

The Freethinker

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TO DEAL in a couple of articles with the hundreds of statements made by Dr. Werner Keller in his book *The Bible as History*, is, of course, quite impossible; but looking through the chapters reproduced in the London *Evening News*, I am amazed, not only that anybody can take him seriously, but at his startling admissions that Science by no means proves the Bible was right.

For example, he actually calls King Solomon "fabulous."

And he commences his account by quotations from the Book of Kings, describing Solomon's immense wealth. Now, if there is one thing certain which has come out of the extensive Palestinian excavations extending over a century, it is that *not a trace* of Solomon or David has ever been discovered. Not a single inscription or incised clay-writing, contemporary with Solomon and mentioning him has ever been dug up.

Solomon the Copper King

But what have been dug up are fish hooks made of copper, and tiles coming from some wall or other. So that settles it. An American archæologist called Glueck describes Solomon as "the great copper king" who "must probably be reckoned among the greatest exporters of copper in the ancient world." This would take a lot of beating for sheer impudence—for there is not a scrap of evidence that Solomon exported anything. The word "copper" does not occur at all in the Biblical description of Solomon's reign. It occurs once only (in Ezra) and "copper-smith" occurs once only (in Timothy) in the Bible. Solomon's wealth was in silver and gold and ivory and apes and peacocks and he had, we are biblically told, 12,000 horsemen.

But though Science and scientists have utterly failed to produce a scrap of evidence for Solomon (and his distinguished father, David), what was discovered was "a flat stone surface studded with stone stumps ranged one behind the other in long rows and square in shape." So, breathlessly, Science and Archæology came to the conclusion that this must be the remains of stables. "Does not the Bible," asks Dr. Keller, "speak of the untold horses of King Solomon?" That places for horses were necessary for the ancient armies is just as true as that some kind of housing was necessary for the soldiers. But what evidence is produced that these particular stables could put up an "untold" number of horses? What evidence has been produced that Solomon had "40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots" and, in addition, stables for the horses of his 12,000 horsemen? Not a scrap. All we get from Dr. Keller is a quotation from the Book of Kings, and what an American archæologist says about some copper and other finds which may well have been some stables. No one disputes that copper fish hooks were in use for fishing, or that stables were necessary for horses in ancient times. But they no more prove that Solomon ever existed than they do Romulus and Remus.

Keller and Kepler

Let us leave the Old Testament for the present and come to "A Star in the East," the well-known Star which is known as the Star of Bethlehem, and which heralded the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem (complete with a capital B). Dr. Keller has a long chapter on it, and I was hoping for some evidence that on this we should have some famous scientists all admitting that here at least the

Bible was Right. Will it be believed that the only name given is that of *Kepler*, who died in 1630, and who was a thorough believer in the Noble Art of Astrology! Dr. Keller must have such superb contempt for the intelligence of his readers that he was sure he could

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Does Science Prove The Bible?—2

By H. CUTNER

get away with that!

What Kepler "remembered," we are told, was something some old "Jewish astrologers" said about the Messiah through "a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces." This overwhelmingly proves that the Star of Bethlehem, the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus the Messiah, and the Bible, are thoroughly vindicated by Science. I am sure even Dr. Keller must have laughed to himself at this kind of crushing proof that the Bible was Right.

But if one looks a little closer at what he wrote, it will be seen that he has to admit that Science does *not* accept December 25th as the birthday of Jesus in spite of the Star in the East. Dr. Keller says that "Astronomers and historians, secular and ecclesiastical, are, however, unanimous that December 25th of the year zero was not the authentic date of the birth of Christ, neither as regards the year or the day." Science appears to have slipped him here.

That Blessed Census

If Herod died about 4 B.C. and Jesus was born before he died, then Jesus must have been born before 4 B.C. Alas, according to Luke, however, the census Cyrenius (who was the governor of Syria) instituted and to which Joseph and Mary went before the birth of Jesus, took place about 7 A.D. It is the *only* census that can be traced historically at that time under Cyrenius. This fact has always played havoc with the "birth" of Jesus. Could the Inspired Word of Luke be wrong?

A mutilated inscription on which the name of Cyrenius may be decyphered was, however, discovered in 1912 showing that he was the governor of Syria once *before* the period named by Luke—and, hey presto, once again Science proves that the Bible was right! Sir William Ramsey, who early this century was well known as a Biblical scholar, contended that Luke meant the census he refers to was taken between 10 and 7 B.C. Now, there is not a scrap of evidence for this. Nowhere in any contemporary history is this earlier census referred to; it is the *later* one which is mentioned by Josephus. All this is conveniently left out by Dr. Keller—and no wonder. Not only does Science as such ridicule the Star in the East, but it can find

nothing to substantiate Ramsey.

Even Dr. Keller has to say "Astronomers believe that the wise men's guiding light was in fact a 'fusion' of Saturn and Jupiter, and that Jesus was born earlier than the calendar indicates." We are not given the names of these astronomers — in fact, as far as I have read, the names of prominent scientists are conspicuously absent from Dr. Keller's staggering proofs that Science proves the Bible was Right. It should prove highly entertaining to learn how the "fusion" of Jupiter and Saturn came about.

Jesus a Jew?

As becomes a member of the Master Race, Dr. Keller is not too keen about Jesus being a Jew — "Although we accept Christ's Jewish origin as a matter of course, there have been attempts at various times to prove that he was an Aryan," he sadly tells us, and instances the well-known "Panthera" story to show that it was a Greek soldier who was the father of Jesus. It must have been heartbreaking for Dr. Keller not to be able altogether to support Houston Chamberlain, the renegade Englishman, and Hitler, both of whom saw in Jesus an Aryan (and quite possibly a good German) with a number of other famous scientists in support. As it is, we are told that Paul and Luke "would certainly have seen no disadvantage in Jesus being of Gentile descent," any more than Dr. Keller or even Hitler.

Most of the chapters begin with a text — and so one need not be surprised to find this from Galatians — "But when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth his son." This must always be literally believed in by true

Christians, but where does Science prove it is true? Is there a single scientist in the world who can produce a scrap of proof or evidence for this characteristic piece of biblical balderdash? And to have the impudence to claim in face of such a text that Science proves the Bible was Right!

Proving God

Even those scientists — and there are not many — who still cling to some form of theism have to fall back on Faith for their belief. How many of them can get away with, for example, the now almost completely discredited Design Argument when trying to prove "God"? They much prefer to indulge in a highly complicated meta-physical vocabulary than face the direct implications of the meaning of the Design Argument. At all events, Science as such is of no help whatever here.

Finally — for the present — some of us would like to know where Science *explains* the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the Hebrew talking serpent; the Fall of Man; the age of Methusaleh; how Noah managed to get the million (at least) different species of living things into his Ark; how he fed them; how Sarah bore a child at ninety; the truth of witchcraft; how an ass can see the Angel of the Lord and speak perfect Hebrew to Balaam; and so on. There will be no answer from theologians and certainly not from Science. Still, Dr. Keller will have done his best for the Lord and the Bible — even though he has been utterly unable to bring in anything to prove his case but the blessed *word* Science; and little or nothing at all from *Scientists*.

New Zealand Calling

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

THE SUEZ CRISIS has been headline news in our papers, and, apart from the football, probably the most discussed topic of recent weeks. People in England are aware that the N.Z. Government lined up solidly with Sir Anthony Eden and sent off post-haste to London our Minister who handles foreign affairs. It would, however, be quite wrong to get the impression that New Zealand is solidly behind Eden. The Government may be, but one has only to scan the daily papers to see how widespread is the feeling here against being involved in force. Editorials in the Auckland *Star*, which probably has the largest circulation of any evening paper in the Dominion, have been most outspoken. The *Star* also reprinted *Manchester Guardian* criticism. Dr. J. F. Northey, Professor of Public Law at Auckland University, a day or two after Eden's first statement to the House of Commons on the Canal crisis, had this to say: "Colonel Nasser's tactics in nationalising the Suez Canal are *right* in international law, so far, and the British Government's counter-measures are *wrong*." Then followed nearly a column of matter in support of his statement. One correspondent wrote: "We must stand squarely behind the United Nations." Another: "The people do not want to fight and articles such as yours will give our Government the lead it obviously needs."

★

Dr. Craven, manager of the Springboks rugby footballers who recently toured New Zealand and who had to lower their flag to N.Z. rugby, preached several times in New Zealand churches during the course of the Springboks' tour. On one occasion he said that he believed "the Holy Spirit had approved of his coming to New Zealand as manager of the team." Whether the Holy Ghost had any

thing to do with the subsequent defeat of the team we have not been informed. Not many New Zealanders think it had.

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Aucklanders are having an all too rare opportunity of seeing the work of a modern sculptor of note — Henry Moore. The exhibition has attracted record crowds, some 14,000 in a matter of a few days. Let it not be thought that Auckland is a particularly art-conscious city. Quite frankly, a large majority have been drawn to visit the Art Gallery out of sheer curiosity, their appetite whetted by the criticism voiced by the Mayor of Auckland (who obviously is incompetent to express judgment) that the exhibition contains exhibits "nauseating and revolting."

SCIENCE QUIZ

1. What are supernovæ?
2. With which branches of science were the following associated?—(a) Laplace, (b) Lamarck, (c) Lavoisier?
3. In which land was the first recording of an eclipse of the sun?
4. What was the last planet to be discovered in our solar system?
5. What is the general attitude of scientists towards the possibility of the inheritance of acquired characters?
6. What is the Oedipus complex?
7. "Eureka!" What does this mean and who said it on what occasion (according to tradition)?

(Answers on page 354)

—NEXT WEEK—

OIL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD
By ANDREW PEARSE

Fiction for Freethinkers

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN 1870 the Vatican Council sitting in Rome pronounced authoritatively that the basic dogmas of Christianity can be known by the light of unaided reason, and without recourse to Divine Revelation. This was to embrace all basic dogmas, besides such tenets as the Divinity of Christ and the immortality of the soul. This Vatican decree put an end to a prolonged controversy inside the Church, since a powerful party known as the Fideists had denied the competence of reason in matters affecting the supernatural, a belief caricatured by some rationalist theologians who said they "believed as Christians and doubted as philosophers." Rome had to put an end to this and did so in a detailed statement at the Vatican Council, declaring that Faith and Reason both came from God, and that, normally at any rate, reason must precede faith. A lucid account of the process is found in McCabe's *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, where he points out that some Freethinkers still regard the Church of Rome as "Fideist," but (technically at least) this impression is wrong.

A special branch of Theology is nowadays assigned to the task of proving the fundamental Christian dogmas. This is known as Natural Theology, and as McCabe pointed out, all appeals to supernatural revelation are excluded from it, since it is in fact the *bona fides* of Revelation that Natural Theology has to prove. Perhaps its most famous exponent in modern times was Cardinal Newman — who, however, was a better writer than reasoner, and, though always readable, was rarely convincing! In my view the ablest exponent of Natural Theology was an obscure German Jesuit, one of the "backroom boys" of the Church. Fr. Bernard Boedder, whose book *Natural Theology* is about the most logical attempt to — shall we say — solve the insoluble, that I have come across. Present day Catholic apologetics are usually on a much lower level than Newman or Boedder.

The latest effort in Catholic apologetics to come my way is a pamphlet published in 1947 by the Catholic Truth Society, by Heinrich Schunck, presumably a German publicist, and translated into English. It bears the ambitious title of *Facts for Freethinkers*, but as is usual in Catholic apologetics so many facts are left out that one might more aptly describe the pamphlet as *fiction* for Freethinkers. There is nothing in any way original in the author's arguments; in fact one might say of them what the Jewish rabbis have said about the New Testament: "What is new is not true, and what is true is not new."

Herr Schunck, of course, starts off with our venerable, if somewhat dilapidated, old friend the Argument from Design. Yes! We are not spared even the threadbare analogy of the watch. Declaring that "Freethinking is good, but right thinking is better," he goes on to make the hardly original statement, "There is a God." There follows a brief re-hash of the marvels of the universe which require an omnipotent Creator to have brought them into being. The "facts" for Freethinkers are carefully selected, much, for instance, being made of the enormous size of the universe. But of what earthly or heavenly use is a universe the overwhelming majority of which consists of nothing but empty soundless space, in which, to quote Simon Newcomb's classic definition of the moon, "there is no weather and nothing ever happens"? Surely if we are to judge the Deity by his alleged creation, God's favourite interests must be silence, emptiness and general futility, since these are indubitably the main characteristics of the visible universe? But these facts are not submitted by our apologist

to the attention of Freethinkers, nor are the equally certain facts that of the imposing array of constellations, suns and planets which he cites as evidence of the intelligent handiwork of the Creator; hardly any can be the home of any life that could be called intelligent: the overwhelming majority are merely vast flying projectiles revolving aimlessly in space and serving no conceivable purpose in which even a moderately intelligent Creator could take pleasure.

So much for our author's "facts" and omissions. He also argues lengthily, if without much originality, from the human and animal constitution for the existence of an intelligent Creator. But here again there are some surprising omissions. If God made the human organism as it is now, in the Garden of Eden complete, he thoughtfully provided it with an organ, the appendix, which, in itself quite useless, yet does discharge one function efficiently: it tortures and kills every year large numbers of perfectly innocent people, mostly children. One might further mention cancer, T.B., leprosy and other "intelligent" attributes of the organism that rather suggest that its Creator was chiefly interested in tormenting his creation. If, contrarily, Herr Schunck is a Catholic evolutionist — such do exist — then we must confront him with this dilemma: if Adam, the "first man," had the ape-like ancestry which evolution demands, how then explain the origin, uniqueness and, above all, immortality of the soul in man but not in his arboreal ancestors? Where are we to draw the line? The older Catholic apologists before Darwin did not have to deal with these tricky questions — which would have taxed even the ingenuity of St. Thomas to have solved. Either way the theist appears to be caught in an insoluble dilemma.

However, our author uses more obvious arguments. With a splash of famous names there are paraded a galaxy of writers, and in particular scientists, who believed, or are quoted as believing, in God. The great Voltaire, who was a Deist of sorts, but who did not love the Catholic Church, would certainly not have been pleased at seeing his name quoted as evidence for Christianity in a Catholic pamphlet. But even if all the names here cited were actually self-confessed theists, some very relevant facts in connection with this argument are conveniently omitted. For instance, during the vastly greater part of the time in which human records have been kept, it would have been impossible for an avowed atheist to gain any public recognition. One can see this from the way in which the voluminous writings we know from contemporaries of Democritus, Epicurus, *et al*, who taught atheism and materialism, have disappeared; whilst the writings of their theistic opponents, such as Plato, have been "religiously" preserved. What would have happened to a medieval Bradlaugh denying the validity of St. Thomas's "Five Proofs" of the existence of God? The fate of Bruno gives us the probable answer. Even today the public profession of atheism is no help to worldly success! Such facts considerably reduce the value of our Catholic author's array of theistic men of science. In any case, some of the most crushing evidence against the existence of a Creator has only made itself felt in more recent years. How, for example, would Plato have reacted had he known the Copernican astronomy? Or Newton — also cited here as a Theist — if he had caught up with Einstein?

As has often been pointed out, the Argument from Design itself ends in a fundamental contradiction, for if everything needs an antecedent creator, so by definition

(Concluded on page 353)

This Believing World

Horrid consternation filled the Christian world when it was learnt that Canon Raven (who is Chaplain to the Queen) was marrying a blatant unbeliever, one who did not believe in God Almighty though she was ready to believe that Christ existed. But later, it was discovered that the lady, while no Christian, was at least as fervent a believer in God as her saintly fiancé. The newspapers had got it all wrong. And, no doubt, the worthy Canon will have a shot at converting his wife to the one true belief. It is all so utterly . . . well, so utterly!

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The Rev. R. Horton, of Pinxton Rectory, Nottingham, tells us in a letter to the press that "an atheist doesn't do much harm to the Faith," while "an agnostic — a chap who can't make up his mind — doesn't cut much ice." Mr. Horton here is at comical variance with the huge BBC, TV, and ITV organisations, who are all so frightened of atheism — and for that matter, agnosticism as well — that they wouldn't allow even two minutes for a "chap" to say he was one or the other. Under no circumstances must the viewers and hearers in England — 20,000,000 of them — be allowed to know that there are atheists about. Still, let us admit that Mr. Horton doesn't like "gloomy-faced Pharisees," who are, he says, responsible for the "gospel of gloom" in Christianity. How these parsons like to pass the buck! The "gospel of gloom" comes, *not* from Pharisees, but from *Christians*. What about a Scottish Sabbath Day?

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Another parson, the Rev. D. L. Newman, who helps people with problems in the Brighton *Argus*, had to answer a correspondent who thought religion "a spent force." This is, of course, quite wrong, and is a "hangover from Darwin's evolution theory and when the Bible was being attacked by what is known as the higher criticism." In such an atmosphere, "atheism became the fashion." Well, we can't remember that atheism ever became a fashion, and it is a pity that Mr. Newman did not give us his evidence. But this was the prelude to, "there is not a thinker of repute who would talk like that today," and the usual attack on "science." Adds the eminent Mr. Newman, "There has been a change in outlook that makes atheism old-fashioned."

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Naturally, if atheism is old-fashioned, there is now "a newly introduced intellectual climate that is quite congenial to a personal faith." In other words, there has been "a change of heart," and (though he does not say so in so many words) this means that people are returning to the Old Faith, to the Bible which has been proved by Science, and so on. If the people who read the *Argus* really believe this pious twaddle, then one can only ask despairingly where is the "intellectual climate" Mr. Newman talks about? Does he mean the climate that Billy Graham and Jehovah's Witnesses are responsible for?

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According to a book entitled "The Mystery of Christ," which, we are told, "alone explains the Bible" (and which costs 4s. 6d.), Adam and Eve were later made into Abraham and Sarah, and still later became Joseph and Mary. And whom did Abel become? First he became Isaac, and then Jesus Christ. Seth was Jacob and John the Baptist but, "in the beginning of the Millenium, Seth is, spiritually, Jesus Christ, David, Elijah, and Moses." We heartily concur. This book gives us, in fact, the intellectual atmosphere which forces disgruntled infidels to return to God's Word, to the One Faith, and to that Divine environment

which the Reverends Horton and Newman are doing so much to bring about, bless 'em.

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There seems to be some idea that "rock 'n' roll," that intellectual craze which is sweeping so many teenagers into the arms of the Devil, could be counteracted by a complete surrender to dear *old* Christianity — the Christianity of our grandparents. But surely at that time, one of the chief attractions of revivalism was its own special brand of rock 'n' roll, a delightful example of which used to infuse Welsh Christians particularly. Once they had found Jesus and were full of the religious spirit, they yelled, danced about, rolled on the ground in what the unfaithful called hysterics, and altogether made our modern rock 'n' roll look like a sedate Mothers' Meeting. Our teenagers simply have no idea what the Gift of Tongues can do to a thoroughly religious revivalist meeting.

Facts for Freethinkers — 16

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

THIS PECULIAR CHRISTIAN SECT is principally known today as the upholder of Saturday as the rightful Christian Sabbath.

A 49-year-old American farmer, a Baptist named William Miller, proclaimed in the year 1831 that the second coming of Christ would mark the end of the world in 1843. He claimed this to be a discovery based on the prophecies of the Bible, and particularly of the Book of Daniel. Naturally, many simple-minded people in his vicinity were excited into believing all this. Some laid down their work and gave themselves up to "preparation" for the End, even forsaking properties and families. In an atmosphere of religious fanaticism there were disturbances and arrests. The End of the World failing to occur in 1843, it was postponed till 1844.

Disappointed a second time, Miller acknowledged the error. "To contend that we were not mistaken is dishonest. We should never be ashamed frankly to confess our errors. I have no confidence in any of the new theories that grew out of the movement."

What followed this burst of honesty amply demonstrates that a lie will get half way round the world while truth is getting its shoes on. The movement started by Miller, and abandoned by him, was now taken up by one of his followers, a sickly and hysterical epileptic, Mrs. White. She was quite unlike the plodding farmer who had read his Daniel with dull but honest mind, and had added up two and two and made five. Ellen White got her clues direct from God. She heard "His Very Voice."

Thousands rallied to her. And let us not congratulate ourselves that our mid-20th century has progressed far from those credulous times. If Billy Graham were to announce that Jesus would slide down Nelson's Column next Bonfire Night he would have immediate acceptance by hundreds of thousands of followers. Who can doubt it?

Mrs. White's testimonies are believed to this day by the Adventists as the one and only true exposition of the Holy Book and equal to the teaching of the Apostles. All other Churches are the Whore of Babylon.

Adventists claim that the Second Coming is determinable exactly, if only it *could* be determined; and they also uphold Saturday as the true Christian Sabbath. Sunday being an invention of the Pope. Old Testament law is also split into (a) the moral law (of God), and (b) the ceremonial law (of Moses).

The movement operates in Australia as "The Voice of Prophecy." Evidently by no means poor, the Adventists, though not as large as the major Christian organisations, have been quite adventurous as missionaries. G.H.T.

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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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bristol Downs).—Every Sunday, 3.30 p.m.: DAVE SHIPPER.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Sunday, October 28th, at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, November 4th, 7 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "A Free-thought Miscellany."
Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, November 4th, 7.15 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER, "The Dead Sea Scrolls."
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 6th, 7.15 p.m.: Rev. R. MCKAY (Head of BBC Religious Broadcasting): "Religious Broadcasting—Its Aims."
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 4th, 6.30 p.m.: Miss E. LEES (President, Leicester Physical Research Society), "Psychic Research—the Open Door."
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Newcastle Chambers, Angel Row).—Thursday, November 8th, 7.30 p.m.: B. HAYLETT, "Christianity and History."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, November 4th, 2.30 p.m.: H. POPPLEWELL, "The Power of Advertising."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 4th, 11 a.m.: H. L. BEALES, M.A., "The Political Situation in America."

FICTION FOR FREETHINKERS

(Concluded from page 351)

does God also. Who made God? Ever since Thomas Aquinas, than whom few can ever have used words more ingeniously, Catholic theology has sought to escape this initial contradiction by using long words about "necessary" and "contingent" being, and our author does so here. To a believer in evolution all these are just words signifying nothing except the mental confusion of those who utter them. Everything that exists is "necessary" or it could not exist: when it ceases to be "necessary" it ceases to exist. Evolution and Einstein have made the theistic hypothesis irrational and unnecessary.

Facts for Freethinkers, by H. Schunck; C.T.S., 1947; 3d. Also cf. Natural Theology, by Bernard Boedder, S.J.; 1891; in Manuals of Catholic Philosophy: Longmans.

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SPECIAL

THE ATTENTION of readers in the London area is drawn to a special course of lectures at 41 Gray's Inn Road on Friday evenings, commencing next week, November 9th. Mr. F. A. Ridley will be the speaker, his subjects "Comparative Religion" (six lectures), followed by "The History of Christianity" (six lectures in the New Year). There will be discussion after each meeting. The meetings will commence at 7.15 p.m., and the fee is a shilling per lecture. We hope for a good attendance not only from members of our own movement but from other progressive groups.

Notes and News

ONE of the most colossal pieces of Christian impudence for some time occurred recently at Edinburgh, where the Court gave a little girl to the custody of her atheist father in preference to that of her Catholic mother, but *only on condition* that he guaranteed to bring her up as a Christian. If a Christian father had been told to bring his child up as an atheist our pious press would have made such a hullabaloo that the decision would have had to be revoked. But the worst feature of this disgusting case is that Lord Clyde remarked, in his official capacity, that "atheism and the child's welfare were almost mutually exclusive." We sternly challenge Lord Clyde's right to cast this slur on many of his fellow citizens, and also his right to make such a condition of custody. And as for the majority of our national press who blab piously about this being a "free country," one looks almost in vain for any denunciation of the grossly unjust ruling.

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WE note, too, that after saying, in effect, that the father's atheism precluded his bringing up his child decently, the Court accepted the father's word that the child would have a Christian upbringing. So the Court, after all its talk, credited the atheist with honesty. What a stupid and contemptible exhibition of "justice"! N.S.S. speakers wishing to use this case in their propaganda will on request be supplied with the details if they require them.

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THE question of secular marriage ceremonies has recently been the subject of some local press correspondence at Leicester, where a local padre has said that the register office is for unbelievers. Pointing out the possibilities of making the secular ceremony more attractive, Mr. C. H. Hammersley writes in the Leicester *Evening Mail*: As Pocklington's Walk is not suitable for taking photographs, unbelieving couples are invited to pose for their wedding groups in front of the Leicester Secular Hall."

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THE recent death of Judge Raulston (Tennessee) recalls the famous "Monkey Trial" which he judged in 1925 at Dayton, Tennessee. At the trial, John Scopes, a biology teacher, was fined for teaching evolution, the sentence being rescinded on appeal over a technical point. The teaching contravened the Tennessee State law that nothing should be taught to children which denied the creation of the world according to Genesis.

Report from Finland

By M. SUNLAKU

PROF. RUUTU, who was chairman of our freethought union and chief editor of our publication *Vapaa Ajatteliija*, has now left us for ever; he died on August 27th, broken down by a serious illness, and his death is a great loss to the Freethinkers of Finland.

We do not have any contact with freethinking activity in Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. I only know there are 250 members of a freethinking association in Stockholm. As far as we know, ours is the only journal for freethought in the northern countries. At the moment there is no chance of getting reliable information of any freethinking activities in the Soviet Union, for some time ago I had a conversation with representatives of the Soviet News Agency.

Now I want to tell you something of our country.

There is Law of Religious Freedom in Finland; every citizen may belong to any church or be beyond all religious communions and belong to Civil Register. Nowadays, there are about 5% of our people in Civil Register (in the city of Helsinki 11%). Since the Law of Religious Freedom was made in 1923, these 5% are a sign that religious prejudices still are lying deep in our people. Sometimes one maintains, maybe to hide one's own weakness, that the main reason is lack of interest. People do not care to walk to the office of the minister in charge of a parish, because the application for resignation must be done personally. Written application is not valid and does not lead to result. There is a little charge for resignation. The tax paid to the church is rather high, about 10% of the income. Those belonging to Civil Register have to pay no tax, corresponding to the tax paid to the church.

The freethinking activity, which was very energetic among the intellectuals at the turn of the century, is nowadays almost choked. At least 80-90% of the members of our Union are workers. It is apparent that it is easier for workers than for intellectuals to belong to our Union and associations, because they have nothing to lose economically, whereas the intellectuals will be depressed by the Church, if they participate in the freethinking activities. This holds true to quite an extent. In the 'thirties, when the reaction was very strong in Finland, our speakers were threatened and violated. Among others, our well-known writer and great Freethinker Ernst Lampén, "Great Emperor," was violated and driven by force to another place. Latterly, such has not happened but the Church still uses pressure on people in order to rob their bread. One case is characteristic:

There was a discussion in our radio of the attitude of science in regard to the existence of the soul. Among others some clergymen took part in the discussion. One master of arts took a rather undisguised attitude in favour of the scientific theory of life. I called him the next day, expressed my thanks and asked him to contribute an article to our paper. He refused firmly to do that and declared that he dares not even to try anything like that. Later on, I heard from his near friends that he had earlier lost his position as a teacher.

Such cases are not rare at all in our country; as far as I know there are two municipalities only where a teacher, resigned from the Church, may resume teaching.

According to law, our children have the right to get instruction in ethics, instead of religion. However, there are very few children to participate in the lessons of ethics; often even such children, whose parents do not belong to the church, listen to the teaching of religion, quite simply

therefore, because otherwise these children would be mentally depressed and they would be given lower numbers. This is not only supposition, but we have clear examples of such procedure. Not long ago, our Federation had to take a hand in such a case. In our public schools the religious instruction is not confined to the lessons of religion only; the same teachers are teaching all the subjects, including religion, history, natural science and so on. So, the Church still is ruling over our schools.

Our radio is controlled by the State; different political parties have their representatives in its administration, but the real ruler in our radio is the Church. Devotions are done in the morning and by day; also in the evening we have to listen to it. And this is not enough: clergymen and fawners on the Church speak of God and his guiding in the connection of all possible things; in historical stories, travel sketches, etc. No Freethinker has for nine years come before the microphone of our radio. Certainly we have had some scientific lectures there, but no lecturer has dared criticise the Church. The Church has its room in the apartment of our news agency, and so it can control the work quite effectively.

Our press is very subservient to the Church. We cannot find anything against the Church in the papers of any political party. Sometimes, in the columns of *Free World*, somebody may write short articles in the spirit of freethinking, but such happens very seldom. Our papers do not state their attitude towards the Church, although the outlook of some papers may be non-religious. Our Federation has no chance to publish articles in the papers of any party.

Our clergymen have infiltrated political parties, even labour parties. They are sitting in the meetings of those and taking part in political life. This is, of course, nothing new at all, as they are the oldest politicians of our country. We do not yet, indeed, pray to God in the meetings but efforts are made to steer the development to that direction.

Lately some intellectuals have shown a tendency for participating in the activity of Freethinkers. We have succeeded to get some lecturers to help us, but I cannot yet say if this tendency will continue.

As you have seen of these particulars, the religious liberty in our country is theoretical only. We extend our activities nowadays, because of the sympathy which is felt towards our work, but much money is needed for that purpose. And this is our weak point. The Church, again, collects taxes (about seven milliards Finnish marks yearly). To disjoin State and Church is enormous work under present conditions. We have published our plan of work, in which one of the most important clauses is the above matter. If we could find any energetic person to begin this work in the Parliament, we should have more hope of getting support from political parties.

I think, you cannot get any cheering opinion about the religious level of our people.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Bright stars. (Their significance is a matter of current controversy. Only three have been recorded in our galaxy.)
2. (a) Astronomy, (b) Biology, (c) Chemistry.
3. China (776 B.C.).
4. Pluto (1932).
5. Against.
6. Misplaced love of the mother, the name being taken from the Greek drama *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles. The term is used in psychoanalysis.
7. "I have found it," attributed to Archimedes' discovery of displacement while bathing.

G.H.T.

The Historical Aspects of the Exodus

By C. T. SALISBURY

THE STORY of the exodus and bondage of the Israelites in Egypt contained in the Book of Exodus is usually either piously believed, every dot and comma of it, or dismissed as a fairy tale. As could be expected, the ancient Egyptian records are quite silent on the subject and it seems quite definite that nothing ever happened even remotely like the events depicted. Yet the legend has played such a profound part in Jewish thought that it would indeed be strange if absolutely no basis could be found for it. Let us therefore examine the available data in order to discover which is the most likely event that the myth commemorates.

The orthodox view is that the exodus took place during the reign of the Pharaoh Mer-en-Ptah (c. 1300 B.C.), whose father Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression. Although reverend "scholars" inform us that this is an indisputably proven fact, in reality the proposition is hardly worth consideration, for it is based solely on the biblical mention of the city Ramses and the so-called Israel Stela. The former is no more evidence for Moses and his tribe than the ruins of old Rome are for Romulus and Remus, but what of the latter? This tablet, a slab of black syenite, was found in the ruins of the Temple of Amun at Thebes and contains an inscription which is thought to refer to the Israelites. But how the text can in any way support plagues galore and a victorious withdrawal is hard to imagine, for it says: "... the people of Ysraael is spoiled, it hath no seed. Syria has become as widows of the land of Egypt. . . ." In reality the stela is a record of the Libyan and Syrian campaigns of Mer-en-Ptah; it tells of his conquests and, as can be seen, bears no resemblance to the story contained in Exodus. However, the pious will clutch at any straw, and even the existence of the mummified body of Mer-en-Ptah, which shows no signs of having been drowned, does not daunt them.

A further hypothesis is that the entry into Canaan is referred to in the Tel-el-Amarna Tablets (correspondence between several Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty and princes and kings of the tributary cities and provinces in Syria). One letter tells of the raids, on the Syrian frontiers of the empire, of a people called the Habiru, a name which is likened to Hebrew. If this be so, however, it would necessarily follow that the exodus took place during the time of very strong Pharaohs such as Tuthmosis III and Amunhotep the Great, the records of which kings make no mention of anything even remotely like it. The exponents of this theory, who are more scholarly than pious, admit this defect and suggest that during their wanderings the Israelites watered their flocks in Egypt and their withdrawal was such an everyday event that the Egyptians took no notice of it. If this idea has some substance it can be readily seen that it in no way substantiates the Mosaic narrative.

Yet another theory suggests the close of the Middle Kingdom (c. 1800 B.C.) as a likely date, basing this claim on events depicted in the Papyrus Ipuwer. This document tells of earthquakes and other natural catastrophes which are supposed to have been remembered as the plagues. This theory also advances the idea that the Amalekites, whom the Israelites met on their journey eastwards, were none other than the Shepherd Kings or Hyksos who invaded Egypt at the same time. Otherwise, there is very little evidence to support this conclusion.

By far the most reasonable suggestion, in the writer's opinion anyway, is that these Hyksos invaders were themselves proto-Israelites and that their stay and subsequent

expulsion from Egypt was remembered by the later re-compilers of the Old Testament, when in order to boost up the new monotheism of Judaism, it was necessary to twist the story somewhat to show the marvellous power of Jehovah. It was an early example of propaganda.

We know of the Hyksos invasion from Josephus, who in his *Contra Apion* cites the old Egyptian historian Manetho, from whose works the legend was gleaned. According to this account, during the reign of a king called Timæus (who cannot be identified) an ignoble race came out of the east and subdued Egypt without a battle having been fought. They built a strongly fortified city called Avaris, ruled for 511 years, and during this time made themselves absolutely detested because of their cruelties. Eventually, a king named Alisphragmuthosis (perhaps the Pharaoh Aahmosis I, c. 1587 B.C.) succeeded in driving them into Avaris, after which a long siege ensued. They were finally driven out by Thumosis (perhaps Tuthmosis I, c. 1541-1516 B.C.) and made their way into Syria, where they founded Jerusalem. According to *Contra Apion*, Josephus was himself quite convinced that the Hyksos were early Hebrews and as far as I can see, the only reason why the orthodox will not admit this is owing to the cruelties perpetrated by the Shepherds and also that they worshipped the evil deity Set of Sutekhy. (For the orthodox, the Israelites must always be little tin gods worshipping the only true god—Jehovah.) Moreover, instead of a victorious withdrawal, the Hyksos were quite definitely "kicked out."

Archæology has confirmed the Manetho account showing that about 1800 B.C. an invading host of barbarians entered the Nile Valley, destroying, plundering and murdering wherever they went. Inscriptions found in the Delta tell of the Hyksos king Apophis being known as "the king of the pest," and many other relics have been unearthed. Likewise the records of the kings of the 17th and 18th dynasties tell us of the expulsion and the following wars of conquest.

Out of all the long history of ancient Egypt, the above is all that can be found to have a bearing on the Exodus, and Manetho's account has little in it to support any of the fantastic happenings contained in the Book of Books.

Waves from the West

By D. SHIPPER

THE SUNDAY GAMES DISPUTE rolls merrily on in Bristol, "the City of Churches." Many differing viewpoints have been put forward in the "Readers' Letters" section of the Press, but perhaps the most entertaining was from the Chairman of the Gloucestershire Archery Society. This gentleman was all in favour of Sunday games providing "this does not interfere with people," and pointed out that "for many archery clubs Sunday is the best day of the week." However, archers are by no means irreligious sportsmen, for "on the special occasions of a big Sunday meeting, it has long been the custom in archery to hold a religious service on the field before the start of shooting. These services are always well attended." The Wembley Cup Final is another occasion which attracts a huge crowd for hymn singing.

★

The Bishop of Gloucester, writing in the *Gloucester Diocesan Gazette* (to which I subscribe) recommends a revision in the legal treatment of bad drivers. "Possibly

the authorities might do well to revive the use of the *village stocks*. Then when we got the offenders put into them, the rest of us could go along with a few shop-soiled eggs and tomatoes." It is plain to see to which century the mentality of this constructive social reformer belongs. The Bishop is usually driven by his chauffeur in a one God-power car.

★

The Bristol Free Church Federal Council have, as expected, come down very heavily against the move to allow Bristolians the pleasure of Sunday games. All good Socialists, they are extremely worried about the handful of people who would have to provide the labour for the benefit of the majority. Surprising, because they do not as a rule seem so worried about labour conditions, especially for the other six days of the week.

★

At Timsbury, near Bath, an atmosphere of hostility prevails. When the new rector, the Rev. Hugh Davies, arrived recently, he found twelve stone figures, displayed in positions of prominence, around the walls of his church. Inside were other odd items, a miscellaneous collection amassed over a period of thirty years. No doubt Mr. Davies reckoned the place as a theological junk-shop and, deciding a clearing-out was necessary, asked for an immediate commencement of "mopping-up operations." Armed rebellion broke out among the village militants at this threat to the figures, affectionately known as "the village football team and referee," and now pieces of paper keep appearing on the church door, first, a note of protest, or petition, from the village Maquis, next an answer from the rector. Christianity is, indeed, a peace-loving religion.

★

The Bishop of Bristol, Dr. F. A. Cockin, assuring an audience that nothing could tempt him to leave his diocese, remarked that the Bishop of Malmesbury's new diocese, Guildford, "would tempt me more than most." This was because he believed the Surrey diocese had a finer assortment of golf courses than any other. The last time we saw the Bishop he was spiritually stymied.

★

After severe hand-to-hand fighting in Buckland St. Mary, an armistice was arranged and the matter referred to arbitration. The Diocesan Chancellor held a Consistory Council and heard two petitions. The first, by the Rector of Buckland St. Mary, was for a faculty to place an aumbry on the north wall of the chancel. Naturally, the Parochial Church Council opposed this idea, and to show that they too could be revolutionary, in conjunction with the churchwardens they petitioned for the removal of the Rector's ciborium. This certainly sounds like a painful operation.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24TH.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Barker, Cleaver, Ebury, Hornbrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Arthur and Gordon. Sum received from Chapman Estate, India. New members admitted to Birmingham, Blackburn, Edinburgh, Manchester, Nottingham and Parent Branch (14 in all). Reports of various meetings were received. Propaganda Committee appointed. Protests to Prime Minister (re Capital Punishment) and Secretary of State for Scotland (re Lord Clyde) authorised. Rules Committee would meet November 10th/11th. Annual Dinner fixed for February 16th, 1957, Mecca Restaurant, E.C.2. Sub-Committee appointed. Study classes under the President would commence Friday, November 9th. Congratulations expressed to Mr. Rothwell, Blackburn, on re-forming branch and to Edinburgh Branch on its progress. Other branch matters dealt with. Messages sent to American Rationalist Federation and Friendship Liberal League. Next meeting fixed for Wednesday, November 21st, 1956

CORRESPONDENCE

SUNDAY IN SCOTLAND

As a born Scot of 66 years' residence in Scotland I must say the *Sunday Mail* article on which the comments in "This Believing World" (October 5th) are based is a gross exaggeration of the position. Having had some residence also in England I am pretty sure the English are far more priest-ridden than we are. This, I believe, is due to the prevalence in England of Church schools, which, apart from a few semi-controlled by the R.C.s, we don't have. As a result, education in Scotland is far more secular than in England. There is certainly a lot less religious instruction.

Your contributor may be interested to know that Scots parents who have had occasion to go to live in England complain that, whereas in Scotland their children were being *educated*, in England they got *religion*! Not long ago Mr. Ridley referred to Scotland as a "Sabbatarian wilderness." Nonsense! The "Sabbath" is the head day for hammers, saws, chisels, spades, hoes, golf, cricket, booze, and similar diversions. Only a few pay any attention to ministers and the churches are for the most part almost empty. Many of the latter have ceased to exist and have become cinemas.

It is high time many English people ceased to think of the Scots as a race of semi-barbarians steeped in fundamentalism, and the objectionable tone of the two paragraphs in "This Believing World" does not help.

G. S. BROWN.

PUBLIC ENEMY No. 1

Without doubt Mr. E. G. Macfarlane is correct in citing nationalism as the major immediate threat to our survival. The idol of national state worship can only, I think, be supplanted by raising the alternative ideal of a World State. However, in order to achieve and sustain a world society in which mankind may live at peace I believe we shall be obliged to buttress it with the same kind of propaganda, flag waving and emotion that now goes to support the idea of nation states. Possibly this need for idols is an inherent weakness of the human mind.

CONSTANCE FRAZER.

The article "Public Enemy No. 1" by Mr. Macfarlane is very sound; he puts the whole case in a nutshell. The citizens of the world will show sense when they give up politics and religion for good.

AN IRISH FREETHINKER (Dublin).

LECTURE REPORT

THE NEW SEASON of Sunday evening lectures of the Leicester Secular Society began with a lecture by Mr. F. A. Hornbrook on "The Catholic Menace Today."

The speaker proved beyond any doubt that the R.C. Church is no friend of Democracy, illustrating his talk with evidence from Catholic sources. Catholics preached tolerance only where they were in a minority. When in supremacy they persecuted those who refused to submit to the authority of the Pope.

With Mr. Manhattan ill, we have to thank our good friend Mr. Hornbrook for stepping into the breach at very short notice.

OBITUARY

WE REGRET to announce the death of Mr. Fred Casey of Bury, an old FREETHINKER reader, and well known in Manchester Secularist circles, at the age of 82. He maintained an active interest in freethought and social problems right to the end of his life. Our sincere sympathy goes to Mrs. Casey.

★

WE regret to announce the death in Harrow Hospital of Clifford John Tacchi, at the age of 76. Mr. Tacchi was a much-travelled man and spent a great deal of his life in Hong Kong. He was a keen reader of this paper for many years. The General Secretary of the National Secular Society visited Mr. Tacchi a few days before his death and found him mentally alert, though physically tired. He firmly adhered to his Freethought views. His only son was killed in Malaya during the last war.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner.

Price 1/3; postage 3d.

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS.

 By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 6d.; postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition).

 By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 4d.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.

 Chapman Cohen's criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price: Cloth, 4/6; Paper, 2/6

Postage 4d. and 3d. respectively

GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.

 An outline of the philosophy of Freethought. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4/6; postage 5d.

ROBERT TAYLOR—THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN.

 By H. Cutner. Price 1/6; postage 3d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS.

 By G. W. Foote. Price 3/9; postage 4d.