

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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## Question for Parliamentary Candidates:—

**WOULD you support a bill to clarify the law of abortion, so that fear of prosecution need not deter doctors from performing abortions in cases where continuation of pregnancy would, in their opinion, seriously injure the mother's health?**

A few months ago, the Newcastle papers reported that a passer-by had just managed to prevent a woman from throwing herself over the Tyne bridge. They glossed over the point that the woman had been driven to this desperate attempt by the fact that her husband was unemployed and she was in her ninth pregnancy. Abortion cases are rarely referred to in the National Press, and local press reports tend to be confined to these in which death resulted. These are merely the worst of the innumerable cases in which women hurt themselves in trying to stop unwanted pregnancies.

There are three categories of abortions: (i) Inevitable abortion, which occurs naturally, (ii) Therapeutic abortion, performed by doctors to save the mother's life (interpreted in a wide sense), (iii) So-called criminal abortion, often done by unqualified persons under unhygienic conditions, either for money or out of a desire to assist those in distress. Women frequently attempt to procure their own abortion.

### Criminal Abortion

It is this third category which constitutes the problem of abortion; a problem because it is the cause of an intolerable amount of unnecessary suffering in Britain. On occasion, the most desperate measures are resorted to by women for this purpose. They take loathsome draughts and injure themselves with knitting needles or other instruments, causing agonies which no man would voluntarily inflict on himself, quite apart from the appalling dangers of infection and internal perforation. The greater part of this suffering could be eliminated under clear and humane abortion laws, since most women who now secretly and belatedly turn for help to others who risk blackmail, could openly seek qualified help in good time. Early abortion under proper conditions is not now regarded as a serious operation.

### The Present Abortion Law

Mrs. Mary Stocks recently referred to the present law relating to abortion in Britain as "indeterminate, clumsy and sometimes cruel in its operation." It dates back to 1861, when surgery was immeasurably more dangerous than it is now. This law made the unlawful administration of poison or unlawful use of instruments for abortion punishable by penal servitude for life. The circumstances in which these things might be lawful were left undefined.

The position was improved by the Bourne case in 1938, when it was ruled that abortion was legal when performed in good faith to preserve the life and health of the mother.

Nevertheless, many doctors are still reluctant to agree to abortion even in the most deserving cases, for fear of prosecution, hence the Abortion Law Reform Association seeks a clarification of the law, so that women need not be driven to dangerous and painful efforts in unhygienic conditions. The correspondence files of the Association are full of harrowing case histories, many resulting from

the continued belief that abortion is in all circumstances illegal.

It is not easy to estimate the annual number of backstreet abortions performed in Britain, as only those resulting in serious injury or sepsis normally come to light. These latter are so numerous, however, that it

is considered probable that one criminal abortion is procured for every six or eight babies actually born.

The evil is, in fact, on such a scale that some 500 women die every year, usually in terrible pain, as a result of bungled attempts, while several thousand survive as physical or mental wrecks, scarred for the rest of their lives.

Only a fraction of those who resort to abortion are unmarried, far commoner is the case of the married woman who already has several children and is too poor to support any more. Another common reason is that the home is overcrowded, or that the husband is a bad father and the mother feels incapable of bringing up yet another baby on top of her existing responsibilities. The poor fare worst under the present law, for the wealthy have relatively little difficulty in securing the services of a competent abortionist exploiting the common doubt concerning the legality of abortion to his financial advantage.

In 1952-53, Mr. Joseph Reeves, M.P., introduced a Bill in the House of Commons to get a Bourne Judgment embodied in the law and so remove one of the main fears of doctors, which is that the Bourne Judgment might be reversed by another.

The Bill was talked out, and a revised bill was introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Amulree in January, 1954, but did not reach a second reading.

Mr. Reeves' proposals were violently attacked and misrepresented by the Roman Catholic Church, which would rather see unwanted children born in miserable circumstances, with a total ban on abortion, than allow the sufferings of the mothers to be alleviated and their mistakes corrected.

### Legal Abortion

In various other countries, abortion is considered legal for cases of rape, incest, emotional repugnance, imbecility, or probability of giving birth to a handicapped child. There is no evidence of social evils resulting from this freedom. Medical considerations for which therapeutic abortion may be reasonable, include unhealed tuberculosis, psychoses, malignant hypertension, repeated pre-eclamptic toxæmia, and signs of incompatible blood in the child.

Needless to say, abortion is not a thing to be lightly encouraged, and it should always be regarded as a last

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

# The Abortion Problem in 1955

By BASIL BRADLAUGH BONNER

resort, prevention by contraception being in every way preferable to "cure" by abortion. The Abortion Law Reform Association (Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Alice Jenkins, 53, Gloucester Terrace, London, W.2) is at present seeking to ensure that all doctors appreciate the implications of the Bourne Judgment, and to prepare public opinion for revision of the law so as to make the Bourne Judgment irreversible and allow abortion on eugenic as well as medical grounds.

## REVIEW

# Beloved Rebel

*James Maxton—The Beloved Rebel* (George Allen and Unwin, 12s. 6d., by John McNair—with a foreword by Lord Boyd Orr) THE age in which we live is, in general, unfavourable to the development of outstanding individuals, or indeed, to colourful individuality of any kind. For this is the age of the masses; ideas and personalities tend to become streamlined and mass-produced. The word "robot" is, perhaps, the most characteristic word coined in, and by, our generation. In politics, as in other departments of human activity, the outstanding and colourful *individual* is, it would appear, dying out. Sir Winston Churchill, who, whatever one may think of his politics, is certainly a great *individual* is, perhaps, the last of the great independent Members of Parliament who have furnished not the least of the glories of the British political system.

The subject of Mr. John McNair's biography, the late James Maxton, M.P., stood at the very opposite pole of the political firmament to Sir Winston, but, like his Tory opposite number, the Socialist "fire-eater" from the Clyde, was, first and foremost, an *individual*, a colourful *personality*. Some pundit once remarked that "when Nature fashions a genius, she breaks the mould." Whether Maxton was a genius depends, as Joad used to put it, on what one means by the so often misused term. Whatever one's view, it is, at any rate, unlikely that there will ever be another James Maxton! In a Labour movement in which personality is increasingly at a discount, and in which sober statistics have succeeded "the great rosy dawn,"—as Hilaire Belloc once described the Utopias of the early Socialist pioneers—Maxton stood out from the ruck of politicians with the brilliance of a solitary star. It was, perhaps, to the originality of his personality rather than to his brilliant oratory or his intellectual gifts, that he owed his unique reputation amongst the public figures of his time.

The author of this biography, undertaken at the express wish of the *Maxton Memorial Committee*, Mr. John McNair, has every qualification for the position of biographer, for Mr. McNair, until last autumn General Secretary of the I.L.P., was a close personal and political associate of Maxton during most of his political life. It is both as a personal admirer and as an I.L.P. Socialist, that Mr. McNair writes, and he makes no secret of the fact that, where his hero is concerned, he admires him, "this side idolatry," one feels almost include to add, and on the "further side idolatry," as well!

James Maxton was, indeed, so fascinating a public figure, and so delightful a personality, that it is, indeed, difficult to restrain one's admiration for this singularly noble figure. The present writer was only privileged to know James Maxton during his last years, when, as a member of the I.L.P. and for several years of its National Administrative Council, I got to know Maxton fairly well. Whilst personally, I am in substantial agreement with my old colleague, McNair, in his personal and political judgments, in particular, as they affect Maxton individually, I think that,

if only to avoid hero-worship, he might have added—if only as "The Devil's Advocate"—that his hero had, not only all the virtues he ascribes to him—we all agree on *that!*—but, also, certain *political* defects which indicate that *no* one is both omniscient and impeccable! "Jimmy," as everyone called him in the I.L.P., was naturally lazy by temperament—he was the first to admit it!—and I do not think that, if called upon to take office, he would have made a good administrator. He had been "agin the Government" too long to have the *positive* outlook of a successful administrator. James Maxton was an agitator, an orator, and what an orator! No one who ever saw that lean, long-haired figure, with the outstretched finger and the deep rasping voice, is ever likely to forget the experience. Maxton's oratory was as unique as his personality. Oratory may be, as once described, "the harlot of the arts," but in the hands of this great artist of the *spoken* word, the "harlot" became transfigured! Moreover, contrary to some popular impressions, there was sense and wit, as well as "sound and fury," in his speeches. He was not an easy man to follow on the platform or in the discussions of the N.A.C.; the present writer can testify to this from *personal* experience!

The *political* career of James Maxton covered the stormy and controversial era between the end of the first and that of the second, World Wars. It is here fully described, and at least, the highlights may be, I presume, known to the readers of this journal. As the militant spokesman and parliamentary leader of the extreme "Left" in British politics, the Member for Bridgeton—a Glasgow seat—which he held against all comers from his entry into Parliament in 1922, down to his death in 1946, often took unpopular decisions. He was never afraid to take them! Whether his more controversial decisions, such as his opposition to the Labour Party after 1932; his support for Munich (1938) as a last chance of avoiding war; or his opposition to the war against Hitler Germany, when it finally came, can be justified, is too intricate a question to discuss here. It is, at least, certain that, in all that he said and did, James Maxton was passionately sincere, and that no stain of self-seeking or opportunism ever marred his vision of what he held to be the next step in human evolution, the International Socialist Commonwealth, in which "the exploitation of man by man" would become a thing of the forever vanished past. Temperamentally, Maxton was an artist rather than a scientist, and he always appeared to me to be a follower of the "Utopian" Socialism of William Morris rather than of the more rigorous "scientific Socialism" of Karl Marx.

In his personal relations, Maxton was universally popular. He never presumed on his international fame or on the undoubted fact that he was one of the finest orators of his day. Politically, he was not only eloquent but shrewd. When, for example, I once said to him that Mr. Attlee was merely "a stop-gap," "Jimmy" replied briefly: "He has been 'stopping the gap' for a hell of a long time!" And that was that! Though a well-read man, Maxton was not, I think, a particularly original thinker or profound scholar. Like other, perhaps like most, great *speakers*, he was not a master of the *written* word; his published books are not more than moderately competent. Indeed, perhaps, his fame was based so largely on his unique individuality—he was *always* "Jimmy" Maxton—that his fame may not altogether survive the passing of those who knew him.

I must conclude by apologising to the readers of *The Freethinker*—for the former Editor of which, Mr. Chapman Cohen, Maxton always had a high regard—for allowing a book review to become so largely a *personal* sketch.

(Continued on page 157)

# Einstein's Monistic Universe

By G. H. TAYLOR

A MATERIALIST is a Monist. That is to say, he does not believe the universe to be made up of two or more independent principles of existence. He does not believe, for instance, that life and matter co-exist as separate entities, as in the philosophy of Vitalism. He does not believe, as did Smuts, that a Holistic Factor operates on matter for the purpose of drawing it into ever-greater wholes. He does not believe that something called Spirit interacts with matter from a special vantage point in the "ether." These and other dualistic, or pluralistic, theories, the Materialist explicitly rejects. He maintains the ultimate oneness of nature: this is inevitable from his standpoint of unbroken determinism. The causal correctness of everything that exists does not allow of any supernatural interpolation or intrusion whatever.

The Materialist, of course, is not the only kind of Monist. Spinoza's Pantheism also comes into this philosophical category, and there are other examples. Haeckel's critic, Frank Ballard, after writing *Haeckel's Monism False*, followed it up with *Theomonism True*. We cannot here stay to consider Ballard, and in any case he was most effectively disposed of by McCabe.

But the kind of monism which features the universe as Einstein conceived it is decidedly a materialistic monism. He left no room for the supernatural, no place for "spirit."

Now Haeckel's monism may be false, or rather incomplete, but not for any reason adduced by Ballard. It rested on the arbitrary blend of two principles; the constancy of matter, a chemical principle (Lavoisier, 1789); and the constancy of force (Mayer, 1842).

With matter and energy fused in Einstein's equation ( $MC^2 = E$ , in ergs), only one major conservation law is required. If, then, the conservation of "matter" is abandoned, it is only because of the previously restricted definition of matter and does not point to any supernatural interference. Radioactivity does not so much refute the conservation of matter, as the conservation of chemical elements.

We do not now speak of the conservation of this or that special mode of existence, but of the conservation of the whole. Every physical change in nature involves a transformation of energy, but the total quantity in whatever form, in the universe remains unaltered. The gradual welding together of theoretical physics into a single structure has been achieved largely by finding that certain important physical quantities are forms one of another; just as Jeans called matter "bottled light." In his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, Jeans says:—

"The three major conservation laws reduce to one simple fundamental entity which may take many forms, matter and radiation in particular, and which is conserved throughout all changes. The sum total of this entity forms the whole activity of the universe, which does not change its total quantity, but it continually changes its quality."

With separate conservation laws monism was incomplete in physics, however well vindicated in other branches of science. With the removal of the partitions in physics we reach a state of complete interrelatedness.

This foundational unity vindicates monism. The whole universe is seen to be a materialistic monon.

Apart from his influence on science in general, and on its sector physics in particular, Einstein's direct contribution to the unification of theoretical structure has been his treatment of the notions of space, time, gravitation and matter, which are effectively brought into the general framework.

Gravitation now appears not as a "force" (as with Newton), but as a property of space. The apple falls from the tree to the ground not because Newton's law of gravity so decrees, but because space is warped in the region of matter.

On a slightly concave floor, a marble placed near the edge would roll inwards, towards the centre. Similarly, bodies in space-time move (unless impeded by other bodies) in the straightest possible track, i.e., the geodesic. The latter makes the shortest possible time between two points. "Free" (i.e., unimpeded) particles move in geodesics, and the Law of Gravity is the law telling how geodesics are shaped in the neighbourhood of matter.

Gravitation is thus the distortion of space-time by the presence of matter, and so the Earth's elliptical path is due to the fact that space-time is so disturbed, or puckered, by the presence of the Sun that the path of least time is the elliptic. The more matter is present, the greater is this puckering. One effect of this is that the light from a star behind the sun comes curving round it in an eclipse. The solar eclipse of 1919 furnished proof of Einstein's theory and showed the "bending" of light rays.

This warping, the "5th dimension" (time being the 4th), causes pieces of matter free to move (i.e., not impeded by others) to draw together: the amount of this warping, and therefore the amount of the resulting gravitation, depends on the amount and nearness of matter. The further from matter the less the warping, gravitation thus representing a kind of crinkle in space-time which is less and less marked as it recedes from the matter involved (e.g., the earth). Matter, as it were, *broadcasts* its presence as gravitation.

These local irregularities, however, are only superimposed on the *main curvature* of space. This latter is such that a straight line would return to its starting point in about 500,000 million light years, or  $3 \times 10^{24}$  miles. Einstein first adopted Riemann's spherical geometry (as distinct from Euclidian). As a simple illustration, the angles of a common or garden triangle add up to  $180^\circ$ ; on a spherical surface a triangle would obviously not yield this result. We may note, in passing, that certain "philosophical" Spiritualists have tried to press conclusions from hypergeometrical space in an attempt to find some place for housing the departed souls!

The paradox of finity and infinity disappears in Einstein's system. The old riddle of where we should get to if we could travel indefinitely through space, is a riddle belonging to Pre-Relativity physics. It is now possible to conceive a space finite yet unbounded. Even on the limited dimensions of a child's ball we can picture an eternal fly walking on and on, and round and round, never stopping, even though there is only a finite amount of ball to walk on. And should he fly off into another dimension, the same would apply.

Einstein did not systematise a philosophy. He remained a scientist, and left that to others. But *science can make or break any philosophy*, and the only sort of philosophy countenanced by the work of the greatest physical scientist the world has known is (and the final choice of name is of secondary consideration) Monism, Energism or Materialism.

—NEXT WEEK—

SHELLEY

By C. McCALL

## This Believing World

Just as, according to Christian opinion, the whole world was shocked at the B.B.C. allowing Mrs. Knight to broadcast heretical opinions so, according to Cardinal Griffin, all Christians were scandalised at a radio play given at Easter in which, with shameless effrontery, "our Lord" was credited with a number of brothers and sisters. The fact that, according to the Precious Word of God, this is the case, is beside the point. It is true that Mark 6, 3, distinctly says so, but if heretical Protestants are allowed openly to read the Bible without clearly understanding it, what can we expect?

Only properly instructed Roman priests can explain the Holy Book, and all Catholics know that the brothers and sisters of "our Lord" were in reality his cousins—not, be it understood, on his Father's side, but on his Mother's; and this in spite of the fact that the Mother of Jesus was really the Mother of God Almighty as any Catholic child would tell you. If there is a little mix-up in the exact relationship of the four brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, as the Rev. B. L. Conway of the Paulist Fathers sadly admits, it can be dispelled by faith in the Church and absolute obedience to its priests.

Apart from this, the English Church, which has always looked askance at "Spiritual" healing, appears now to insist that its own special brand called "Divine" healing should be the only one allowed to operate. Rivals are piously warned off. It is simply absurd to imagine that a Spirit Doctor can turn out cures by the hundred thousand, while the laying-on of hands, inspired by the one and only Jesus Christ, never accomplishes more than a few sporadic ones. Mr. H. Edwards, whose cures of incurable diseases have filled columns of extravagant praise both in Spiritualist journals and the daily Press, is very angry with the way Christian doctors on the Church of England's Inquiry into "Spiritual" healing contemptuously dismiss his prize cases.

In a recent number of "Psychic News," he lists some of the remarkable cures he has made through Spirits—cures which, alas, the Christian doctors refuse to discuss. One of them caught our infidel eye—that of a medium called Olsen, who was suffering from a spinal complaint and had to wear a plaster casing. Visiting Edwards, in three minutes Olsen was so completely cured that he resumed "work as a physical medium and has had no recurrence of the trouble." But in *Psychic Realm* of the same week is given the sad story of poor Olsen's breakdown in health again, and the cancellation of many engagements. So one can pay one's money and take one's choice, but the Spirits and Jesus Christ between them do make a holy mess sometimes even of complete cures. Or do they?

Then there is this constant preoccupation by Christians and Spiritualists of what they call "demoniacal possession." In those good old days called by believers the Golden Age of the Church, when everybody believed everything—those who were silly enough not to be promptly exterminated—people were constantly inhabited by Demons, and the Church had a high old time "exorcising" the beastly things. Nowadays, priests have to be *implored* to do any exorcising, for almost always what is called "possession" is either pure imagination or a high temperature which a dose of aspirins can dispel. The way effete "materialism" rears its ugly head in these cases is almost beyond belief.

A Trinidad gentleman recently begged the Editor of a

Spiritualist paper to expel his own Demons as a Father Sebastian was religiously unable to do so. This is simply astounding, for the Roman Church in particular has some wonderful prayers specially designed to settle the hash of the most unconquerable Demon in Hell, and it is incredible that any Evil Spirit, however powerful, can withstand such Holy Denunciation when uttered in the name of Jesus Christ. Incidentally, possession is very disagreeable, for one gets awful pains and gushes of cold wind and ladies, we are confidentially told, "experience very unpleasant visitations while in bed."

However, a medium, Mr. de Santos, was called in and, though living in England, he has no difficulty in "astral" travelling—most unfair to our railways and shipping and air-travel companies, for in this way he dodges fares. He managed to contact the "very unsociable" Demon inhabiting the Trinidad gentleman with other similar spirits, and found it was all due to pure jealousy. With tact and persuasion, the spirits were easily compelled to leave the unlucky gentleman who housed them, and no doubt he will live happily ever after. All this is solemnly told in this year of grace 1955, and there are actually people who avidly lap it up!

## GEORGE MILLER'S

### Newcastle Notebook

MAKING an honest effort to correct Old Error, the Rev. G. J. C. Marchant argues that "churchgoers who give up smoking during Lent and consume vast quantities of sweets instead achieve nothing: there is still a weakness of will." Lent tests our pleasures and indulgences, and if you can forgo both without your irritability being a devil of a nuisance to others then you are master of your soul and likely to shout "Invictus!" from the housetops whenever your proud ego gets out of control. If you cannot regulate your habits, and nobly abstain occasionally, you are a slave to your body, and that is "not a matter over which Christians can be indifferent," as if they ever were. Mr. Marchant hoists the reminder that "Lent is a special time for saving." Now a good method is to use a self denial box, *via* which what accumulates could finally arrive at some "true Christian cause."

The gross indecency of party paper hats rouses the ire of the Rev. M. N. Coates, Rural Dean of Jarrow, exasperation being natural when drunken revellers, wearing the things, attended Midnight Communion at Christmas. The Rev. Coates, and other Revs. who reported similar outrages, have my best home-grown sympathy, only I have no doubt that they would have been strangely excited if the gatecrashers had shuffled in wearing crowns of thorns and exhibiting cruel nail wounds in hands and feet. How much more effective at Easter!

They used to have such annual performances at St. Mary's, Tyne Dock, but since 1948 entrance by ticket only became a rule. Meanwhile, St. Mary's continues to be a pretty example of a church divided against itself, for extremists have for some time being "Romanising" the services, a state of affairs which excited rebellion in one member who, having nothing to confess, has finally resigned. The Bishop of Durham has investigated, but up till now his public opinion of them all is unknown, let alone his private.

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

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

S. M. CAINES.—We regret that Mr. Paul Varney's account of the recent discussion on *Morals and Ethics* at Cardiff referred to Mr. Ebury's opponent as a member of Jehovah's Witnesses; whereas he is a member of "The Order of Christian Witness", an organisation composed of members of various Christian sects. Thanks for correction.

S. W. BROOKS.—See article on Einstein, this issue.

W. A. VAUGHAN.—Your letter and suggestion were passed on to Mr. Ridley.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

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

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

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

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, May 22, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

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

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. RIDLEY, EBURY, WOOD and W. J. O'NEILL. *The Freethinker* on sale outside Hyde Park.

### INDOOR

Friday Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, May 20, 7-15 p.m.: B. O. WARWICK, "Science-Fiction To-day."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 22, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Are Myths Useful?"

## Notes and News

Prior to the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. there will be a Reception of Members in the Royal Hotel, Woburn Place, London, W.C.1, at 7-30 p.m., on Saturday, May 28. The Hotel is within easy reach of Euston, and near Russell Square. The Conference will be held in the Royal Hotel on Sunday, May 29, in two sessions as usual, beginning at 10-30 a.m. prompt. A Conference luncheon will be ready at 1 p.m. in the Hotel. In the evening an Outdoor Public Demonstration will be held at Speakers' Corner, Marble Arch, where the London speakers will be specially reinforced by our provincial ones. It is hoped that two platforms will be in use.

Among the many interesting motions tabled for the Conference, some more than usually controversial, is a recommendation from Manchester concerning freethought broadcasting, and another recommending the use of Branch Bulletins. From Nottingham comes a new idea for conducting N.S.S. Conferences, namely, the concentration on one or two particular lines of inquiry, instead of the customary miscellaneous agenda. The E.C. will move that all building used for cultural purposes, and not for profit, should be exempt from rates. As at present, such payments cannot be avoided by organisations who do not claim to be "religious." Glasgow will advocate the use of films for freethought propaganda, some practical possibilities of which were mentioned by Mr. Adrian Brunel at N.S.S. Annual Dinner. North London motions include the main-

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £844 18s. 8d.; G. Swan, 8s.; A South African (White Stone Pond, £1); E. C. R., 10s.; W. H. D., 5s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; S. C. Merrifield, 7s. 6d.; Mrs. B. Allbon, 5s.; Mrs. N. Rutherford, 15s.; F. Ford, 5s.; Total, £848 15s. 2d.

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

## An Appeal

WHEN men embarked upon the path of critical inquiry freethought was born. To the independent spirit, courage, and genius of a few thinkers in every age—often solitary souls, living ever in the shadow of persecution for daring to speak, write, and act in accordance with honest convictions—the emancipation of the human mind has been due. Without their efforts and sacrifices we should still be living in the Dark Ages of the mind, venturing to do nothing, to say nothing, to publish nothing that could be construed as being in conflict with established opinion, clerical or secular.

Truly, we are the inheritors of a long and splendid tradition of freethought, which dates back to the Greeks. We owe the pioneers a debt too great to repay. We can only prove ourselves worthy of their labours and sufferings by carrying on the noble work they have necessarily left unfinished.

We who will not truckle to the dogmatism of authority, or to the easy but often dangerous persuasions of political Right or Left, are fortunate in having a paper like *The Freethinker* for our mouthpiece. It is the only journal of its kind in this country to-day. It must not fail through lack of financial support in the difficult period it is undergoing. Its future, and the future of all that is dear to and bound up with it, is in our hands. By donations, large or small, to the Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund, we can resolve that its flag shall never be furled.

G. I. B.

taining of pressure on the B.B.C. following the Mrs. Knight broadcasts; a protest against the armaments race; and a proposal to regulate the number of members from any branch who may be on the national executive. West London draw attention to recent indications that speaking pitches are being converted into car parks. These and other motions should give Conference plenty of material for useful discussion.

Sir Ian Jacob, for the B.B.C., has apologised to Cardinal Griffin for the televising of the play "Family Portrait," following Roman Catholic protests. The play was preceded by an apology for providing Jesus with brothers (all by the same Virgin); there was no wish to offend those who could not harmonise this with the Christian faith. Mary appeared as a harassed housewife, and anything but immaculate.

## BELOVED REBEL

(Concluded from page 154)

It is not easy to write impartially of "Jimmy" Maxton—for he was one of the finest *human* beings of his time. The facts of his career will be found in the McNair biography. Historians will doubtless record that he was a great orator, a great political personality. An old colleague may be permitted a humbler but equally sincere tribute. In all his relations, public and personal, James Maxton remained always a fundamentally decent fellow.

F. A. RIDLEY

## Notes on a New Gospel—3

By H. CUTNER

FEW things have disturbed the orthodox more than the two discordant genealogies of Jesus found in Matthew and Luke. Considering that Jesus was the Son of God as well as God himself, the only genealogy which could apply to him would be that of Mary; but for some reason (no doubt sent to try our faith) both these lists of "ancestors" belong to Joseph, the impotent old gentleman God sent to be the husband of his (God's) Mother. Joseph in them is represented as having *two* fathers, Jacob and Heli, both descended from David through different lines; while both genealogies, which are based on lists given in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, either differ from each other when they shouldn't, or differ from the Septuagint. It is quite possible that Messrs. Graves and Podro in their *Nazarene Gospel Restored* have read all the Christian books dealing with these genealogies, but I am happy to state that I have not. Even more nonsense has been written on these lists than on the Resurrection.

Even Messrs. G. & P., after discoursing on them for a few pages, give in at last and assert that, "after allowance has been made for the miscopying of Hebrew names by Greek scribes" the genealogy "may be unconfidently restored as follows," and give their own list. The word "unconfidently" proves that, like the majority of believers they recognise the utter hopelessness of squaring Matthew with Luke, and both with the Old Testament, either in Greek or Hebrew.

But, considering how widely our two authors have read, and considering that Mr. Podro at least must be familiar with the Kabbalah and its "geometria" or whatever its numerology is called, they should have pointed out that whoever inserted the two genealogies into the Gospels, were quite indifferent as to its reality. As the Jews expected a "son of David" to be their Messiah—though even all this Messiah business was no doubt confined only to their priests—it was necessary to endow the "New Adam" with a properly constructed lineage and, no doubt whatever, two writers independently of each other had a shot. The Matthew writer chose—as he said—three groups of "14" names. Why then just 42? The answer is quite simple:  $42 = 7 \times 6$ ; that is, it gives you the two magic numbers 7 and 6, the "divine" number 7 and the "human" number 6. God, you see, rested on the seventh day as it must have been very fatiguing to create our Universe in six days, even for a God. So the number 7 is "divine" as any modern numerologist or Kabbalist would tell you.

On the other hand, 6 is a purely human number, for it was on the sixth day that Man was created. As Jesus was both God and Man, Matthew cleverly worked in the two numbers into the genealogy of Jesus. But he was still cleverer. The third group of 14 has only *thirteen* names—one of those terrible problems sent to Christians by God Almighty again to try their faith. Why thirteen? Well  $13 = 7 + 6$ —again the two numbers which so conclusively prove Jesus to be both God and Man. And, in spite of this obvious numerology, we get orthodox scholars solemnly discussing for centuries a purely literary and arithmetical trick.

What about Luke? His genealogy doesn't bother with the "Man" business at all. God is at one end and Jesus is at the other end, so he concentrated on the "divine" number 7 for both Gods. There are just 77 names, no doubt whatever picked at hazard to fulfil his purpose. If Messrs. Graves and Podro did not know the various numerical tricks resorted to by the Hebrew and Greek writers to endow the Bible with a lot of "esoteric" nonsense, then it is time they did.

Whether the two authors do or do not believe the many miraculous stories in the "canonical" Gospels, it is difficult to say; but as a start they throw overboard those of the childhood of Jesus given in the *Protoevangelium*, the *Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Gospel of Thomas*. They "are not worth examining here," we are blandly told. But why? Why are these stories to be disbelieved and the stories of the encounters Jesus had with Devils to be believed? Why are we to believe that an Angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream? How can a real Angel appear to anybody in a dream? How can anybody distinguish between a "real" Angel and a "dream" Angel?

In passing, I note that the "restored" Nazarene Gospel contains the famous prophecy from Isaiah about a Virgin bearing a Son—this Son being called Emmanuel, a name never again bestowed on Jesus in the New Testament, thus proving he must be "God with us." But why, in their long discussion on the question of this text, did they not quote the very orthodox Catholic Encyclopædia where will be found (in vol. 15):

Modern theology does not grant that Isaiah 7, 14 contains a real prophecy fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ; it must maintain, therefore, that St. Matthew misunderstood the passage when he said: Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son . . .

The "restored" Gospel changes the Greek word "virgin"—in Hebrew it is "young woman" and no more refers to Mary than to the new moon—to "damsel," quite a happy compromise; but can anything be more damning to the "original" writer of the true Gospel "restored" for us by the genius of Messrs. Graves and Podro than to be told by the Catholic Encyclopædia—of all works—that he was "mistaken," and that therefore he was not "inspired" by God Almighty?

As Mr. Podro could tell Mr. Graves, Jews have for centuries been told by horrified Christians (horrified at such disbelief) that the famous text proves not only that Jesus was prophesied in the Old Testament, but that Isaiah recognised his Virgin Birth. Not that the two authors believe in the virginity of the *Mother* of Jesus—she of the respectable Davidic descent—but of course they do in that of Mary. Both of them do—and who should know better than they? As far as it is possible to read the *Nazarene Gospel Restored* without amusement—I mean the Gospel itself given complete in just under 200 pages—one must congratulate Mr. Graves on a fine piece of fiction, and his equally fine imitation of the English of the Authorised Version. As no doubt he knows, this English was never spoken. It was most cleverly made up by Tyndale (more than anybody else) with an eye to holy reverence. It is why our modern versions of the Bible cannot compete in holiness with the A.V. You simply cannot worship in the English of our space-ship-fiction magazines. Mr. Graves knew this and he wisely kept to the style of the A.V.

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# The Capacity for Self-Delusion

By G. I. BENNETT

H. G. WELLS once said that the mind of man is as much of a truth-seeking instrument as a pig's snout. This was heavy satire, but it had its point. For truly, the capacity of human beings for hoodwinking themselves seems limitless.

In all that concerns practical day-to-day matters men and women are, as a rule, logical and competent enough. It is only on solemn or ceremonial occasions that they suddenly become overgrown children. Amongst temporal things in our temporal world business people are shrewd in their calculations of cause and effect. Yet when they go to Church, or otherwise have reason to reflect on spiritual things, they can be as muddled, as confused, as credulous, as puerile in their mental processes, as much believers in the arbitrary suspension of natural law at the caprice of a Deity, as your savage—for whom at least it may be said that, as the supernatural is an integral part of his every-day experience, there is no artificial separation of his religious from his secular life. This duality of mind in allegedly civilised human beings has often seemed curiously indefensible to a simple monist like myself.

In the ordinary daily life of modern man there is no room for miracles, for magic, for uncaused effects, for the scientifically unexplained and unexplainable. Our reasonable anticipations and hopes are based upon solid grounds of probability. We do not expect wine to become the blood of a Divine Person by the utterance of some time-honoured mystical clichés. And we should be seeking certification as lunatics if we seriously imagined that, by some strange alchemy, bread or biscuit could be changed into the flesh of a God-ordained Saviour. In every event or occurrence we look for a natural cause. And anything that is at a given instant mysterious will, of course, puzzle us, but is not for a moment thought to have other than a perfectly rational explanation.

The truth is that science—systematised knowledge, that is—has invaded so many departments of experience that it is impossible nowadays, without being intellectually obtuse, to accept the sort of supernatural interpretation of phenomena that satisfied our early forbears. As Mr G. H. Taylor in one of his articles so ably showed, they reasoned things out for themselves as we do, *but without our knowledge*. Yet, as I say, the human capacity for self-delusion is apparently unmeasurable.

When men and women become solemn they frequently become foolish. When their emotions are roused, their sentiments touched, their hopes and their fears stirred, they are capable of believing the most astounding things. People who are eminently sensible—nay, even dourly down-to-earth—in the conduct of their own secular affairs, abandon all sensibility in paying fervid homage to God, Queen, Country, and Empire; and some are even naive enough, and uneducated enough, to sigh over the passing of the landed gentry, the “stately homes of England” that ever fewer of them inhabit, and that colourfully cruel and barbaric pastime of theirs—riding to hounds.

Human nature is indeed full of paradox. Men can be gloriously self-sacrificing in fighting for their country in its “hour of need.” Yet they are often incurably egoistic in the circumstance of their own or their near relatives' demise. They wish to live for ever, apparently, in the Elysium Fields, and in the case of a loved one who precedes them in death, to be re-united with him (or her) some day when their earthly career has run its course. If they have achieved in life some measure of notability they glow with pride at the thought that their fellow-citizens may see fit to erect a

monument or statue to their memory. If, as with most of us, fame passes them by, then a tablet suitably inscribed in the grounds of cemetery or crematorium is the next best way, they feel, of keeping green their memory. As if it signified at all!

“Time like an ever-rolling stream  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.”

But many, I verily believe, would fail in spirit if, of a sudden, they were inescapably faced with the facts of existence. So innured are they to living in a world of their own imagining that to be made aware of the sovereign indifference of time, Nature, and the universe to ourselves would fill them with a peculiar kind of horror. They live by subconsciously transforming the world as it is into the world as, to them, it ought to be. And appearances matter. Appearances are all. For these it is that have given credal and institutional religion its timeless hold over man. From the tiny country Church, snug amongst peaceful hills, to the great Cathedral, towering majestically above the ceaseless feverish life of a city, how everything pulls—the sonorous organ music, the union of human voices raised in the fellowship of corporate worship, the priestly regalia and ritual, the age-old traditions. . . .!

Yet I feel that, even without these powerful appurtenances of faith, human beings would be found who contrived to believe, seeing in a splendid dawn, a beautiful sunset, a vista of vast, wild grandeur, the heavenly peace of a summer or autumn evening, the perennial mystery (as the poet and the pietist may both view it) of new-born life, and every kind or noble deed—seeing in them all the face of God. Ah, how much men see of what they want to see, how little of what they don't! There is as much of ugliness as of beauty, as much of sadness as of gladness, as much of sickness and suffering as of radiance and health, as much of evil as of goodness, as much of hell as of heaven here on earth.

Those of us who have lived as Atheists and will die as Atheists are not blind to the good and lovely things of this world; but we do not close our eyes to the other side of the picture. Can the face of God be seen here, too? Any honest mind that seeks to know reality, and not just those aspects of it that conform to its moral and aesthetic sensibilities and that give it agreeable spiritual assurance, must ask this question. It is one of the toughest that has ever confronted theology; and it has never been, and can never be, answered within its narrow framework.

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## SECULAR EDUCATION

Secular education, then, is far from meaning that the State in its schools would be hostile to religion. It means that religion, being an essentially individual or Church matter, would be left to individuals and the Churches to teach. The State in its collective capacity is the custodian and expender of the taxes levied on all the citizens of the realm, irrespective of their religious opinions, and it should, in consequence, refrain from supporting any merely party or sectional view of religion through its educational institutions. Those who support State neutrality in regard to religious teaching would object as strongly to State support of Secularism, or any other belief held by a portion of the community, as they object to its support of Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, or Nonconformity.

The advocate of secular education insists that religious

teaching is a matter with which the State, as such, should have nothing to do. The word "secular" in this usage does not denote any school of thought. It reflects no theological opinion of any kind either favourable to or adverse to any form of religion. The word simply means nothing more nor less than it stands for when it is authoritatively used in the official Education Code. It means only a school curriculum that covers subjects other than those described as "religious," and these it classes as "secular."

(*The Case for Secular Education.*)

## The Christian Achilles Heel

By HIBERNICUS

CHRISTIANITY has so many weak spots that the critic often hardly knows where to begin. If he questions some isolated point he is told "Ah, but that is not one of the essential beliefs," and if he asks just what are the essential beliefs, he is bidden go and read a list of woolly authors who all give different lists of essential beliefs.

There is, however, one doctrine held by many Christians which is especially vulnerable. It is held by both the Neo-Catholic and the Neo-Lutheran groups. It is the doctrine of Original Sin.

A valuable contribution to the subject was H. D. Lewis's *Morals and the New Theology*. Christian authors have here adopted their usual policy towards criticism—ignoring it. One Christian who did give it brief mention was Martin Jarrett-Kerr. He is one of those Anglo-Catholic monks who so much embarrass our Protestants. Here is some of his criticism (from *Our Trespasses*): "If they (the views of Lewis) are correct, not only this little book, but the whole orthodox Catholic doctrine of 'Original Sin' must go overboard." This is like saying "If Darwin's theory is true, then the Book of Genesis must go overboard."

Lewis is a leading moral philosopher, not unfriendly to religion; and his verdict is that the doctrine of original sin is not only illogical (which would not worry the Christians) but also immoral. If sin is to mean anything which would be punished by a just god, it must mean a deliberate and conscious wrong-doing; but Original Sin could not be deliberate or conscious for us, whatever it was for Adam (or was it Eve?). With relentless logic, Lewis showed how quibbles like "Adam represented us" depend on a careless use of words. The statements of Niebuhr, Brunner, and of leading Anglicans are torn to shreds.

The logical conclusion of this doctrine is an authoritarian religion; for if man's reason is deranged by Original Sin then he cannot think for himself, and needs an infallible guide. The Bible has gone, for informed minds at least, and all that is left is the Catholic Church. (Belloc prophesied a return to the Catholic Church "because there is nothing else left.")

Fortunately, there is left human reason; we have no cause for supposing it has been damaged by eating forbidden fruit. Those who try to support original sin without Catholicism are being driven into the melancholic lunacy of the German theologians Barth and Brunner. (The Germans seem to get revenge for their military defeats by spreading gloom over the victors—remember Spengler after 1918.) The logical conclusion of their doctrine of the complete corruption of human nature is that one form of government is as good (or, to be exact, as bad) as another, which helps to explain the slight resistance that German Protestantism showed against Hitler.

Yet this doctrine has proved attractive to some in

Britain. Some Humanists were so impatient that a war seemed the end of all possible progress; they have flown to the idea. I refer to such people as D. R. Davies and the late Dr. Joad. To read the later works of these men one would think that this was the only doctrine in Christianity. This melancholic trend is only part of a modern tendency. It has become fashionable in some quarters to profess belief in mediaeval theology, as it has become fashionable in other quarters to wear Edwardian clothes. Those who have read any realistic and factual history will know how fortunate these people are that they are only *looking back*.

The fact that some Christians are repelled by this doctrine is an advantage. It is not from these liberal Christians that the threat of Christian authoritarianism comes.

## Correspondence

### THE LOGIC OF ATHEISM

G. S. Smelters expects Christians to accept his logic: gods do not exist; "God" is one instance of a god; therefore God does not exist. So what? He makes no attempt to justify his "gods do not exist" attempt to refer to fiction (e.g. Homer) which proves nothing. (Is Homer fiction or legend? Is everything in fiction untrue?)

S. W. Brooks (April 22) is equally convinced that "God does not exist" and moreover that this statement is true in the same sense as "Two plus two equal four." The former is neither true nor false, it is not capable of being answered because it is meaningless. What is his definition of God, and where is his proof?

The term "existence" is a difficult and dangerous one, but a statement "No blue kangaroos exist" can be reworded "No kangaroos are blue" which is more precise. This question is meaningful because "kangaroo" and "blue" can be described in terms of sense-data, but a statement "No zoobles are ubbly" is not, and nor is the question of the existence of God—unless the questioner can define God as an object with recognisable properties.

Surely it is on grounds such as this, that the god-idea is meaningless, and all religions consequently nonsense, that Atheism rests? A Christian might reply that a god is defined as an omnipotent and omniscient being, but two incomprehensible attributes of an unknown object hardly constitute a definition!

An atheist can be defined (e.g. in McCabe's *Encyclopedia*) as one without belief in a god, and might claim that there is no evidence for a god. While this is true it contains no more information than "There is no evidence for ubbly zoobles," and the basis of atheism is again seen to be merely the opinion, expressed crudely, that religion is nonsense.

E. G. H. CROUCH.

## OBITUARY

With deep sorrow, his old friends will learn of the death of John Forshaw Partington. He was 71 and a member of The Parent Society, N.S.S., of many years standing, having been militant in the days of his health. Humane in the widest sense, his fine sensitivity endeared him to his many friends. He showed fortitude during his ill-health and his Secularism was unswerving. At his own request for a Secular service, the undersigned officiated at Carlton Crematorium on April 29.

J. G. BURDON.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has lost one of its oldest and staunchest members in Mr. Albert Thornewell of Fir Tree Farm, Mucklow Hill, Halesowen, Worcs., who died April 28, aged 77. He will long be remembered for his fascinating lectures on archaeological subjects to the Branch. His remains were cremated and the ashes will be scattered over the Walton Hill by some of his cycling friends, he having been a keen wheeler from his youth. Sympathy is extended to his widow, sons and daughters.

CHARLES H. SMITH.

On May 3 the death occurred of Mrs. Beatrice Longhurst, aged 75, from a cerebral haemorrhage following a short illness. The widow of a freethinker, she shared her late husband's enthusiasm for freethought and left instructions for a secular cremation service to be conducted by the undersigned. Her wishes were met on May 9 at Putney Vale Crematorium, with her surviving brother, sister, two adopted sons and a number of friends in attendance.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.