story of his writing "The Rights of Man" and the storm that followed its publication. His escape to France was dramatised. We were told of his becoming a deputy of the French Convention and of his narrow escape from the guillotine, etc.

But there was no mention of "The Age of Reason" or his beliefs regarding religion!—Yours, etc.,

W. H. D.

[The "political" Thomas, but not the "infidel" Tom.—Ed.]

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