

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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THE holy books of the world's major religions can be conveniently divided into two kinds. There are those written, certainly or probably, by a single author presumed to be inspired from a supernatural source; and there are collections, arbitrary and sometimes surprisingly, by what they exclude as well as include, made up of a number of separate volumes bound together within the covers of a single volume. In the first category are such holy books as the Koran or the Book of Mormon; in the second the Hindu Vedanta or the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, our Old and New Testaments. In actual circumstances attendant on their authorship and their literary background, the Jewish and Christian Bibles may be described more accurately as libraries than as single books, and still more so if they are taken together, for between Genesis and Revelation something like a thousand years lapses, during which lengthy period the Jewish nation and Church passed through quite a number of often startling vicissitudes. Nor do the books of the Old Testament, the Bible of Judaism, vary merely in their dates and literary compositions; there are also great inequalities at both literary and cultural levels. At its best Hebrew literature was capable of producing masterpieces not unworthy of inclusion with those of other surviving ancient literatures; whilst at its worst it frequently descends to the level of other literary relics of a barbaric age, and its god, if not more, was not less savage than were those of other early religious cults. In brief the Bible, whether Jewish, Christian or both, is not a book so much as a collection of books, often selected arbitrarily and for considerations often having little to do with either moral elevation, intellectual content or even literary ability. This view appears to be the only one at all consonant with modern biblical scholarship.

## Old Testament Sceptics

The Jews, to confine our remarks to the Hebrew Bible, were not always orthodox or always uncritical. The same race—or cult—which in modern times has produced such eminent unbelievers as Spinoza, Heine, Einstein and Freud, was not devoid of sceptics even in biblical times, as, indeed, is often obvious from the denunciations of the "sacred" writers themselves. Moreover, strange as it appears, the work of such sceptics is to be found in the sacred Canon itself! The Old Testament, if not the New, includes the literary output of sceptical thinkers, the predecessors of Spinoza, and of sceptical poets, the predecessors of Heine. The way in which these originally sceptical writings, the work primarily of men whose outlook was openly contemptuous of the rabbinical orthodoxy of Judaism, eventually became included in the official Canon of orthodoxy, is a curious and interesting chapter in the story of comparative religion.

## Three Biblical Sceptics

Apart from *obiter dicta* found within the Holy Book there are in our O.T. two whole books and a substantial fragment

of a third which, even as found today, deviate widely from orthodoxy, and which, as restored to the original texts by eminent scholars, appear to have been written by critics of their contemporary orthodoxy who wrote from a standpoint barely removed, if removed at all, from utter scepticism and complete hostility to the prevailing religious dogmas of Judaism. In order of literary magnitude, we have the poem of Job, the soliloquies of Ecclesiastes, and that section of Proverbs attributed to Agur. All these works, to secure their

later inclusion in the sacred Canon, have been heavily bowdlerized, but even in their present form they contain many passages which have a most unorthodox ring; whilst as restored in their original texts, and completely divested of all the later rabbinical glosses designed to reconcile their

heterodox teaching with orthodox Judaism, they all appear if not completely sceptical, at least as near to it as makes little difference.

## The Poem of Job

The poem of Job is, beyond any doubt, the greatest purely literary work produced by the ancient Hebrews, if, indeed, a lengthy poem set in purely Arab surroundings, and which never mentions the Jewish god by his proper name, was actually the work of a Jew at all. Such scholars as the late Prof. Dillon and the historian Froude have compared Job purely as a literary product with such literary masterpieces as *Paradise Lost* and *De Rerum Natura*. According to Dr. Dillon, who restored the probable original text by purging it of rabbinical interpolations, Job is a drama rather than a poem, its aim being to discredit the current Jewish beliefs in the beneficence of God and in the moral order of the world. Even in our bowdlerized text God gets the worst of all the argument and appears very much as a figure of fun; but the original poem, as reconstructed, is far more sceptical and explicitly rejects any idea either of divine justice or human immortality.

## Ecclesiastes a Manual of Scepticism

An eminent Jewish scholar, the late Dr. M. Jastrow, has similarly recovered the original text of Ecclesiastes, "The Preacher." In this also we find an almost complete scepticism with regard to God, divine retribution and personal immortality, which last is explicitly denied. Except for a few purely perfunctory references to the existence of God, the whole original text is a work, not only of remarkable eloquence but also of pure Agnosticism. "Vanity of vanities," life is futile and transitory. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" constitutes the underlying theme of this sombre pessimist, whose work, according to a German scholar, bears a marked affinity with such a modern sceptical pessimist as Schopenhauer, also a master of literary eloquence. Epicurean and Buddhist influences have been detected in Ecclesiastes but, with the rabbinical glosses

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### Biblical Sceptics

By F. A. RIDLEY



removed, of Jewish orthodoxy there remains hardly a trace. A similar scepticism is also to be found in the unexpurgated Proverbs of Agur. Again, stripped of rabbinical glosses, Ecclesiastes has much in common with Omar Khayyam.

### Job and Solomon

Why, then, it may relevantly be asked, were such heretical books ever received into the inspired Canon of Holy Scripture? The answer is simple. It was the names of their alleged authors, the holy Patriarch Job and the wise King Solomon, which settled the matter, though Ecclesiastes had to wait till the Christian era for official recognition. However, these heretical books were not included until they had undergone a pretty thorough bowdlerizing at the hands of the orthodox Jewish editors, and, as Dillon and Jastrow indicate, our revised texts would often astonish the original

authors. Dillon succinctly summarises the process as a result of which Job and Ecclesiastes were eventually, and after much opposition, received into the official Canon. He writes, "Job and Ecclesiastes were inserted in the Jewish and, one may add, the Christian, canon, solely on the strength of passages which the authors of these compositions never even saw, and which flatly contradict the main thesis of their works."

The resulting literary frauds, however, certainly raised the literary level of the Hebrew Bible by inclusion of what are, even in their present bowdlerized form, deeply impressive works, whilst the editorial work of the Rabbis furnished the science of comparative religion with interesting and instructive material as to how sacred books were originally compiled, often from the most unlikely sources.

## Science and Morality

By Dr. E. L. DWIGHT TURNER

WE have no right to divorce morality from science—to make science merely technical, without regard to social consequences. Man is, everywhere and under all circumstances, and at all times, a social being. He cannot live independently of others. He had to have parents and was, and is, dependent upon others for his very existence.

Any shirking of moral responsibility by scientists is therefore illogical and cowardly.

However, morality and religious belief are not the same thing. The great assortment of religious beliefs, in world history have, more often than not, been nonsensical or worse.

But morality is easily and clearly defined as right living, or acting in such a way as to live decently and honorably and to injure no one. This means that every person should do the best he can in all of life's relationships.

Science and commonsense know of no superhuman "revelations," or of any "miracles," and they have no use for the multiplicity of so-called religious dogmas. Science deals only with nature and facts, and it has no belief in any of the millions of gods, devils, angels, witches, spooks, etc., that man's imagination has created. To science, the supernatural is unknown, unnecessary and superfluous.

The morality of science should not be conventional, but should be ideal, based on the highest and best activities which the human mind can develop by means of careful and practical experience. The struggle to achieve rationality and truth is the business of social science.

Rationality and truth are not inherent in any economic or political system. They have to be laboriously worked out by the advance guard of free and courageous and progressive thinkers. This means that reason—the best that man can develop—is the supreme criterion.

The impediments to rationality are many and varied, especially when there is monopolistic or big-business control over mass-communication devices—and even of educational systems, especially when militarism—rather than peaceful co-existence is fostered or emphasised.

The search for truth must go on impervious to persecution. The highest value for the scientist is free inquiry and the knowledge which it has given him. Science is the sworn enemy of human prejudice, intolerance, superstition, and of everything else which opposes truth. Science is in this respect a morality, as well as being a method of inquiry and investigation and advancement.

The findings of social science are not now widely heeded because society is not rationally structured. Reason involves an acceptance of those values fundamental in science, of tolerance, equality of opportunity, free assembly and freedom of discussion and of co-operation.

To discover the proper kind of society for our future world and the structure of social relations therein consonant with reason and truth, we have only to observe the pattern of social relationship which are necessary for the promotion of science itself. Scientific endeavours are themselves a system of social relationships and co-operation, and this system is itself the ideal towards which the great society of the future should aim if it is to be truly scientific, and is consequently international in its organisation and outlook.

Every struggle against tyranny over men's minds has been part of the struggle for the advancement of truth and science. It is a mistake to view science simply as a technique. Its social relationships involve a morality that should advance co-operation in all human activities and provide a better world for all peoples to live in—a world free from superstition and oppression, a world of true culture, peace and prosperity.

(*Liberal*, Oct. 1955)

### AMERICA'S YOUNG CATHOLICS

Headlines—No crime is too vicious or depraved for these pious little monsters. We read such headlines daily as: 11 youths arrested in slaying of boy, 15; 3 teen-agers held in savage slaying; Miami policeman shot by youth; boy killer sentenced; teen-ager indicted in fatal shooting; two youths held in Bronx slaying; Brooklyn boy, 16, sentenced to die; church club knifing fatal to Salem boy; Norwood Youth indicted in slaying of girl, 15; Maine girl, 8, murdered, boy, 15, held; boy shoots father; killer of schoolgirl dies week of Jan. 10; blind mother shot by son aiming at dad; youth convicted of murder in Stomp killing; hoodlum's blast kills man, 61; hoodlums kill manufacturer in Loss Angeles; Brooklyn boy slain by teen gangsters; one killed, 12 hurt, in teen-age war; boy, 6, admits slaying infant with hammer; teen-ager beaten unconscious; girl stabbed in walk through park; Cambridge youths jailed for beating six women; youths admit torturing army airman; youth stabbed, woman kicked, in teen-age row; 3 youths carve name of girl on boy's arm; hoodlums beat and rob legless war hero; mad youths slug 10; racist terror seen in beating of Jewish boy; two teen-agers held in N.Y. crime spree; etc., etc. Practically ALL of these headlines refer to Catholic teen-agers.

(From *Progressive World*.)

NEXT WEEK

THE 1956 BEAR GARDEN

By R. READER



## The Right to Euthanasia

By G. I. BENNETT

PROCREATION, as everybody knows, is one of the most fundamental and natural of things, but I have never altogether understood why childbirth should be generally so lightly regarded. Bringing children into the world seems to me an act of greatest moment in the life of man and woman. And I sometimes wonder how many—or how few—of those who stopped to reflect on the multitude of fears, cares, dangers, griefs, and misfortunes that beset us mortals between birth and death would ever take upon themselves the awful responsibility of procreating at all. But then, I am a bachelor; and perhaps it will be argued that that is why I feel as I do. . . .

Still, I think most people of intelligence will agree that begetting children is a matter of high seriousness—never a slight, incidental undertaking—quite apart from the circumstance of over-population, one of the gravest of problems the world faces today.

It is not, however, about entrance into the world that I write now, but about exit from it. Plainly, we could not choose to stay out of the world if we wished. We ought, therefore, to have the means of easy departure from it, should life prove an intolerable affair. The ancients of Greece and Rome—especially the Stoics—were not queasy, as are we, about the moral aspects of voluntary death. And the right to suicide was fully recognised when considerations of personal honour, or the hopelessness of personal suffering, counselled no other course.

Now, traditionally and fundamentally, Christianity opposes the idea of voluntarily quitting life. Its teaching that human life is God-given and inviolable has left its imprint to this day on our system of law and even on our thinking. If a census were taken I believe it would be found that the majority of Christian folk would on religious-moral grounds be against the principle of easy death—even in the case of incurable physical suffering, where there is most justification for it. No man, they say, has right to dispose of life, either his own or another's. Yet in England the secular law does, in fact, still exact the penalty of a life for a life. And the extraordinary thing is that most of those who basically disapprove of euthanasia (to give it its correct name) nevertheless silently concur, in this day and age, in the practice of judicial execution, and—what to me is more disturbing—cherish the conception of a "righteous war" with its wholesale killing of the men, women, and children of the nation or nations which, at a given time, are declared enemy.

Not all Christians, of course, oppose euthanasia. Churchmen like the late Bishop Barnes, Dr. Inge, and H. R. L. ("Dick") Sheppard were indeed its spirited advocates. But their attitude could not in their lifetime, and cannot now, be harmonised with the commonly accepted beliefs and doctrines of the Christian Church.

Yet independently of specifically theological assertion, there prevails the view that the desire to prolong human life under all circumstances is a civilised desire. That there comes a time when, so far from being civilised, it is clearly—even outrageously—inhumane does not appear to have been sufficiently realised. To my mind comes a particularly distressing case—of a certain young man who was one of the last war's worst victims. He went into the Armed Forces with the full faculties and good health of youth: he came out of the Forces a mere breathing organism, without arms, without legs, and with partial if not complete loss of sight. He had been engaged to be married. Not un-

naturally, the engagement was broken. Death for him would have been a mercy; yet although he has nothing to live for, he lives on still, I believe, fated to goodness knows how many years of black and barren existence. Alas! how many others must there be as unfortunate, or almost as unfortunate, as he?

Human life is not and never has been sacred in itself—though this is a fact that humane modern sentiment, backed by nearly 2,000 years of Christian teaching, finds hard to accept. It cannot be gainsaid that medical science has to its credit some remarkable achievements; but in its desire to heal it has tended, I feel, to proceed on the assumption that death is an evil to be fought against and staved off to the very last moment. And certainly, by enabling us to live in varying degrees of decrepitude and infirmity long after our period of happy useful life is over, that science has not proved an unqualified blessing.

If there is something worse than death it is a living death. If a man painfully and feebly exists, if he has lost—or perhaps never had—the faculties of sight, hearing, or speech, what can life mean to him? If he is so terribly stricken that he would ask nothing better than release, why should he not be allowed a swift and gentle release, having, after due consideration and in suitable legal form, recorded that this is his desire? The technical difficulties arising from a revision of the law in this regard are surely not insuperable.

For us to keep alive a patient long after he has lost all interest in or wish for life seems to me unwarrantably callous. We are much kinder to our animal pets, for whom, when their misery is evident and their recovery impossible, we arrange a speedy and painless dispatch.

I have heard religious moralists defend the endurance of human suffering by maintaining that it strengthens character and ennobles the soul. Rarely is this true. There have been men like W. E. Henley who in critical illness could valiantly cry, "I am master of my fate, I am captain of my soul," and men like Llewelyn Powys, poor consumptive that he was, whose fortitude throughout was such that the physician who attended him in his last days paid him the posthumous tribute: "I am thankful to the fate that threw Llewelyn in my path. He will, even though only a short moment in my long life, shine out as a bright star through the general dullness of human beings. . . ." But their spirit and moral stamina are of a kind found seldom in the rank and file of humanity. Great physical suffering, for the most part, demeans men, warps their minds, withers their sympathies, destroys their personality, makes them less than what they were or would have been.

Where tolerable existence is not possible we ought not to withhold from a patient the right to an easy deliverance. It was this point of view that led, back in 1935, to the inception of the Voluntary Euthanasia Legalisation Society under the presidency of the late Lord Moynihan, with the support of a considerable number of other doctors, and of such notable clerics as W. R. Inge, H. R. L. Sheppard, and W. R. Matthews. A Bill to promote the objects of that Society, but designed to preclude the criminal misuse of or precipitate recourse to euthanasia, was presented to the House of Lords in 1936. It did not receive a second reading—which is not altogether surprising when it is

(concluded on next page)



## This Believing World

Christmas is over—and the Holy Babe of Bethlehem (or is it Nazareth?) is at last put safely to bed. He has done his job well for Christianity, for indeed sweet are the uses of advertisement; and what a holy blessing the Babe has been and still is to the dying faith. And what a blessing he has also been to big business, what with Xmas cards, Xmas presents, and Xmas fare. The dose will be repeated at Easter, but till then we can all breathe a sigh of relief—thank Heaven!

All religious viewers must have had the shock of their lives the other day, when Mr. Raymond Lyttleton finished his course of lectures on the Modern Universe. His account of the latest developments in Astronomy made fascinating hearing, and as he went on, it must have dawned on the minds of his Fundamentalist hearers that just as the millions of galaxies in the sky, already hundreds of millions of light years away, were receding rapidly into the infinite, so was the credulous humbug of Genesis—"he made the stars also"—receding from the minds of most intelligent people.

Mr. Lyttleton made no bones about it. After giving us many stupendous figures of the size of nebulae and galaxies (which of course cannot be grasped by mortals) he roundly declared that the one thing modern Astronomy had come to see was that there was *no purpose whatever* in or behind the Universe. It was all purely mechanical. There was no Universal Mind or Great Architect or God Almighty was what he made quite clear. In other words, his lectures were based on mechanistic Materialism. And no doubt the religious directors of the B.B.C. will be bombarded with pious protests from angry Papists and Protestants, though not one of them could possibly submit an answer to Mr. Lyttleton's devastating rebuttal of all religious claims.

A headline in "Psychic News" tells us that "Spiritualism has made the Old Testament obsolete." Thus only Spiritualism has performed this remarkable feat! Shades of Tom Paine, G. W. Foote, Bob Ingersoll, and Charlie Bradlaugh—they have alas contributed nothing whatever to the demolition. Think of it, if it had not been for Spiritualism, we should all still have been out-and-out believers in Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other great OT heroes. We should all have still been wallowing in the naive "history" of the OT with its Serpent talking pure Hebrew, its Exodus of three million Israelites from Egypt in one night, its Elijah flying up to Heaven in a fiery chariot, and all the other marvels which devout Christians and Jews look upon as Gospel Truth.

The Spiritualist genius who discovered the Old Testament is obsolete is the Rev. W. Minifie, but while he finds the OT miracles impossible to swallow, yet he swallows without the bat of an eyelid a spiritual healer treating a boy who had one leg shorter than the other, pulling the shorter leg to equal the other "before his very eyes." Mr. Minifie would have swallowed just as easily the similar miracle performed by Jesus as a boy—a door he helped his father to make was found too small for the doorway, so Jesus immediately and miraculously stretched it to fit.

As a clergyman, Mr. Minifie manages to get spirit parsons to talk to him, so it is not surprising that he has had long conversations with the great Spurgeon himself—and these

conversations, dealing as they do with Spurgeon's marvelous meanderings in Summerland, will soon be published. Spurgeon was no pink Christian—he believed in everything, a fiery Hell, an angelic Heaven, the Virgin Birth, Miracles, the Second Advent, and many other Biblical truths; so he will (or ought to) confound such unbelieving sceptics as horrid Atheists and blatant Materialists.

We used to wonder where Poltergeists came from, and now we know. They come from "tides and rain." When you get floodwater, for example, you get poltergeist phenomena. Even heavy rain can do the trick. In fact, the new President of the Society for Psychical Research, Mr. G. W. Lambert, wants us to investigate spirits with weather reports instead of exorcism. What he really believes we are not quite sure, but he insisted that researchers should be on the "physical" and not on the "psychical" side. And he wants "the phenomena" more "amenable to reason." But supposing the phenomena are just gross mal-observation or credulous bunk, as most of them are?

## THE RIGHT TO EUTHANASIA

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remembered how ill is the fortune of so many progressive causes at the parliamentary and legislative level. But it is ironical that one who played a prominent, if not decisive, part in turning the scales against it was the late Lord Horder, whose outlook was confessedly rationalist. . . .

Again and again has it been brought home to me how cruelly wrong is this idea that a human being born into the world must bear with his lot, be it what it may, until life's natural close. In this connexion I am forcibly reminded of reading some few years ago of a mother giving birth to a baby without eyes. Should that child have been allowed to live? It is monstrous that society answered Yes. An infant was thus fated to a lifelong blindness that it could have been spared if mercifully dispatched at birth. The ancient Greeks, whose infanticidal tendencies we cannot today regard without abhorrence, were, even when cruel, far kinder than we are. But my present purpose is to argue, not that we should decide for others—even the utterly helpless—whether it is better they live or not live, but that we should give everyone the opportunity to decide for himself or herself.

The fact that you, reader, can read these lines with understanding surely means much in itself. Had you been blind you would not have been able to do so. Had you been congenitally deaf—and probably mute, since the two usually go together—you would, with your limited vocabulary, have read them only with difficulty and no doubt imperfectly followed them. And had you been mentally deficient you would not have grasped their import, anyway.

As it happens, those who live in a world of perpetual darkness or perpetual silence are often cheerful souls, possessed of more than ordinary urge to live. But if they, along with those who are the victim of crippling disease and chronic ill-health, should wish to abdicate life, none—least of all the physically and mentally sound—have any case for saying them nay. Amongst the aims and objects of humanitarian endeavour, that of gaining social, political, and legal recognition of the right to euthanasia must stand high.

*The Bible Handbook* (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.  
Robert Taylor—*The Devil's Chaplain*. By H. Cutner. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.



## THE FREETHINKER

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### 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.

### Lecture Notices, Etc.

#### OUTDOOR

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Lincolns Inn Fields, Kingsway, W.C.1.)—Every Tuesday, 1 p.m.; (Tower Hill) Every Thursday, 1 p.m. Speakers: J. M. Alexander, W. Carlton, and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1.0 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and CORSAIR.

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

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

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

#### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, January 1, 7.0 p.m.: H. M. CASHMORE, "Literary Forgeries."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, January 3, 7.15 p.m.: Symposium. B. J. FAIRHALL, Mrs. LINDSAY, Miss SMOKER, T. JACK, "The Cultivation of a Rational Religious Sentiment."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 1, 6.30 p.m.: New Year's Party.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, January 1, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The New Reformation."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, January 1, 7.15 p.m. Annual General Meeting.

### Notes and News

To all our readers and supporters, we wish a Happy New Year and particularly a fighting New Year against superstition, credulity and humbug from any quarter. This is the unique contribution of *The Freethinker*, the only weekly journal in the world devoted to the cause of Free-thought which means, in the ultimate, devoted to tolerance and justice above all. We hope our readers will support us in the coming year with even more enthusiasm if possible. We, on our part, will never relax our efforts to provide in *The Freethinker* the best of Freethought fare.

### The Memorial Fund

(Some recent appreciations, taken at random from many equally encouraging.)

"I look forward to the regular arrival of *The Freethinker*, an intellectual delight." JOHANNESBURG.

"Best wishes to all who keep the Freethought Flag flying. I try at this end, but it is a long and lonesome road."

—HAMPSHIRE.

### The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,037 6s. 7d.; H. Courlander, South Africa, £5 5s. 0d.; J. P. Tuck, 13s.; A. V. Peries, £2; C. Hammersley, 8s. 6d.; J. Molyneux, 5s.; A. N. Richmond, 10s. Total to date, £1,046 2s. 1d.

"I read *The Freethinker* with great interest from first page to last. Long may it continue."—NATAL.

"I shall be taking my back numbers of *The Freethinker* on my travels, as I usually do. Best wishes and all success."—BOLTON.

"Long life to *The Freethinker*, which I started taking just after the first world war."—MEXBOROUGH.

"I hope *The Freethinker* will long continue to voice reasoned and forthright opinion."—LIVERPOOL.

"With best wishes for the uninterrupted publication of *The Freethinker*, which I enjoy reading every week."—BOLTON.

"Best wishes to all in your great Freethought movement."—NEW ZEALAND.

### A Freethinker Anthology for 1955

(culled from the pages of *The Freethinker* for 1955)

JOSEPH McCABE: About two tons of a radioactive by-product are freed when an H-bomb explodes. This substance takes 5,000 years to lose half of its dangerous rays. . . . Do not talk to me about the action of a God in such a universe. Do not talk to me about immortal souls and heavens. Do not talk to me about the jumble of ancient stories called Christianity. We shall gain enormously when we rule out the whole of this preposterous nonsense from the administration of our planet. (Feb. 4.)

E. H. GROUT: The Romanist minority is so compact, so untiring, so well organised and so wealthy that many editors . . . are mortally afraid of giving offence. (Sept 9.)

S. RAMANATHAN (India): Morality is not a revelation but an evolution. (July 22.)

HIBERNICUS: Some Church bosses assert that modern Christianity is enlightened and harmless; but we can see what they would really like people to believe by observing what they teach to children. (Nov. 4.)

LEON SPAIN (U.S.A.): Christian history is replete with crusades and inquisitions, wars and persecutions, heresy hunts and innumerable evils which would put to shame any other group having such an unspeakable record. (Mar 11.)

J. H. MATSON: The support expressed in the letters that managed to get printed in favour (of Mrs. Knight) is a clear indication of the trend of opinion today. (June 17.)

C. G. L. Du CANN: One of the famous Ten Commandments lays heavy emphasis on the duty of children towards their parents. Not one of these Commandments ever speaks of the reverse duty of parents to their children. (Jan. 28.)

ROBERT H. SCOTT (U.S.A.): It may be that no public monument will be erected to the memory of Joseph McCabe for many years to come, but he has, by his writings, erected for himself the best and most enduring of monuments. (Feb. 25.)

H. DAY: Christianity is merely the name attached to one of many world religions all evolved by man. It has no more authenticity than any of the others, and like all the others is likely to die of being found out. (Feb. 11.)



LEONARD MARTIN (S. Africa) : Mohammed turns in his grave every time one of his followers takes an alcoholic drink, so to make matters right they always take another on top of it, or even multiples of two. (April 15.)

G. I. BENNETT : Einstein had no belief in a power in the least anthropomorphic, standing in a personal and special relationship to man, and found the idea of an individual's survival of physical death beyond comprehension. (Sept. 30.)

R. READER (Belgium) : That lovely flower, contemporary civilization, is in reality not a scientific bloom at all, but rather a hybrid in which scientific method and discovery have been systematically prostituted to serve religious concepts of ignorant ages. (Mar. 25.)

E. G. MACFARLANE : The application of science is frustrated at the very outset of every school day. Science is actually precluded by the religious act of worship every morning. (Oct. 28.)

DR. E. L. DWIGHT TURNER (U.S.A.) : No brain, no mind. In other words immortality is an illusion. (Jan. 28.)

GEORGE MILLER : One of the Church's most unpleasant traits is the resistance it shows to each new scientific discovery or invention, then . . . eventually turning them to its own advantage. (May 13.)

WM. McCARTHY (U.S.A.) : The belief that man has a soul sustains the Christian religion, feeds the priests and supports their temples. (Aug. 5.)

A. YATES : Our whole experience teaches us that it is not upon our knowledge of a god, but upon our knowledge of nature that our existence depends. (June 10.)

A. O'HALLORAN (New Zealand) : McCabe's brilliant gifts, his magnificent zeal, his utter fearlessness, long ago won our respect and esteem ; he passes into Freethought history as one of its truly great sons. (Feb. 18.)

RUBY Ta'BOIS : Sleeping in the moonlight is still believed by some to have harmful results of a mental nature, another hangover from the primitive belief in the baleful influence of the moon. (Sept. 16.)

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Australia) : The last remaining ghost of gods, the modern "God-in-General," will follow them to the oblivion of all the gods. (Oct. 7.)

DR. HUGO HECHT (America) : There are no miracles in medicine. (Sept. 2.)

REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A. : Lunn on morality should be compulsory reading for all wavering Christians, for he unwittingly succeeds in showing how immoral the religious, and specifically Christian, view of ethics is. (Nov. 4.)

H. IRVING : Wisdom and foolishness are alike buttressed by reasons. (April 22.)

GEORGES ORY (France) : The Russian Church works in complete loyalty with the Government, of which she is a valuable and efficient auxiliary. Her prelates fill the Orthodox missions beyond the frontiers and witness in some way to the continuity of Russian policy. (April 29.)

W. EDWARD MEADS : Morals are principles which are integral rules of life, bound up with the fact of our living together in a society. (Sept. 9.)

BASIL BRADLAUGH BONNER : 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. (May 20.)

J. GORDON : A man of strong democratic convictions and passionate upholder of justice, he (Einstein) never hesitated to condemn intolerance and brutality. (June 24.)

REV. JOHN ROWLAND : The Fundamentalist argument of Dr. Graham, "I'm not telling you what I think ; I'm telling you what God thinks" . . . will drive the more intelligent people out of the churches. (Aug. 19.)

G.J.F. : Once the idea of the soul is destroyed, the idea that man survives death will go, and with it will go the only effective incentive to a belief in God. (May 13.)

COLIN McCALL : The history of civilization is very largely synonymous with the elucidation of mysteries. (Aug. 26.)

F. A. RIDLEY : Rival Christian Churches are not noted for Christian charity towards each other ! (Jan. 21.)

H. CUTNER : The actual House of Nazareth where Mary and her miraculously born Son used to live was bodily wafted over into Italy in the 13th century, and not even the most hostile critic has ever disproved the truth of the wafting, because many pilgrims have testified to the open space left in Nazareth where the House used to be. (Nov. 4.)

F. A. HORNIBROOK : Where they are in a majority the Roman Catholics are tyrants ; when in a minority they claim to be loyal citizens and democrats. When attacked for their political actions and intrigues they immediately scream that it is their religion which is being attacked. (Oct. 21.)

G. H. TAYLOR : Christianity survives with a vacuum for a brain and a bejewelled crown for the covering thereof. (Mar. 18.)

## Sufficient For All

By R. READER

MANY people today are sincerely convinced that the world is not overpopulated—that, with more efficient organisation and distribution general standards of living could reach, and even surpass, those of pre-war middle-class Britain.

In point of fact, however, enormous efforts are today being made to stave off the worst famine in history. The details of such efforts are intricate and technical, and are appreciated only by those working in such fields. Therefore the intensity of the effort, and hence the gravity of the problem, are not recognised.

Let us consider one of these cases, that of using the Indian sun as a source of mechanical power, and trace some of the factors that overpopulation is obliging us to take into account.

In India today, water for irrigating crops has to be raised from wells. Men once did this work. It is now done by bullocks. Why? Because, although both men and bullocks require to be fed, food for the latter is more plentiful than sustenance for the former. For each gallon of water raised, therefore, the bullock costs less than the man.

The sun's rays, concentrated by a suitable mirror, can be used to boil water and drive a steam engine which, in turn, will raise the water. This eliminates the cost of feeding the bullock, and therefore, at first sight, appears advantageous. But in practice, the problem is much more complicated. Bullocks are made by nature. Mirrors, lenses, steam engines, and boilers have to be manufactured by men. Ores of several metals ; a smelting furnace ; coal ; and human effort, physical and mental, are necessary to make the parts, and the latter then require machine tools to bring them within permissible limits of size and finish. In other words, a certain quantity of human effort must be expended in order to make the machine.

The work that can be obtained from the finished device is dependent on many things, among others the size of the



mirror or lens, the duration and intensity of the sun's rays, and the rate of wear of the part of the machine. In the case of the bullock, the work got out exceeds the work put in as food by an amount that we will call "A." Let us assume that with the machine the work got out exceeds the work put in (i.e., the human effort to make the machine, maintain it, and replace it when worn out) by an amount "B." Obviously, for any advantage to accrue from using the machine in place of the bullock, B must be greater than A.

These are the considerations which determine whether any proposition is economically sound. And they are also the considerations which are showing, ever more clearly, that the world is overpopulated, and this for the following reasons.

To take the case mentioned above; with a given size of apparatus no amount of technical improvement can increase the output beyond a certain point. Theoretical calculations show that sun-driven, wind-driven and similar devices will be able to replace coal or oil-fired boilers, or water-driven turbines only in circumstances which particularly favour their use—for example, in places having long, sunny periods throughout the year, or point exposed to strong prevalent winds. Nature appears to have fixed an upper quantitative limit for supporting human life—and the tenacity and desperation with which the slenderest possibilities are being minutely explored testifies eloquently to the fact that that limit has now been reached.

"But a Golden Atomic Age is dawning" we are told. "The fission of one gram of U-235 will replace tons of coal." Agreed. But how much human energy is expended in producing that gram of U-235? A very great deal. And even more is used safely to convert the energy liberated into useful work and neutralise the end-products. That the efficiency of present-day reactors will be greatly increased, we cannot doubt. But we would do well to realise that the benefits are not so great as we have been led to believe.

Above all, we should consider atomic fission, not as a herald of a deepening and intensification of existing patterns of living, but rather as an ultimatum to change these. If, eventually, overweening human pride in numbers triumphs over rational thought, then our obituary notice will hardly be flattering. We have certain achievements to our credit, but the final verdict will be that we ended in a manner more stupid than that of any mouse we enticed into our mousetraps.

### WHAT'S THE TIME?

Time to join the National Secular Society if you are not already a member. Time to renew your annual subscription if you are.

To the loyal body of members we will only say: Ease the work of your Branch Secretary and of the General Secretary by renewing promptly.

To those who wish to join, may we say there are three ways of doing it.

#### The First Way

You can contact your local branch for details of membership and a membership form. Branches in Britain include the following, with secretaries or organisers as given:

LONDON: NORTH: Mrs. E. Ebury, 36 Nascot St., Watford.  
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LONDON: WEST: Mr. H. Cleaver, 29A Dunraven Road, Shepherds Bush, W.12.

LONDON: CENTRAL: Mr. J. M. Alexander, 249 Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, N.1.

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EDINBURGH: Mr. W. Cronan, 52 Sloan Street Edinburgh, 6.

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MERSEYSIDE: Mr. W. Parry, 476 Mill Street, Liverpool 8.

NOTTINGHAM: Mr. T. M. Mosley, 63 Valley Rd., Carlton, Nottingham.

#### The Second Way

Those who reside too far away from, or for other reasons prefer not to join a local branch, can join the Parent Branch by direct contact with the Head Office, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

#### The Third Way

A new branch may be formed by seven people in any locality, subject to ratification by the National Executive.

At the moment there are distinct possibilities for new branches at Bristol, Cardiff, Carlisle, Norwich, Preston and Swansea, and one is in process of formation at Dumfries under the secretaryship of Mr. James Gibson, Verosa Cottage, Low Road, Hightae, Lockerbie.

Subscriptions for 1956 are now due, except in special circumstances. Branch Secretaries remit capitation fees of 2/- per branch member to the General Secretary not later than January 31st, 1956.

Full details of the Society and its work may be obtained from the General Secretary.

## Correspondence

### IRELAND

May I say that the widespread misconceptions about Irish partition existing in this country are likely to be increased rather than diminished by the letter from your correspondent Mrs. J. Matson.

The minority in the north, some 30 to 40 per cent., can quite rightly be described as large but this description hardly fits the southern non-Catholics who number only about 4 to 5 per cent. of the population. That is the reason why all the trouble occurs north of the border.

Mrs. Matson implies a view held by most anti-partitionists that if only Britain stopped meddling in the north the "real rulers of Ireland would be the Irish people."

This is pure wishful thinking. It is true that for centuries Great Britain manipulated religion for her own political ends but for the past generation it has not been a case of politics manipulating religion but the reverse.

The greatest single factor in keeping partition alive today is not Westminster, but home and whether the British remain or withdraw from the north the vampires of the Vatican are likely to remain the real rulers of Southern Ireland for a long time to come and



Britain or no Britain the Orange faction in the north-east will fight, if need be to the last drop of their blood, rather than submit to "unity."

Anti-partitionists should realize that although it is sometimes difficult to unscramble Irish politics and religion there is today no workable political solution. If they stopped striking at England and devoted all their energies to fighting Popery in the south and Calvinistic bigotry in the north they would be on the right road to unifying our country. It is a long hard road but it is the only one.

A. F. HARRIS.

Endeavouring to conceal the shallowness of her argument Mrs. Matson ("Ireland" 2/12/55) adopts a technique common among Irish Nationalists, that of completely ignoring—or perverting—certain pertinent facts and substituting in their stead such banal shibboleths as "foreign occupation and exploitation."

Mrs. Matson implies that identity of race exists between Celt and Ulsterman. Nothing could be more untrue. By birth, development and interests both types of Irishmen are anti-theoretical. A United Ireland is impracticable because common historical development and common interests between the two races do not exist.

Re "foreign occupation and exploitation," if exploitation does exist in Southern Ireland it can do so only with the consent of the Government of the Republic since by the Ireland Act (1949) the Irish Republic constitutes a sovereign state. If it is asserted such exploitation exists in Northern Ireland Mrs. Matson would do well to consult any publication on the fiscal and financial relations between Gt. Britain and Northern Ireland.

I do not know on what grounds British troops (particularly such regiments as the Inniskillings, Irish Fusiliers and Royal Ulster Rifles) constitute foreign occupation. At every election in Northern Ireland the vast majority of the people have given their consent to such "occupation." British troops have as much justification for being in Ulster as they have for being in England. Their mandate is the will of the vast majority of the electorate.

Finally what is Mrs. Matson's criterion for a "large minority?" She uses these words in one sentence to mean 33½% (the proportion of R.C.'s in Northern Ireland) and in the next sentence endeavours to make them represent a much smaller figure, 6% (the proportion of non-R.C.'s in the Republic). The following is from Whittaker, 1955 (p. 827): "Republic of Ireland: Catholics, 2,786,033; Episcopalians, 124,829; Presbyterians, 23,870; Methodists, 8,355; Others, 12,020. Total, 2,955,107."

The proportion of non-Catholics (this includes Atheists, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) therefore constitutes about 6%. This hardly constitutes a "large minority" especially when Mrs. Matson referred only to Protestants as forming such a minority.

ROBERT E. C. WALLACE.

### WHICH IS WORSE ?

It is strange that so many who view with complete complacency the idea of everlasting punishment should shudder at the thought of Capital Punishment. Which is worse ?

MOLLY ROCHE.

### HOMOSEXUALS

For the information of S. W. Brooks I have read "The Physiology of Sex" by K. Walker and about 300 other modern works on sex and sexual deviations. Perhaps the word "queer" is a rather severe one to use when describing homosexuals who are, after all, sick people who need medical attention.

All the scientific jargon of Havelock Ellis, K. Walker etc. will not convince me that they are not a menace to the moral, and possibly the physical, health of our young people who are free from this disease.

Mr Brooks should face the problem of homosexuality from a practical viewpoint, namely, that they are not normal people and are in need of medical treatment, either physically or mentally.

ALEX TALBERT.

### " SACRED "

J. Gorel (9/12/55) has completely missed my point.

I made no attempt to deny that "we can respect a fellow-man's prejudices, his feelings, his tastes and so forth." All I said was that as "sacred" means "set apart for use in the service of super-natural beings" an Atheist or Secularist cannot use this term to describe anything.

Let us consider the instances given by Mr. Gorel. A man's love for his wife is an entirely praiseworthy and admirable thing. But love only becomes, "sacred" when it is held to be "an attribute of Deity."

An heirloom is a symbol of family continuity, and as such may

evoke feelings of pride and affection. But there is nothing "sacred" about it except to those who regard the family as a "divinely ordained" institution. A plot of earth enclosing the dead body of a human being is precisely the same as any other plot of earth. The feeling that a grave is a "sacred" thing is derived from its association with the Christian doctrine of "the resurrection of the body" from its place of burial. This, likewise is a belief which entails acknowledgement of "supernatural beings." A man's word of honour cannot be described as "sacred" unless he has invoked a "supernatural being" to witness his pledge. Consequently, I still maintain that for those who have discarded belief in "the supernatural" words like "sacred" and "holy" have no meaning. Feelings of respect and affection remain, naturally, but they have a humanist and secularist basis.

S. W. BROOKS.

### OBITUARY

It is with regret that we report the death of a well known member of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. Mr. George Neil Peck died suddenly on 9th December shortly after his 76th birthday. Both Mr. and Mrs. Peck were Christian Scientists before becoming Secularists; and having liberated themselves from superstition they tried to help others do likewise. Mr. Charles H. Smith officiated at the cremation on 13th December. To Mr. Peck's widow and daughter, we extend our deepest sympathy.

### A PAGAN "PRAYER"

This is not the prayer of a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister, a Jewish rabbi, a Quaker teacher. These words are those of Eusebius, a "pagan" who lived some two thousand years ago.

"May I be no man's enemy, and may I be the friend of that which is eternal and abides. . . . May I never devise evil against any man; if any devise evil against me, may I escape . . . without the need of hurting him. May I love, seek and attain only that which is good. May I wish for all men's happiness and envy none. . . . When I have done or said what is wrong, may I never wait for the rebuke of others, but always reuke myself until I make amends. . . . May I win no victory that harms either me or my opponent. . . . May I reconcile friends who are wroth with one another. May I, to the extent of my power, give all needful help . . . to all who are in want. May I never fail a friend in danger. . . . May I respect myself. . . . May I always keep tame that which rages within me. . . . May I never discuss who is wicked and what wicked things he has done, but know good men and follow in their footsteps."

### CHRISTIAN DEBUNKING JESUS

"Jesus Christ is certainly presented as the Son of God, a pre-existent divine being, and therefore to that extent a mythical figure." R. Bultmann.—"It would be serious error, if it were supposed that Dr. Bultmann could be dismissed as an existentialist wolf masquerading in the sheep's clothing of a New Testament theologian; the problems he has raised are real problems, and they must be wrestled with" (A Review in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, October, 1954, of *Kerygma and Myth*, by R. Bultmann and others, London: S.P.C.K., 1953).

*The Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ*. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. By Gerald Massey. Price 1/-, postage 2d.

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