

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

IN ITS ISSUE of December 12th, our contemporary, the *Daily Express*, owned by that pious Protestant, Lord Beaverbrook, announced that a new dogma on the Virgin Mary was shortly to be promulgated by the present Pope, Pius the 12th. Our contemporary added that several committees of theologians were already studying the new dogma with a view to its precise definition. We are informed that the prospective dogma is being defined at the Vatican as "Mary's Universal Meditation", and that it will teach explicitly that "all the prayers, the appeals for help and spiritual comfort, whether addressed directly to the Father or to the Son, reach God through the Mother of Christ only". Such is the prospective dogma.

The Evolution of the Cult of Mary

Presumably, we shall soon become acquainted with the new dogma, for the present Pope is already an octogenarian, and has recently been dangerously ill. If, as our contemporary states, he is determined on the new dogma, its official promulgation can hardly be long delayed. Assuming the probability, or even possibility, of this new dogma, it may be both opportune, as well as interesting, to trace the evolution of this dogma throughout the centuries during which the legendary Mother of a perhaps mythical Christ has been successively, so to speak, raised in the celestial peerage from the modest status of a Galilean maiden to the vestibule, as it were, of god-head. In the long story told by comparative religion, there are to be found, of course, historical parallels, notably with the Egyptian Isis, but the probably equally lengthy evolution of the cult of Isis cannot, unfortunately, be studied with the same detail. The Egyptian Madonna, also a "star of the sea", was born by the Nile in prehistoric times, and the origins of her cult are lost in the mists of ages.

Mary in the New Testament

By a clumsy but, for us fortunate piece of editing, we are able to state *definitely* that the Virgin birth was unknown to the original authors of our gospels of Matthew and Luke, where alone, the miraculous birth is actually described. For, in both gospels, we are given a genealogy of the Saviour, in one case from Adam, the first man, in the other, from Abraham, the alleged founder of the Hebrew race. These genealogies differ, but both alike, trace the descent of Jesus through *Joseph*, the descendant of the legendary national hero, King David. There is no mention of Mary in either genealogy. This fact, combined with frequent references to Jesus as the "son of David", indicate that the original authors of the gospels knew nothing about any virgin birth. Indeed this supposition is actually *proved* by the recent discovery of an ancient MS of the gospel of Matthew, which concludes the genealogy with the addition "and Joseph begat Jesus". One may, perhaps, comment in this connection, "There are none so blind as those who won't see" or read.

The Pagan Origins of the Virgin Birth

Amongst the Jews the term "a son of God", was a figurative term, since Jehovah is, by definition, a childless bachelor; but this was emphatically not the case with regard to the Pagan gods, who had as many illegitimate children as, say, the polygamous Kings of our Old Testament; such offspring were frequently born of virgins.

The Christian doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ did not grow up amongst converts from Judaism but from converted Pagans, already familiar with incestuous gods and virgin births galore. When, for example, an early Christian writer, Saint Justin (second century) defended the then novel doc-

trine of the virgin birth in his controversy with the Jewish Rabbi Trypho, the Rabbi accused him of borrowing the doctrine from the Pagan legends of Perseus and Hercules, both born of the incestuous intercourse of gods and virgins. To which Justin could only reply lamely that the Demons had invented these Pagan legends in order to discredit the Virgin Birth of the Christian Saviour; hardly very convincing reasoning? However, the Pagan converts embraced the familiar doctrine eagerly; and they soon imposed it upon the church, in which Pagan converts soon came to form the immense majority of believers. From the end of the second century on, belief in the Virgin Birth of Christ became the "orthodox" doctrine and was, as such, made compulsory, under pain of death, in the "totalitarian" church of the Middle Ages.

The Mother of God

As more Pagans flocked into the Christian church, Mary came more and more to fill the *role* and to borrow the attributes of the Pagan goddesses whom she had succeeded in the adoration of the multitudes. Only some of the more conservative theologians in whom, perhaps, something of the spirit of Greek rationalism, lingered, demurred to the extravagances of the popular cult of Mary. They objected in particular to the title of "Mother of God", or (in Greek) Theotokos — "god-bearer". At most, Mary was only the mother of the *man* Jesus. However, popular belief was too much for the theologians! At the Council of Ephesus (431) Mary was solemnly proclaimed as the "Mother of God". From then on, the cult of Mary went forward without a break.

The "Perpetual Virginity" of Mary

The next step was represented by the official acceptance by the Catholic Church of the strange physiological belief in the "perpetual virginity" of Mary. Whereas the New Testament talks about the brothers and sisters of Jesus, the new dogma proclaimed Mary as "ever virgin", and of necessity childless by any human father. The aforesaid brothers and sisters became relegated to collateral relationship. Mary had remained "virgo intacta" even whilst giving birth to Christ: a physical miracle, to be justified presumably only on the hypothesis that, "with God all things are possible".

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Fourth Person of the Trinity

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

In which connection one recalls a recent Catholic protest against a BBC play which depicted Mary surrounded by her family.

The Immaculate Conception

In a comparatively recent year, 1854, the then Pope, Pius the Ninth, "infallibly" proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary—that is, that Mary alone of human beings since the Fall, had been miraculously conceived without "original sin", since otherwise, she must have transmitted it to her Divine Son, which was impossible! This doctrine had actually been taught in the church for many centuries, but it was not proclaimed as an official "Article of Faith" since Saint Thomas Aquinas, the most famous of Catholic doctors, had opposed it, on the ingenious grounds that, if Mary was born without "original sin", she could not have been saved by Christ, who had proclaimed himself as the saviour of *all* human beings. However, despite this typical piece of "Alice-in-Wonderland" reasoning, Pope Pius eventually by-passed even St. Thomas in this matter.

The Assumption of Mary

At the Vatican council some of the bishops wanted to proclaim the "pious opinion" that Mary had been miraculously preserved from bodily death, and had been bodily "assumed" into Heaven as an Article of Faith, that is, as a

compulsory dogma. This was not done at the time, but the present Pope, in sublime contempt for both the law of gravitation and the modern science of "astro-nautics", has recently (1950) proclaimed the dogma. Mary, like her son, is now transported, body and soul to "Heaven", wherever that may or may not be. Perpetual and Immaculate Virgin, released from the laws that govern both the operation of genetics and of gravitation, what more can be added about this astonishing young woman, about whom we know so little in her life and so much *after* her death?

The Fourth Person of the Trinity

Are the posthumous activities of the virgin mother of God ended? *Not necessarily!* For there is one stage yet to traverse before her celestial parallel with her Egyptian avatar, Isis, is finally concluded. Will the virgin "Queen of Heaven" become a goddess, a partner in the god-head, "The Fourth Person of the Trinity"? Such a final apotheosis has often been predicted by critics in the past. It rather looks as if it may be realised in our time. We shall await the promulgation of the Pope's new dogma with much interest. "The Mother of God" has already eclipsed God the Father; will the virgin goddess eclipse the whole Trinity, just as her Egyptian prototype Isis did in ancient Egypt? Not only we, but all students of comparative religion, will await with intense curiosity the final stage of this extraordinary evolution.

Sufficient for All

By JAMES H. MATSON

THE ARTICLE "Sufficient for All" by R. Reader is, indeed, alarming, but as regards the allegation that "enormous efforts are today being made to stave off the worst famine in history", we who have lived through two wars and have seen thousands of tons of food deliberately wasted, do not take too seriously the efforts of governments in this direction. Tons of fish thrown back into the sea or used as manure on the excuse of lack of transport and low prices, millions more rabbits than rats poisoned, according to official figures, while heavy penalties were inflicted for so-called poaching, are things that speak louder to us than do his "intricate and technical details . . . appreciated only by those working in such fields". We note that China, owing to increased cultivation and mechanisation, was able to send a year or two ago substantial *food* help to a more needy country, India; while I am old enough to remember the time when Mansion House appeals were made for India's famine victims, not to send food from here but to send money to one part of India to buy food for the starving in another part. But there is no need to remember the past or to refer to other countries for examples. I live in a town where during the summer and autumn shiploads of fruit and vegetables are coming in, while farmers and market gardeners are ploughing in or letting rot their crops owing to lack of customers. And this is but one aspect. Goods that can hardly be sold at the lowest figure by growers are sold on London markets at prices so high as to limit the power of the consumers to purchase. I need not refer to the law which compelled jam makers to use a percentage of foreign so-called fruit pulp when sound fruit is in consequence left to rot in our orchards, or to the way the Ethiopian peasants were encouraged during the war to produce grain for sale to the allied governments which, when produced, was not purchased but left to spoil on the ground because the armies were offered cheaper supplies

elsewhere. From all this it appears that the immediate need is not just to grow more food but to ensure that its ownership is not left in the hands of the powers who have produced the world results that R. Reader is so disturbed about. And even while we are perusing R. Reader's apocalyptic nightmare of the imminent starvation of mankind, we see and hear the American presidential announcement that the government is prepared to compensate growers, not only of wheat but also of various human necessities, not to produce but to leave idle large tracts of valuable agricultural land for the reason that the American Government has in store food of which the amounts are given in astronomical figures as well as the cash value. Now since the American taxpayer has had to supply the money for these enormous government purchases from the growers and since recent figures show that acute hunger is the lot of millions in that land of too much food, it is clear that those who foot the bill are not necessarily the consumers. (*Manchester Guardian*, October 31st, 1955, *Daily Telegraph*, April 25th.)

I make no reference to the question of birth control, for though I am a convinced advocate for the unrestricted knowledge of this subject and of the means of its application, at the same time I know that the only way to do so is to face the whole question of our conventional sex system: not to patch up this outgrown legacy of past ignorance and social life but to build a new way of life in which a free humanity can live and breed free men and women.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE MARGARET KNIGHT
CORRESPONDENCE

On Theism

By JOHN BOWDEN

THE Design Argument was a great favourite of Paley's; and for decades his famous "watch analogy" was regarded as a complete refutation of Atheism. Reduced to its essentials the Paleyan argument runs thus: A savage who picked up a watch would at once discern marks of design and would infer a maker. Animals, and the universe as a whole, carry even more evident marks of design. Therefore there is a Supreme Designer — God!

Nowadays this "conclusive" argument for God seems to have fallen into disfavour. It is realised that no savage, unless he had some knowledge of watches (or similar mechanical devices) and their makers, would infer a maker. He would look upon the watch as a natural object; if it happened to be ticking he would regard it as a living organism.

Civilised folk know that watches are designed and made (a designer and a maker are not necessarily the same person). In their experience all mechanical devices are designed and made. But no one has ever had experience of the making of animals and a universe.

When it was believed that animals — elephants, say — had always been elephants there was some degree of plausibility in the Paleyan argument. The doctrine of evolution, however, has placed matters in a different light.

And if the elephant be designed, what of its designer? If the Theist were logical he would perceive that the argument he puts forward to prove the existence of a designer of animals and of the universe can be applied to the Designer himself. Once again we are faced with a never-ending series of designers and makers, each more marvellous than its predecessors.

But the really fatal flaw in the Paleyan analogy is this: the watchmaker makes his watches out of pre-existing materials, whereas what the Theist requires is not only a designer and maker of the universe, but one who also brought into existence (out of nothing!) the elemental matter out of which the universe is composed. In short, the "analogy" is not an analogy at all.

Even if valid, the analogy would establish the existence not of one God but a multiplicity of Gods. To produce a watch a whole series of operators are required. There is the miner who digs out the metal, the carrier who transports it, the smelter who smelts it, the metallurgist who makes the alloys, the makers of the machinery for stamping out the parts, the glass maker, and so on. The man who puts the watch together merely assembles the parts brought to him and which he had no hand in making. Finally, there is the man who tests the finished article.

And so, if the Paleyan argument had validity, it might establish a case for polytheism, never for monotheism. The argument from "purpose" is merely a variant of the design argument.

Wherever we look, we are told, purpose is manifest. Our attention is directed to the purposive actions of animals. The efforts of every animal are directed primarily to ensuring survival, and to that end it is equipped with organs to enable it to perpetuate its existence. The purpose of its eyes is to enable the animal to see its way about, of legs to enable it to go in search of food and to escape from its foes, and so on. And so we infer Purpose (with a capital P) behind the Universe.

We have here a prime example of what semanticists call the "utraquistic subterfuge". The word "purpose" is used in two senses. In the first instance it is a synonym for func-

tion; in the second case it is used to describe a conscious, intelligent, premeditated action.

It is quite in order to use the word purpose in each of these cases so long as the difference in meaning is kept in mind; but it decidedly is not legitimate to make the conclusions drawn from one usage apply to a situation which is not analogous.

(It is not suggested that those who resort to the utraquistic subterfuge are necessarily dishonest; they may be muddle-headed!)

A further point: if the Universe be eternal, then the very notion of a Divine Purpose is absurd. An infinite purpose is a contradiction in terms. A purpose implies an end. How can there be an end in an endless Universe?

The claim that phenomena are divinely guided still enjoys a certain popularity despite its manifest weaknesses. Because human beings direct operations and exert guidance in everyday affairs, there must be a Supreme Intelligence who directs events in the Cosmos. How else, we are asked, can we explain the geometrical designs found in a crystal? How else can we account for the combination of brain cells which results in genius? To say that there is no guidance in such cases is absurd. One might as well say that a heap of letters of the alphabet could sort themselves out and grow themselves into a sentence.

Again the analogy is false. Letters of the alphabet are artificial constructions; they are made for a particular purpose and can serve no other purpose. And they don't "throw" themselves into anything; they don't move, they are moved. Molecules of matter, on the other hand, are *natural* entities; they move by virtue of their inherent powers of attraction and repulsion. They combine with other molecules with which they have an affinity, and the patterns they form are in each case invariable; no other pattern could result from the combination. If the patterns were *not* invariable; if, in the presence of identical conditions, a combination exhibited one form at one time and an entirely different form at another there would be some justification for assuming the operation of a supernatural force.

As usual, the Theist wants us to meet him on ground of his choosing. He refers us to the brain of the genius; he says nothing about the brain of the idiot. But if all things are guided, then we must accept the idiot's brain as the result of guidance. To the Atheist the factors operating in each case are purely natural; the difference is simply one of difference in the conditions of development.

It will be noted that the claim for guidance is yet another variant of the design argument.

It is claimed that the order and regularity we find in nature imply a controlling intelligence. It seems to be overlooked that order is a human concept and that its correlate is disorder. Our conception of one gives rise to our conception of the other. Having formulated the concept of order, we project this concept on to nature. But all we are entitled to say is that the manifestations of nature are due to forces inherent in nature itself. To refer to these operative forces as orderly or disorderly is merely a form of anthropomorphism. When a star blows up and forms what we call a Nova, it is just as much the outcome of natural law as is the movement of a planet in its orbit.

If we are to invoke a guiding intelligence to account for what we call order, to what must we attribute disorder? On the face of it nature is sometimes orderly, sometimes

This Believing World

Faith and spiritual healers must really look to their laurels, for now they have a powerful rival in — what would you think? — in lightning. A Scots lady, it appears, was given only two years to live, but luckily for her, she was struck by lightning, enabling an operation to be performed, and she can now dance the jitterbug. She puts it all down to an act of God — the cure, not the jitterbug — or a miracle specially performed for her; which is not surprising for, after all, lightning was once considered God's flashes of anger, and thunder the noise made when the Almighty (who was then called Jupiter) threw bolts about. Mrs. Porteous wants it all to be forgotten — but, as the *Glasgow Daily Record* plaintively points out, you can't stop a miracle spreading.

★

Three wishes were asked for from some church school children, and out of 102 wishes, only two, we are told in *The Times* "were specifically religious". The rest were all obviously "secular". Help for the sick, no more war, things for home and family, even going to Mars in a space ship, were among the wishes; but Christianity as such wasn't even mentioned. One child wanted everybody to know Jesus, including the heathen, but the only reason given was "they believe in witchcraft", which was one of the beliefs, incidentally, of Jesus himself.

★

The awful fate of two girls as the result of a hot female "gospeller" was given recently in the *Daily Sketch*. It appears that the wife of an American sergeant stationed in Suffolk, inspired, no doubt, by the Rev. B. Graham, began a Sunday school with such good effect that an angry father bitterly complained that his two daughters, who used to go to wrestling matches, socials, and skating, now sit at home "reading Bibles". Our sympathies go out to the poor parent especially as we are sure he would agree with the lady evangelist that the Bible is God's Precious Word. How serious it all is is shown by the fact that the Suffolk town is now torn into two camps — and all because of a Holy Religion. It is too bad.

★

A very disgruntled doctor wrote the other day to *News-Chronicle* protesting against the remark made by a book critic — that "soldiers, unlike doctors, are usually religious men". He has known "a large number (other than the hosts of medical missionaries) of deeply religious doctors". Well, of course, all soldiers could testify that among officers the biggest martinets and bullies were almost always deeply religious, and they are now heartbroken that compulsory Church Parade is no longer held for them.

★

As for doctors — naturally among them can be found many "deeply religious". But how many of the others dare admit their unbelief? Would they not lose dozens of patients? It is no more easy with a powerful Church for doctors to oppose religion, than for business men to proclaim their Atheism. It has never, in fact, been easy for anybody to say outright that they do not believe in God or Christ or even in Hell. And it never will be easy until the Church has had its quietus from Freethought. As one day it will.

★

Once again the BBC has bravely faced its religious followers by allowing a discussion between two unbelievers and two believers. We do not know if it was read from a thoroughly censored script — it looked like it to us — or whether it was entirely unrehearsed. The two Christians were Dr. Micklem and Mr. J. Wren-Lewis, a "research

worker", and it was a pity that he had not included in his research something about the position of Freethought. In any case, the "key word" they had to discuss was "God" and Mr. Wren-Lewis proceeded at once to demolish the whole of the usual Christian conception of God Almighty. He laughed to scorn the idea that God was a dear old gentleman with a white beard in the sky. No, his own idea of God was given to him through "experience", and as far as we could see, that is all it ever amounted to. Thus, Christianity was thoroughly proven.

★

The rest of the "discussion" was somewhat abstract, though Mr. H. J. Blackham and Prof. Flew no doubt did their best. We have an idea that Dr. Micklem preferred an old gentleman in the sky as a god rather than the "experience" of Mr. Wren-Lewis, and we are sure that the two "unbelievers" would also have preferred discussing him. You can at least show that the heavenly habitant is absurd, but what are you going to do with an "experience"? Sky Mr. Wren-Lewis!

La Raison (January-February issue) quotes from the catechism of the diocese of Luchon that "Father Christmas does not exist. He is an invention of the Devil". The apt Gallic comment is: "Of a very good devil; much better, many children will think, than the good God himself".

THEISM — concluded from page 51

disorderly. If we are to regard the presence of a star as a manifestation of order, then its distintegration is a manifestation of disorder. If we invoke intelligence to account for the former, then lack of intelligence or a relaxation of vigilance is responsible for the latter.

It is asserted that by rejecting Divine Guidance the Atheist is committed to the assumption that everything is the result of chance. One can scarcely imagine a more foolish charge. As already pointed out, it is a basic postulate of the Atheist that causality is invariable. There is absolutely no room for chance in the philosophy of Atheism. On the contrary, it is Theism which introduces the chance element; for if natural processes may at any moment be interfered with through Divine caprice there can be no certainty about anything. When the scientist came to repeat an experiment it would be pure chance if he got the results formerly obtained.

When the Atheist uses the word "chance" or "accident", it is merely an indication that, because of ignorance of causal factors, he was unable to foresee a particular happening. He does not believe in chance in the sense of an absence of causality.

[Reprinted from N.Z. RATIONALIST]

CHAPMAN COHEN — JOSEPH McCABE MEMORIAL MEETING

HOLBORN HALL, GRAY'S INN ROAD, WC1
on THURSDAY, MARCH 1st, at 7.30 p.m.

Speakers - S. SILVERMAN, M.P., AVRO MANHATTAN,
HECTOR HAWTON, COLIN McCALL and J. M. ALEXANDER

Chairman - S. L. SALTER

Doors Open 7.0 p.m.

ADMISSION FREE

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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.

F. HARRIS.—To investigate every ghost story would be as stupid as appointing a Commission to consider a report on some old woman bewitching cattle. Spiritualism has got beyond the stage of examining every case to see if it is true or false. It is not Spiritualism but the Spiritualist who needs examination.

R. MAYALL.—"Whenever the mental going is a bit hard... we lose focus and slither off into Ghostland" is from *Star Begotten* by H. G. WELLS.

IAN FALLOWS.—Cock-fighting was prohibited by law several times before it faded out. There was a Royal Cockpit in Whitehall in Tudor times, and the succeeding Stuart, that moral weakling James I, himself delighted in watching this "sport".

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 1 p.m.: Speakers — J. M. ALEXANDER and others.

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

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 A. 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

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—February 19th, 6.45 p.m.: G. WICHELOW, "Dianetics and Scientology".

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 21st, 7.15 p.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "New Notions of Life and Time".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 19th, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Ten Lost Years".

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (64 George Street).—Saturday, February 18th, 3 p.m.: Mrs. F. BLUMBERG, "Family Planning".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, February 19th, 2.30 p.m.: H. WILLAIT, "The Playhouse in the Life of Nottingham".

Rationalist Press Association, Glasgow (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street).—Sunday, February 19th, 3 p.m.: "Brains Trust". Question Master, G. SCOTT, J.P.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 19th, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "Medieval Views of Evolution".

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead House, E.11).—Thursday, February 23rd, 7.45 p.m.: J. L. SHEPHERD, "Christianity's Responsibility for Crime".

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, February 19th, 7.15 p.m.: CEDRIC DOVER, "Perspectives on Race Problems".

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £1,068 8s. 7d.; H.C., 10s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; F. Muston, 4s. 6d.—Total, £1,069 4s. 1d.

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

Notes and News

THE Birmingham Press gave Mrs. Knight a generous allowance of space, without any cuts from her original, to reply to the Rev. N. Power, who had objected to her citing Einstein, Lincoln and Washington as Humanists. Mr. Power, who is broad-minded enough to be familiar with the secularist position, made a courteous rejoinder.

★

THOUGH God may be called upon to do *everything*, no sane person really expects him to do *anything*. A hospital doctor at Manchester was recently dismissed, and an official of the Hospital Board explained as follows to the *Daily Mirror* reporter (January 2nd): "We took our decision because his behaviour was eccentric. For instance, he used to pray at patients' bedsides".

Evidently the Almighty is regarded as an unnecessary addition to the doctor's skill.

★

WE ARE hoping there will be a satisfactory response to the raised price, a step, we may emphasise, which was taken at the oft-repeated suggestions of readers themselves and also of branches of the N.S.S. There must, of course, be no complacency or relaxing of efforts to ensure the survival, in these difficult times, of THE FREETHINKER, and with that end in view we append the following suggestions:

1. Get your newsagent to take a few copies of THE FREETHINKER and display them, guaranteeing to buy the copies that remain unsold.
2. Take an extra copy and either introduce it to an acquaintance or leave it in a promising place for collection, such as a train or bus.
3. Try to get your local library to take THE FREETHINKER if they do not already do so.

We shall be pleased to hear of successes in these directions. May we thank again all who have supported the Fund so liberally.

★

WE were pleased to note that a good account of the N.S.S. Jubilee Dinner appeared in *The Socialist Leader* for February 11th. The heading was "Secularists should seize the mop" — referring to Mrs. Knight's statement that we were "a victorious army engaged in mopping-up operations". The whole report is worth the attention of our readers.

★

BOUND volumes of THE FREETHINKER for 1955 are now to hand. The supply is limited and those readers who would like a copy should write to our office forthwith. The price, including postage, is 25s.

★

WE can understand the surprise of the two men who were driving in Lancashire on February 5th, when they saw a chimpanzee waving its arms as though it wanted a lift. They stopped and the animal came up to the car and tried to get inside, but its woman owner arrived on the scene and took him home, saying that he had been missing for hours. One of the men in the car said later: "It was an astonishing incident. The chimpanzee was introduced to us and insisted on kissing and shaking hands with us. Then the woman and the chimpanzee disappeared into the darkness". We have sought Mr. G. H. Taylor's opinion on the mentality of *this* ape, compared with the great Sultan,

SCIENCE FRONT — XI

Heredity

By G. H. TAYLOR

AS AGAINST the religious theory of a divinely implanted soul, twentieth century biology is successfully analysing the materialistic conditions under which a new personality is born, an advance on Darwin which lifts the "birth of the soul" to a scientific and, therefore, non-religious level.

Speaking of a "strong principle of inheritance", Darwin had not the facilities for analysing exactly what was implied by this term. No doubt he appreciated that it would have a material basis, but, as Nietzsche put it: "Heredity as something quite incomprehensible cannot be used as an explanation, but only as a designation for the identification of a problem".⁽¹⁾

Heredity, then, is no isolated force, but simply a term for denoting the genetic relation between successive generations. Prof. H. S. Jennings condemns "the fallacy that heredity is a force or entity, set off from the rest of the conditions of development".⁽²⁾

For the Darwinians of old, the parent passed on his goods to the offspring in some unknown way and there was an end of it. At the same time the offspring were always slightly different, heredity and variation being more or less co-extensive: the resemblance constituted heredity, the difference variation.

Bateson's re-discovery, at Cambridge in 1900, of the work of Mendel opened up an important line of inquiry. Subsequent work by Prof. T. H. Morgan and his colleagues⁽³⁾ based on Mendel's atomistic conception of inheritance, has shown that heredity has a material basis in the chromosomes. Instead of an immaterial guiding force guiding and directing the molecules in the mother's blood to their places in the embryo, we are beginning to understand, on deterministic lines, how the ultra-microscopic particles, the genes, Mendel's units of heredity, build up eyes, ears, etc., like those of the ancestors. Thousands of these genes are passed by each parent into the ovum, and Mendelism studies and formulates the laws of their behaviour. "Mendelism", says Dr. R. A. Fisher, "supplies the missing parts of the structure first created by Darwin".⁽⁴⁾ It shows that hereditary characters are determined by definite units which are transmitted in the reproductive cells, owing to whose microscopic machines they can be reshuffled and dealt anew without blending, and can be dissembled by crossing. Prof. J. B. Needham extracted from the newt embryo a chemical which can act as organiser of the atomic factors.

"Mendelism made it possible for us to represent the hereditary composition of an organism by a formula. Morgan's work is making it possible to represent that composition by a structural formula". (Prof. Julian Huxley, *Essays*.)

"The biological world", said Prof. L. Hogben, "did not begin to examine the experimental implications of the selectionist solution until the re-discovery of Mendel's laws by Correns, de Vries and Tschermak, and their extension to animals by Bateson and Cuenot".⁽⁵⁾ Much useful research has since been done on Mendelian lines, notably by Crew and Doncaster on animals, by Biffen on plants, and by East and Jones on the mathematical analysis of size inheritance. In U.S.A. Morean has shown that Mendel's atoms of heredity have their material basis and a spacial locality in the chromosomes, and he can actually identify which chromosome is significantly associated with a particular mutant character. He can, moreover, even localise the region of an individual chromosome in which resides a particular Mendelian factor, or mutant gene, and

can gain knowledge of the relations between these genes, arriving at an exact law of linear alignment of the genes.⁽⁶⁾ Thus he is able, by the use of Mendel's atomistic conception, to state the conditions determining the persistence of new genetic characters.

What is the significance of this? It is a practical demonstration by a leading American scientist that conceptions like Vitalism and Holism are unnecessary. "The holistic chromosome clearly would not do. An atomistic chromosome had to be put in its place". (Hogben, *ib.*)

Chromosomes are dark staining rod-shaped bodies within the nucleus of a reproductive cell, of which they occupy only a small part. The chromatin of the resting cell consists of a threadwork of material in the the nucleus. When a cell is about to divide the surrounding wall of the nucleus disappears; its chromatin condenses into chromosomes, of which each living animal or plant has a characteristic number. Division often goes wrong: "The science of genetics is based on the fact that mistakes occur so often that we can find out which genes are carried by a given chromosome". (J. B. S. Haldane.)⁽⁷⁾ The allocation of chromosomes, it may be noted, is just accurate enough to avoid serious damage to many organisms, as might be expected from natural selection.

Morgan's work is a continuation of Mendel's in lifting the study of heredity clear of the teleological ideas of its earlier investigators, such as Kolreuter, Knight, Goss and Naudin, and in eliminating purposive conceptions by the ruthless application of mechanistic procedure. "The study of heredity", Hogben continues, "has become more and more explicitly mechanistic", and the hypotheses of the modern geneticist "are conceived in physical units. The gene has space-time dimensions. Mental inheritance is a meaningless collocation of words unless it is possible to bring the concept of mentality within the mechanistic framework".

Science, that is to say, can have nothing to do with a "God-given soul". Such a misconception joins other religious suppositions as an unnecessary hypothesis.

(1) *The Will to Power*.

(2) *The Biological Basis of Human Nature*.

(3) *The Theory of the Gene*.

(4) *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*.

(5) *Essay on The Atomistic View of Parenthood*.

(6) The name Biometry is given to that branch of Biology dealing with the measurement of living things (linear alignment, weight, volume and number).

(7) *Science and the Supernatural*.

The N.S.S. Jubilee Dinner

THE MECCA RESTAURANT, FEBRUARY 4TH, 1956

NOT ONLY was this the 50th Dinner, but the presence of Mrs. Margaret Knight made it a memorable and an historical one. Even those Christians who assailed her courageous broadcast last year recognised its historic importance, for it broke the Reith tradition that nothing but a more or less Fundamentalist Christianity would be allowed on the radio by the BBC. It demolished that attitude once for all.

Needless to say, she was warmly welcomed by members and their friends — an enthusiastic gathering (including not

only many of our younger members and friends but also a contingent from the provinces), gay and sparkling, made all the more so by the many ladies present who were also, no doubt whatever, delighted that a Dance would be held after the speeches. The Mecca Restaurant provided an excellent dinner, and the speeches later were listened to with the greatest interest.

The President introduced the speakers, and insisted that the progress of Rationalism was fundamental to the world and never more so than at present. He then asked Mrs. Margaret Knight to propose the toast to the National Secular Society. Her speech was listened to with marked attention and received a great ovation. She is an accomplished speaker, and her experience as a Professor of Psychology at Aberdeen University has given her new angles with which to approach the question of Freethought propaganda. She said she was delighted to address the Society founded by Charles Bradlaugh and carried on so worthily by his spiritual descendants. Her own broadcast was directed not so much at the convinced Christian, who was very difficult, even if possible, to "convert" but to the "floating voters" who were hovering on the fringe, so to speak, and who wanted some encouragement. Let us approach them not so much with opposition as with persuasion. Mrs. Knight quoted Abraham Lincoln — "A drop of honey is worth far more than a gallon of gall". We should, in short, make it easy for the other man to do what we want. We should not argue too much — though she herself had been a great "arguer" in her youth. Applied psychology had taught her a great deal. The toast was drunk with acclamation, and Mr. G. H. Taylor, responding, pointed out that the gentle word of persuasion was a weapon Mrs. Knight used with consummate ease. Christians had fondly hoped her broadcasts would be a mere nine days' wonder, but she had earned our admiration also for what she had done since for the best of causes. He thanked her for the kind remarks she had made about the N.S.S. and assured her we rated them very highly.

The toast to "Our Guests" was proposed by Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, who combines the art of after-dinner speaking with a number of sparkling funny stories, which his audience as usual thoroughly enjoyed; and as a contrast was the interesting response of Mr. J. Henry Lloyd, the Hon. Secretary of the Humanist Council, who agreed with almost everything said by Mrs. Knight. Mr. Lloyd had been trying for a long time to get the BBC to agree to broadcast a Rationalist Service, say, from Conway Hall, but so far had not succeeded. However, the BBC had consented to a discussion between Christians and Rationalists, and he hoped we had all listened to the broadcast given on February 1st last. Mr. Lloyd was all in favour of a "new approach" — the kind of approach advocated now by Humanists and the Rationalist Press Association to the problems of meeting Christianity; and it was our job to show Christians we could give them something better. The President, thanking all the speakers, announced at the same time that Mrs. Knight was now a member of the N.S.S.

After a short interval, during which the floor was made ready, Mr. W. Griffiths, acting as M.C., opened the proceedings for dancing, and soon, to the efficient band of Mr. Bill Shipman, we had happy people enjoying old and modern dances. These were interrupted for a short while by a Master of Mystery, Mr. John Brearley, whose feats were too true to be believed, and who in addition to eating fire (that is, a naked flame) himself with apparent ease, was able to produce beer and wines from an empty "barrel" exactly as we should expect a magician to do. And it was with regret that this memorable evening closed.

To our new Secretary, Mr. Colin McCall, and to Mrs. Seibert, and their helpers "behind the scenes", every acknowledgement and thanks must be made for the way in which they had organised this very successful Jubilee Dinner. H.C.

On Evolution

By H. CUTNER

LET ME ASSURE Mr. R. McKeown, whose "reply" to a review of mine appeared in THE FREETHINKER on January 20th, that if he read it "with amusement" his hilarity is nothing like mine. Indeed, I think it is a long time since anything so amusing as his letter has appeared in this journal. Most of our readers generally class anti-Evolutionists with the Billy Graham type of Fundamentalism and ignorance; and very rarely these days do we encounter them. That they still exist is, alas, a fact; and sometimes we are obliged to meet their "arguments". Personally, I would much prefer to spend my time on something really useful than to meet the hoary old objections to Evolution unearthed by Mr. McKeown.

For example, he quotes the usual Jesuit lies and nonsense about Haeckel as "you will no doubt have heard" them. No doubt whatever, Mr. McKeown. They are as well known to us as are the impudent lies and libels sponsored by the pious followers of Jesus whenever they used to talk about Thomas Paine. But suppose for a moment that Haeckel had "falsified" diagrams, what has this to do with Evolution? If Haeckel had never written a line, Evolution would still have been discussed and believed. The theory does not depend on Haeckel. Nor on his diagrams.

Before, however, dealing with this pack of Jesuit lies about Haeckel, there is one point worth making. It is that so very religious were the Germans that they began their scurrilous campaign against him mostly from the *Christian* standpoint. Not only the Jesuit Thomist Bund in Germany but the Protestants of the Kepler Bund as well as most Germans, were solidly behind their religious leaders. Yet when Germany began the war in 1914, people like Mr. McKeown shrieked that all Germans were Atheists! They were in actual fact (with the exception of scientists like Haeckel) thorough Christians, as they were during the 1939-45 war.

Mr. McKeown quotes a passage from the *Munchener Allgemeine Zeitung* in which Haeckel "admits" his forgeries. As a matter of curiosity, I wonder whether he had this German journal in front of him and made his own translation, or whether he just "lifted" the passage from an anti-Evolution work? Would he let us know?

The Kepler Bund was the Protestant equivalent to the Thomist Jesuit Bund, and to show how angry its members were that Evolution was being accepted by the cultured people of the world, it appointed a pious "scientist" called Arnold Brass to write a couple of pamphlets against Evolution and Haeckel. He had—admits Haeckel—some knowledge of science, but he was an unmitigated liar. He charged Haeckel with drawing false diagrams, and claimed that he had provided Haeckel with the true ones. This was a deliberate lie, as was Brass's claim that he was not paid by the Kepler Bund. The Bund admitted that "Brass's pay is guaranteed by the Bund".

But the Kepler Bund was so delighted with Brass's lies that it invited German scientists to "declare themselves"—that is, to express their horror of Haeckel's "forgeries", and the scientists heartily responded. Forty-seven of them signed a manifesto in which "they condemned in the

sharpest manner the attack of Brass and the Kepler Bund on Haeckel". Among these scientists were Weismann, Wiedersheim, Rabl—in fact, the leading embryologists and anatomists in Germany. Rabl was the son-in-law of Virchow—one of Haeckel's opponents on Evolution—but was himself a whole-hearted defender of Evolution, and he finally demolished the ineffable Brass as "a mere layman" in embryology, and warned students "not to trust his illustrations". All this is carefully detailed by Joseph McCabe in an article in the *Literary Guide* (March 1911).

What are called "schematised" drawings are, almost all, illustrations used by scientists which have to be drawn. All scientists have had to have some of their illustrations drawn by artists, and they were bound to be "inaccurate" in some way. Look at the diagrammatic drawings used by astronomers to represent the sun or the moon—are they absolutely accurate? Look at the "reconstructed" drawings of the Neanderthal man or other—more or less—"missing links". The artist does his best, but no intelligent reader could possibly mistake the author's or artist's intention. The shriek of horror emanating from Dr. Brass and his pious followers (like Mr. McKeown) were not directed against Haeckel so much as against Evolution, which all really true Christians know has demolished their religion. No wonder some of them are still foaming at the mouth!

Haeckel had the greatest contempt not only of "Jesuit" science but of the Kepler Bund "science". He wrote a famous reply to both, and the "forgeries" of Haeckel are only now resurrected by angry Catholics who follow their Jesuit mentors more blindly than sheep. It is they who go back to long-forgotten controversies in the hope that some of the mud then thrown about will still stick. Never, never trust a Catholic or a Fundamentalist Christian on Evolution. Every one of their "citations" must be suspect.

Mr. McKeown then proceeds to quote Professor Poulton telling us that Huxley "was at no time a convinced believer in the theory he protected". So what? Evolution does not depend on the question of Huxley's belief. He died just under 60 years ago and quite a lot of water has flown down the Thames since then. But what was it that Huxley was not convinced about? It was "Natural Selection", that is, Darwinism—and numbers of convinced Evolutionists are by no means convinced that Natural Selection has been proven. But unless the reader is sufficiently acute, he might well miss this point. What Huxley was convinced about was Evolution, and that is the whole heart of the matter. Prof. Poulton is dragged in as if he were not a convinced Evolutionist, so I might as well point out that he was the President of the British Association in 1937, and his Presidential Address was published as *The History of Evolution*. In it will be found what Huxley actually said in the early days of Evolution—that it was proven by the vast length of time during which life has existed on the earth, "certainly for millions of years"; by the continual changes which living forms have undergone during this period; and by the successive changes in the best-known fossil groups which are such as we should expect if each series "had been produced by the gradual modification of the earliest form". And what is Prof. Poulton's own comment on this? "This last conclusion", he said, "meant Evolution which so completely accorded with recent discoveries that 'if it had not existed, the palaeontologist would have had to invent it'".

I shall have something more to say about Huxley in the next article.

(To be concluded)

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CORRESPONDENCE

THE BOOK OF JOB

Your contributor, Mr. S. M. Brooks, appears to be singularly ill-equipped to rush into print with dogmatic assertions on the literary character of the Book of Job. Even in the present Bowdlerised—or, more exactly, Rabbinnically-edited—version in the O.T., God's arguments are so obviously irrelevant as to be clearly satirical, and the ironical character of Job's final reply is barely concealed by the Rabbinnical glosses designed to reconcile the heterodox character of the original book with orthodoxy.

If, however, Mr. Brooks had read my article before criticising it, he would know that the original Job was not at all a "pious fiction", but a bold and extremely heterodox challenge to the current Jewish ideas of Providence and of the divine order of the world, human immortality being flatly denied in the original text.

Before he returns to this topic, may I suggest to Mr. Brooks that he takes the trouble to read the original Job? If he can obtain a copy of the late Dr. E. J. Dillon's *Biblical Sceptics*, he will find a comprehensive critique of the Book, including an exact translation of Job's unexpurgated text by that distinguished oriental scholar. It is very different from the Biblical one! When he has taken the trouble to master this, my critic may return to the subject with perhaps more knowledge and, I hope, less dogmatism.

With regard to the point made by Mr. Brooks in connection with Greek drama, there is certainly a resemblance but, also, chronological difficulties. The date of Job is hotly disputed by Biblical scholars, some of whom, I understand, favour Arabic rather than Greek prototypes. Personally, I concur with James Anthony Froude in regarding Job as originally an Arabian saga, not Hebrew at all. I also concur with both that great historian and with Dr. E. J. Dillon, neither of whom could be considered an orthodox Christian, in regarding Job as the greatest purely literary work in the O.T. and as, perhaps, one of the greatest in ancient literature.

F. A. RIDLEY.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

1. ENGLAND.—Vicar of Reighton (Filey) refuses to christen a nine-weeks-old baby.
2. MALTA, Valetta.—Some priests have been told to withhold absolution after confession from Catholics who expressed approval of Malta's integration with Britain.
3. NAIROBI.—Rev. R. H. Smart admitted chastising a bride-to-be in the cathedral vestry.

These brief extracts are from the *Manchester Guardian* (January 28th, 1956) and clearly illustrate the love that these Christians radiate toward their fellow creatures.

J. HENSHAW.

POINTS FROM LETTERS

"HUMANISM" is a vague and unsatisfactory term that can be made to mean nothing more than humanitarianism. I suggest the only word which adequately conveys the idea of naturalistic philosophy is "monism".—S. W. BROOKS.

No one favours making this country a land fit for murderers to live in. . . . But to execute a murderer is no more going to stop further murders than executing the instigator of war is going to prevent future wars.—H. S. WATERS.

THERE'S no fence-sitting in superstition, surely. If I should ever go haywire and back to God, I'd go R.C. and take in the whole circus.—J.F.K.

MR. BURGESS favours the retention of the death penalty because of the increasing amount of murders, rapes, and other serious crimes. Does he not realise that the increase of these offences has occurred while the death penalty is retained?—G. HILBINGER.

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