

# The Freethinker

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AROUND THE END decades of our second century, the famous writer, Lucian of Samosata (incidentally probably the earliest unofficial Pagan author to mention Christianity) wrote what would now be described as a science-fiction romance, describing a journey to the moon. By modern standards his aerial hero's means of lunar locomotion were somewhat primitive, for he actually made the aerial trip to our satellite in—believe it or not—a chariot drawn by swans; a journey, one surmises, that must have taken quite a while. Lucian's aerial paladin had many successors in imaginative literature, notably perhaps, that fantastic genius of the big nose, "great swordsman, great lover" (as a modern French dramatist has described him), and also, great Freethinker as well, the fabulous Cyrano de Bergerac (mid 17th century), author of *A Journey to the Sun and Moon*, which had a great vogue in its day and is now available in an English translation by Mr. Richard Aldington. About the same period, "in good King Charles's golden days" (as the immortal Vicar of Bray described them), in England, John Wilkins, Bishop of Chester and a Fellow of the then recently constituted Royal Society, also wrote *A Journey to the Moon*. However, throughout the long ages prior to the first flying machines, all these celestial trips into the vast regions of space, could only take place in the realm of the human imagination.

## Coming Events Cast Their Shadows Before Them

This lengthy era of purely imaginative contacts with outer space ended in the year 1783, when the first balloon went into the air, and in the year 1785 when a balloon made the historic first aerial crossing from Dover to Calais, certainly a red-letter day in the annals of human flight. However, though the balloon could and did achieve the sensational feat of taking living men into the atmosphere without the aid of wings either of Biblical angels or of classical swans, it could not accomplish the sequential feat of taking human aviators out of the terrestrial atmosphere. For that, more potent means of human transport had to be devised. However, it is proverbial that "coming events cast their shadows before them". In the evolution of space travel, this also proved to be so, for the pioneer science-fiction writers of last century, Jules Verne and H. G. Wells in particular, boldly speculated on "the shape of things to come". Even a Victorian poet, Lord Tennyson, made his then audacious prediction about "aerial navies grappling in the central blue": a military development of ultimately staggering consequences which was actually first initiated in 1870 (in Lord Tennyson's own lifetime) when, during the siege of Paris by the Germans, a French aviator (a friend of Jules Verne) carrying despatches into the beleaguered French capital, was intercepted by a German balloonist and an exchange of rifle shots followed without any damage to either side. Nor was this actually the very first use of balloons for purely military purposes: even

at the time of the French Revolution, the great War Minister of the French Republic, Carnot, "the organiser of victory", employed balloons at the Battle of Fleurus (1794) for scouting purposes. And an English cartoon of 1804 depicts an invasion of England by Napoleon's army in balloons.

## The Advent of the Space Age

However, all this appertains solely to the terrestrial atmosphere. For mankind had to pass firstly through the age of the balloon, and secondly through that of the aeroplane, before arriving at the decisive era of the rocket and, directly in its wake, at the advent of the space-age; the era when

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## On the Threshold of Space

By F. A. RIDLEY

the old Latin tag, *per ardua ad astra* ("through toil to the stars") was to acquire a literal meaning presumably entirely unforeseen by its Roman enunciators. Precisely, the space-age was first inaugurated in 1957 when the first Russian Sputnik went into orbit; the spectacular achievement of wholly materialistic scientific culture inaugurated by the first great atheistic and materialistic revolution in recorded history, the Russian Revolution of 1917. And as is now common knowledge, this initial step, proverbially hardest, in the evolution of the space-age, has been followed by a series of spectacular achievements; rockets which hit the moon (I was in Hamburg when this happened—September 13th, 1959—and the excitement was terrific) and last year, men in orbit around the earth. What now when we are actually upon the threshold of space, for surely here, even more than elsewhere, it remains true that "appetite comes with eating"?

## What Next?

What next? I recently read with great interest a factual and also thought-provoking article upon this precise theme by the Scientific Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Mr. Ronald Bedford. Having first emphasised the sinister but apparently undeniable fact that urgent military reasons rather than purely scientific ones constitute the motive behind the current race for the moon as "the top priority target for both Russia and America", Mr. Bedford proceeds to outline the next stages in the space race. I am primarily indebted to his most valuable summary for the ensuing facts. At present the Russians still maintain their initial lead in the Lunar race; according to our authority, even the Americans are now resigned to find that "the Man in the Moon" will speak Russian. However, the USA is still in the race, and intensive preparations for the conquest of space, or at least of those parts of the cosmos nearest to this planet, are being conducted by both the space titans. Those previously contemplated are here described. Firstly the Russians, present leaders in this aerial marathon. Their immediate plans are "to put a man in orbit round the earth for a week. Then, a Soviet space-ship with a man on board will blast off for a six-day mission to loop the moon. His task, to choose the best landing spot for a touch-down on the moon for a robot space-ship". Meanwhile, the USA is seeking

diligently how to pass the Russians in the lunar race. For we learn that: "Within the next few days [the article from which this quotation is taken was dated 2/1/62], Marine Colonel John Glenn, 40, will enter a Mercury space ship and attempt to orbit the earth three times at 18,000 miles per hour". Another main item of America's programme: the firing of quarter-ton robot space-ships close to the planets, Mars and Venus (distance approximately, 30-40 millions of miles—FAR).

### How Soon?

Evidently things are going to happen in the sky in 1962.—and then? It seems now virtually beyond dispute that the old (and classic) definition of the moon (by the American astronomer, Simon Newcomb), as "a place where there is no weather and where nothing ever happens", will shortly become obsolete when the first strangely-garbed human explorers first set foot on the

lunar craters. How soon? At the present rate of ever-accelerating technical evolution, it would appear to be a cautious, rather than an excessively optimistic, prediction to surmise that by the end of these present sixties, there will be men—human ones—on the moon and at least robot space ships on, or in close proximity to, Mars and Venus—with, no doubt, appropriate instruments wherewith to explore the mystery that surrounds both the Martian canals and the hitherto impenetrable Venusian atmosphere. Then, the space-age with all its fantastic possibilities, will really be here. Its eventual attainment will constitute beyond any room for doubt, one of the greatest achievements both of the human species, of a *Homo sapiens* who, at long last has lived up to his name, and of scientific research unterrified by irrational religious superstitions and unhampered by obsolete theological dogmas.

## Vertical Translation and Freethought

By E. G. MACFARLANE

MR. W. S. WYNBURNE, who is a Senior Lecturer at Stranmillis Training College, Belfast, has written a book entitled *Vertical Translation and the Teaching of English*. The title intrigued me, because I hadn't a clue as to what it might mean, and I was even more intrigued by the suggestion from the author that, if his ideas for a re-organisation of the curriculum as it affects the study of language in secondary schools were adopted, we could "turn millions into freethinkers and humanists".

First-of-all I found out that "vertical translation" really means putting a piece of English writing into different words of the English language which have been chosen by the advocates of Basic English. Presumably, "horizontal translation" would be translation from English to French or German to Chinese; and if this is accepted we can say that Mr. Wynburne wants to replace "horizontal translation" in favour of more "vertical translation" in order to let the pupils get to closer grips with the meanings and ideas which are transmitted by language. Mr. Wynburne maintains, and here I heartily agree with him, that the snares and difficulties of one language are a sufficient obstacle for the child to overcome in his struggle to gain understanding of the writings we have to contend with. He argues that the time spent, on learning the word list of another language such as French or Latin and all the irregularities or "diseases" of the new language, would be far better used in using the English word list in a closer tackling of the meanings and ideas which secondary schools so far have not even tackled.

He argues this most entertainingly and, I think, convincingly for close on 200 pages and at the end I found myself saying, "Yes, most certainly this is something which ought to be introduced in the English-speaking countries right away". My own painful memories of my struggles with the complexities of irregular verbs, different word sequences and different idioms in the French and Latin classes at school and the sight of my children struggling with the same complexities more recently, all urge me to this conclusion. The vested interests of language teachers or university professors in the continuance of the habit of subjecting generation after generation of masses of people to the 90% fruitless task of a training in "horizontal translation" do not weigh with me at all against the change being made. Neither do the difficulties of disposing of the thousands of pounds worth of school books and equipment or of training teachers in "vertical translation" worry me unduly. Given the public

demand all these matters could be easily dealt with.

What does worry me, as a freethinker and a humanist, is that I can see that the new era of "vertical translation" need not necessarily result in the new generations of British or English-speaking children being brought into contact with the works of freethinkers or humanists. A language after all is merely a means of communication and whilst the translation of certain literary works in Basic English would be a more fruitful way of revealing meanings and advancing understanding of the subject-matter surely it is the choice of the subject-matter which will decide whether the pupils are ever called upon to try to understand and appreciate the standpoints of the freethinkers, humanists, rationalists, secularists, atheists, etc., which we feel are excluded by orthodox educationalists from the schools by conscious design. For instance Mr. Wynburne himself chooses Hopkins's poem *The Habit of Perfection* (which concerns a man "weighing up the pros and cons of going into Cistercian Abbey where he will be under vows of silence and poverty") as a case in point to clarify his technique of translation. In the "translation" Mr. Wynburne gratuitously introduces the notion of a controlling God as if this was a matter of generally acceptable fact—which no doubt it will be in the school where he is teaching.

Another point which occurred to me as I read was that Mr. Wynburne's assumptions are more nationalist than humanist in his fundamental approach to language. After all if "vertical translation" can be used in English-speaking countries it can also be used in non-English speaking countries. One is thus led to think of a movement to Basic Chinese in China where "vertical translation" would make the pupils better thinkers in Chinese but still cut off from the non-Chinese parts of the world.

Here is something that the humanist, as I understand the word, cannot ignore. If our purpose as humanists is to work for the social unification of all mankind we must logically oppose nationalist attempts to segregate masses by continuing allegiance to old local languages.

Although Mr. Wynburne does not mention it at all in his book he must surely be aware that English itself is by no means free from the "diseases" which he hits so hard in the French language. Humanists who also desire efficiency, order and regularity in a language for mankind as a whole must therefore point out that a universally agreed designed language for introduction in all schools throughout the world is the ultimate necessity.

Recently we have seen British Conservatives making some surprisingly novel political moves towards the Common Market and a decimal coinage. This is a pattern

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# Confucius

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

THE Encyclopedia Britannica says of Confucius that "his doctrines amount to pure secularism". He is therefore, a man whose life and work will be readily appreciated by all rationalists. Living in an age of ignorance, superstition and civil wars, he noticed the sorrows of his simple countrymen who derived some fictitious form of comfort from worshipping various "gods"—exactly in the same way as millions of credulous and optimistic people still worship a wide variety of "gods" today. Confucius had no belief in these legendary "gods": and, as a practical remedy, he taught sanity and common sense without any recourse to mysticism. His services to mankind are so great that it is difficult to think of anyone who has been so influential in promoting benevolence, or who did so much to advise mankind on living correctly and peaceably.

He was the first man to realise (and to proclaim) that the only way in which to run a family, a village, a city or a province was by the cultivation of kindness, honesty and charitable behaviour, *without any reference to the supernatural or to any bogus promises about Paradise*. Voltaire said of him, "I fervently admire Confucius; he is the only great teacher who did not claim divine inspiration". And Confucianism is not a religion, but a code of good behaviour which improved many lands in Asia before reaching Europe about 1600 AD.

About 500 BC, a young pupil stood up in his school-room and inquired: "Great Teacher, is there one single maxim which can regulate our lives?" Confucius replied "Reciprocity and loving kindness provides the answer. Never do to other people the things which you would not like them to do to you". This immortal reply came to be known as his "Golden Rule". Although it was originated by a non-religious man (who opposed mysticism and belief in an "after-life"), this vitally important theory came to be included as a basic tenet of five of the great religions of the East. The following extracts all emphasise the identical theme of benevolence as recommended in the Confucian Golden Rule. "Variations on an original theme by Confucius", as musicians would call them.

- Hinduism.* "Do naught unto others in ways which would cause pain to yourself."—(Mahabharata).
- Buddhism.* "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find to be hurtful."—(Udunavarga).
- Judaism.* "What is hateful to yourself, do not do towards your fellow-men."—(The Talmud).
- Christianity.* "Whatsoever you wish that men should do unto you, do you also towards them."—(Matthew, 7, 12).
- Islam.* "Not one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother the things which he desires for himself." (The Koran).

Western people are too fond of imagining that kindness and the other virtues which have moderated the savagery of human lives originated with Christianity; and that social and political progress were derived from the ancient Greeks about 400 BC. The truth is that the man who first taught such kindness was Confucius of Lu in China. Jesus of Nazareth's "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" was spoken 500 years *after* Confucius had given out his "Golden Rule". Similarly, the great man from Shantung had been recommending that the State should be administered for the benefit of the people—rather than for the pleasures of a few rulers—many years before the word "democracy" was coined by the Athenians.

Additionally, he was a pioneer in education and psychology, and he was the first man to advocate care for the aged and the education of the poor (because he rightly believed that talent existed in every social grade). He was bold enough to stand up and preach his progressive ideas amid the welter of civil wars and local disorders. From the "blanket of the dark" of 500 BC in chaotic China (torn by tyranny and upheavals), there still shines the beacon of his temperate and sensible recommendations in the important art of good living.

Besides being the first social reformer on record, he was also the most successful. His wisdom and theories enabled thousands of millions of Chinese to live reasonably happily for twenty-four centuries; and while they were not always at peace, the Chinese have had a far more creditable record in this connection than Europeans, who have suffered from continual wars. But perhaps the strangest feature about this greatest of men is that his good advice (given in the age of bows and arrows), most aptly applies to all of us who live in the age of the megaton bomb.

About 30 years ago I was sent out to work in Hong Kong for two years. Before I left England, I called on three "China old hands" for general advice, and all three of them included the opinion "The more you live with the Chinese, the more you will come to admire them". This turned out to be perfectly true, and the commendable Chinese merits undoubtedly derive from the Confucian ideal of mutual respect and consideration between persons of all levels. Largely owing to the Confucian good behaviour, the Chinese became for 24 centuries the best behaved socially of the human family. It was the first secularist who inspired them with decorum, integrity, industry and the art of polite living.

Confucius must not be dismissed by a modern reader as being a dry-as-dust old scholar, speaking from "way back in 500 BC". Every modern Westerner can learn from his valuable theories, because we all find ourselves faced with the same basic problems which faced Confucius; i.e. the problems of how to solve chaos, selfishness and dishonesty. Confucius managed to solve these problems, and his consummate wisdom rescued Old Cathay—just as it can help to rescue the modern world from the pressing problems of today.

His Chinese name was Kung Fu Tzu, which has come to be Anglicised as "Confucius". His seventy-year-old father was a soldier of a noble family and had nine daughters, but—like all Chinese—longed for a son. The amorous old man found solace with a young village girl named Yen Chen Tsai, who certainly deserves to be remembered. On a hill in Lu she prayed for a son, and her desire was answered in 551 BC. The father died soon afterwards, and Confucius grew up in poverty, but he was precocious and studious. Being poor, he was entirely self-taught and he spent his "teens" avidly reading the writings of the Chinese sages of the past. The elder citizens in Lu began to notice him for his lively intelligence and for his fine tall physique. As he possessed a knowledge of mathematics, his first work (when he was about eighteen) was the charge of the granary where he was noted for the fairness of his measures. In due course he superintended the town's sheep and cattle herds, which

(Continued on next page)

## This Believing World

Although mass conversions of Christians to Christianity by, let us say, Billy Graham, are well known, no journalist would find a "story" in the Christian conversion of one ordinary person. But it is quite different if a girl is converted to Buddhism. The *Daily Express* (January 9th) devoted half a column to this world-shattering event—a Miss Kennett renouncing all worldly pleasures to become a holy Buddhist nun. But we are not clear why any renunciation has to be made. Surely anybody can sit alone on the trunk of a tree in a forest and contemplate his (or her) navel like a good Buddhist without the papers making a splash about it?

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The London "Evening News" regular Saturday "reflection is always a joy to read for fun, and its latest quip (January 13th) that the ordinary Christian miracles do not really matter on the question of belief in Christianity is quite true. "The Christian faith" we are told, "is built on the miraculous birth of Our Lord and on His resurrection from death. They are the supreme miracles". Of course. No good Christian is compelled these days to believe in such piffling miracles as Jesus "giving sight to a blind man" or "even raising the dead to life". As the *Evening News* says, the "discoveries of science should make us chary of drawing a dividing line between the possible and the impossible".

★

This means, because science has produced radio and TV. for example, we can accept the miracles of Jesus as literally true, though it is not absolutely necessary to do so to be a good Christian. But you *must* believe in the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection—two of the silliest stories in the Bible. But is it not a fact that if one believes in the existence of God, all the other miracles follow? Given a God Almighty, why shouldn't one believe in Jesus, Jupiter, Venus, Osiris, miracles and all?

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We have always in these columns protested against a pale wishy-washy Christianity, and must congratulate the Church of England for putting back, even if only on probation, the most picturesque figure in Christendom—His Infernal Highness, the Devil. Christianity would not be worth its salt without Him. Not that the bishops were in complete agreement—in fact, Canon Tindall remarked that "it would be a miracle" if they were. The Bishop of Birmingham deplored "putting the Devil" back into the Catechism, but he was overruled, thank God!

★

The death of Hannen Swaffer who, in the heyday of his popularity, was known as the Pope of Fleet Street, has removed a picturesque figure from journalism, though one of the most credulous. When it came to "spirits" and "phenomena", Swaffer was always ready to swallow the most appalling nonsense, and he always appeared astonished that so few people followed his lead this way. He probably got in touch with more aristocratic spirits from the Mighty Deep than any other Spiritualist that ever lived. He seemed to have little use for the Uncle Georges and Aunt Marthas of lesser known "mediums".

★

The many eulogies in print and on the radio of him, however, while mentioning his whole-hearted devotion to Spiritualism, toned it down as much as possible. What was stressed was his work as a journalist—though in the nature of things this was ephemeral. Who now cares two hoots what he said in the past about a play? What would prove interesting would be to find out how many of the

hard-headed Fleet Street journalists he converted to Spiritualism? Half a dozen?

## VERTICAL TRANSLATION AND FREETHOUGHT

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which must accelerate in its application and the question of what we are to do about a world language is one which the social designers must keep uppermost right now. Otherwise we will find our generation having to learn an agreed European language and the following generations other possible intermediates before coming to the ultimate world language. Intelligent long-term thinking can obviate a great deal of wasted time if the world or human problem is faced now.

## CONFUCIUS

(Continued from page 35)

flourished under his honest management.

When he was about twenty-five, the studious young pauper took a momentous and daring step—an extremely revolutionary venture for those primitive days—by setting up what he dared to call an "Academy of Learning". This was the world's first school which was open to boys of every status. ("Instruction recognises no castes or social grades" was the young schoolmaster's novel opinion. Hitherto, such little education as existed had been the monopoly of the rich.) Fees were sometimes paid to Confucius in cash and sometimes in goods (perhaps in the form of a fish or a chicken). If the young pupil showed any promise and was too poor to provide anything in return, Confucius allowed him into the school free of charge. The Master was, therefore, an educational pioneer at the age of twenty-five. By opening up Education to both high and low, by receiving penniless (but worthy) boys free of charge, he initiated the first primitive scholarship system.

In order to appreciate the magnitude of the difficulties which the young idealist had to face, it is necessary to realise the dismal conditions prevailing when he was a pioneer. China was not a unified empire, but was divided into thousands of tiny states, each with a local "prince" or "duke" living in a walled town. These uncultured feudal despots were continually quarrelling and fighting each other, thus causing deep sorrow to the peasants. The misery was aggravated because it was unsafe to live far from the protection of the walled town and a great deal of the land was thus not cultivated. Frequent famines resulted. It was his observation of the universal misery existing which led the young Confucius to look for a solution to end the chaos and distress. ("I must associate myself with suffering men; the disorders now prevailing require my efforts.")

His remedy was the simple one of introducing benevolence and honesty. His character had the same magnanimity as that of Pushkin, President Lincoln, Doctor Barnardo, Sir Stafford Cripps and Premier Nehru. Resembling these talented and unselfish men, he had no desire for money or personal gain. Like them, he laboured with the sole ambition of improving the lives of less fortunate men and women.

For many years he taught his principles of correct living to his disciples; but his novel ideas did not always meet with the approval of the local rulers. So he had often to travel about in Shantung province, wandering with his followers, trying to find some "duke" who would be broad-minded enough to put his progressive ideas to the test.

(To be continued)

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
- London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE. (Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY

### INDOOR

- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, February 6th, 7.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, O.B.E., J.P., "The World and Work of Charles Dickens".
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate). Sunday, February 4th, 6.30 p.m.: A. ACHESON, "Nuclear Disarmament".
- Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (The Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, February 4th, 7.15 p.m.: ALISON McLEOD, "The Theatre in Britain".
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, February 4th, 2.30 p.m.: J. J. DUNNETT, M.A., LL.B., "Football—Sport or Business?"
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 4th, 11 a.m.: J. B. COATES, B.A., "A Challenge to Humanism".
- Tyneside Humanist Society (100 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle, 1). Wednesday, February 7th, 7.30 p.m.: R. M. WILSON, B.Sc., B.Econ., "Savonarola and the Papacy".

## Notes and News

"MANY FORCES of anti-Christ were in solid array" against Christians today, said the Archbishop of York, Dr. Donald Coggan, at Porkington, Yorkshire, on January 20th. And he was sure that "England is full of men and women who are perplexed. They do not know the meaning of life" (*The Sunday Times*, 21/1/62). "Adam Faith tells youngsters that the meaning of life is sex—the propagation of the species", Dr. Coggan added. but "Adam Faith tells us nothing about the life hereafter or why we are here at all". Mr. Faith thought the Archbishop had been unfair and wrong (*The People*, 21/1/62). "After all, I am a Christian", he said, but he added: "I don't suppose there are more than a handful of people in the world who are really convinced of what will happen when they die. And although I'm interested I think I'll wait my turn". A week later all was serene. Dr. Coggan and Mr. Faith had found their "Meeting Point" on television.

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WE LEARN from an undated but recent cutting from the *Unionist*, that, although the population of Northern Ireland has increased by 54,541 in the last ten years. "all

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

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religious denominations have gone up by only 31,909, according to the preliminary census report". There was an increase of 22,582—from 5,865 to 28,447—in the number of people who did not state a religious affiliation.

★

"THIS CHURCH exists primarily to bring forgiveness to sinners." The speaker? None other than the Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Mervyn Stockwood (as reported in the *South London Press*, 19/1/62). The church in question? The Church of the Ascension, Balham Hill, whose former incumbent was Dr. Bryn Thomas. It may be recalled that Dr. Stockwood last year unfrocked Dr. Thomas for "open and notorious sin".

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IN A LETTER to *The Guardian* (22/1/62), A. Scholefield of Colwyn Bay described how, on Remembrance Day, he saw two small girl cadets standing in the vestibule of an Anglican Church "looking wistfully into the building where the remainder of their company had just marched in". The two were Roman Catholics said Mr. Scholefield, "and one looked up at me and said, 'we haven't got to go inside'." With all the talk of unity, in high places, Mr. Scholefield wonders "what is being taught at lower levels".

★

ON FEBRUARY 3RD, a Consistory Court will be held at Ilmington, Warwickshire, to determine if a tombstone in the Church of England churchyard may bear the words, "Pray for the soul of Oswald Smith". Mr. Smith was a Roman Catholic and his widow a member of the Church of England, gave him a Roman Catholic funeral. But the rector of Ilmington, the Rev. Tom Shaw refused to approve the phrase for the tombstone because it implied the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, not held by the Church of England. "Previous rectors have had their wishes respected in such matters", he said (*Sunday Express*, 21/1/62).

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WE EXPRESSED our regret last year (THE FREETHINKER, 11/8/61) when it was announced that *The New Zealand Rationalist* was to be replaced by *Polemic* "signifying argument, discussion, controversy, challenge to accepted ideas". "We happen to favour a title signifying rationalism", we said. Apparently most members of the New Zealand Rationalist Association agreed with us. *Polemic* didn't go down well and was soon discontinued. Happily, *The New Zealand Rationalist* is back again under the editorship of James O'Hanlon. And the Nov./Dec. 1961 issue contains a reprint of Mr. C. Stanley's article, "He Descended into Hell" (THE FREETHINKER, 4/8/61).

★

TWO CLERGYMEN, the Rev. H. A. S. Pink, Rector of Hackney, and the Rev. Donald Pateman, vicar of St. Mark's, London, E.8, took part in the opening session of the Hackney and District Debating Society on January 16th. They presented a motion "That this house is of the opinion that religion has contributed materially to human progress", which was defeated, a *Hackney Gazette* headline (19/1/62) announcing that "Atheists turn the scales in Hackney debate". "Religion must stand condemned as a reactionary movement", said one speaker, while another added that the Church would do anything for poverty except abolish it.

# Who was Lucifer?

By H. CUTNER

READERS WILL REMEMBER that last year I dealt with an American evangelist called Armstrong who had produced a pamphlet on the Bible which was supposed completely to abolish unbelief and unbelievers—in his opinion, of course. Since then he has favoured me with an exceedingly well-produced, beautifully illustrated and printed book of 150 pages entitled, *The Story of the Bible*. It is written and illustrated by Basil Wolverton, an artist of considerable technical skill but with unfortunately a penchant for the most ugly faces of people I have so far come across except in space fiction. There, the denizens of other worlds are depicted in general as even worse than our medieval artists used to depict the inhabitants of hell.

But it is not so much here a question of illustrating the Bible story as what Mr. Wolverton has to say about the Bible. It would be a sheer waste of time to bother with him in detail, for he appears to me to know almost next to nothing of its textual history. I say this in spite of being told in the Introduction that he is "a student of the Bible, and has taught a Bible class". I have met quite a number of Sunday school-teachers who taught a Bible class. Their knowledge of the Bible was confined to a few of the stories and little else.

We are also told in the Introduction that "Mr. Wolverton has stuck tenaciously to the literal Bible account". One might well ask which or what is the "literal Bible account"? Not only do the ancient manuscripts which have been used to give us our translations differ widely from each other, but even the Hebrew text of the Old Testament was not fixed until about the year 500 AD or so, and what it was before this God alone knows, for nobody else does.

Not having the slightest idea *how* "God" created the Universe, Mr. Wolverton tells us—as if it were unquestionably true—that it is more important to know *why* he created it; and we are at once told that God is "a spirit", and that his "Holy Spirit emanates from him everywhere . . .". Let us hope that this will be thoroughly understood by Bible students. We are also told that this "Holy Spirit" created controls, and "rules the universe". This is just the kind of empty babble we can always expect from Bible believers.

But it is with the way Mr. Wolverton adds to the Bible stories that has really intrigued me. He has discovered a "fallen Angel" called Lucifer, and enlarges upon him with that spirit of "Gospel truth" which so often engulfs our out-and-out believers.

Here is what he says about Lucifer:

A long time ago there was in heaven a chief angel whose name was Lucifer. That name means *Light Bringer* or *Shining Star of the Dawn*. God created Lucifer very wise, good and capable. Lucifer was perfect in his ways when God created him, and brilliant in knowledge and beauty . . .

And we are sent to Isaiah, 14, 12, in proof of all these assertions. Well, here is what Isaiah says:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

So Mr. Wolverton quotes as an authority a passage which has no more to do with God creating Lucifer than with God cooking bacon and eggs.

Unless the reader looks it up himself, he will perhaps be surprised to learn that "Lucifer" is mentioned only *once* in the whole of the Bible—only, in fact, in the

Authorised Version. The name Lucifer does *not* occur in the Revised Version, nor in Young's *Literal Translation of the Bible*. All this sheer rubbish about God creating Lucifer very wise, etc., is nowhere in the Bible.

Well, who was Lucifer? We all know his name, but what or who exactly was he—a Devil, a Fallen Angel, "brilliant in knowledge and beauty", or what? I did not find it easy to get any Biblical details about him. Take for example, that great work of reference, *The Century Cyclopedia of Names*. It tells us Lucifer was,

The morning star; the planet Venus when it appears in the morning before sunrise; when it follows the sun, or appears in the evening, it is called Hesperus, or the evening star. The name "day star" is applied by Isaiah figuratively to a king of Babylon; this was rendered in the authorised version by "Lucifer". From this passage, the name was by mistake also given to Satan.

Pandemonium, city and proud seat

Of Lucifer; so by allusion called

Of that bright star to Satan paragon'd.

Milton, *Paradise Lost*, X, 425.

So Lucifer was really the planet Venus, or the King of Babylon; if applied to Satan, it was a *mistake*. And he was not an "angel" "fallen" or otherwise.

But what does a good old-fashioned Bible dictionary say? Cassell's *Bible Dictionary* is perhaps the most "orthodox" ever compiled. I am sure that its editor looked upon every dot and comma in the Authorised Version as an unquestioned revelation from God Almighty himself. It gives,

LUCIFER (Latin, *Light-bringer*; Hebrew, *shining one, son of dawn*), the morning star which precedes sunrise. The allusion is to the king of Babylon—not as often supposed, to Satan.

According to Harmsworth's *Encyclopedia*, you can take your choice of three explanations: Lucifer is the planet Venus; or the son of Astraeus and Aurora; or the Shining One or Day Star as applied to the King of Babylon in the Bible. And thus Lucifer is *not* Satan nor a "fallen" angel—whatever these two words may mean. To put it another way, nobody really knows what is meant by "Lucifer" for he never was anything but a literary myth; and the only *practical* application of the myth I know is when it was applied to "Lucifer" matches. How indeed did the Mighty fall!

Yet in a book specially written for Christians, we have the fantastic notion that Lucifer was a Marvellous Being created by God, who had "millions of angels willing to obey him, all ready to invade Heaven to do battle with God"—a story literally believed in and re-told by Mr. Wolverton. And why did not Lucifer win? Simply because "God has always been the most powerful being to exist". In fact "hydrogen and cobalt bombs and rocket ships" are "puny and weak compared to the powerful forces at God's command". "No human being" exults Mr. Wolverton, "or spirit or army of human beings or spirits has any power to move Him in the slightest".

*The Bible Story* is packed with this kind of imbecility but of course the book is not really much worse than some of the things said by bishops, priests, and parsons on the radio and TV at Christmas time or at Easter. What they say is generally forgotten soon after, but it is worth while to have their egregious twaddle when published in book form exposed as such.

There are many similar specimens of pious balderdash in the book, but the pity is that its readers are most unlikely to read anything savouring of "unbelief". They

would even shrink with horror from *The Age of Reason*. The verb "to reason" is not in their vocabulary. But the astonishing thing about it all is that Mr. Armstrong appears to have unlimited funds at his disposal with which

he can print and publish expensive magazines and books and give them to "subscribers" who are not asked to pay anything. And all in the name of Almighty God who sees that he is never short of funds!

## Dr. Fosdick's Challenge

By G. I. BENNETT

AN ARTICLE that appeared in the January number of *The Reader's Digest* throws out a challenge to freethinkers. It is by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, and is hailed by the *Digest* as "an eminent clergyman's reply to a young man who confesses . . . 'I can't believe in God.'" Addressing himself epistolarily to this young man, Dr. Fosdick writes, "So you propose to content yourself simply with goodness—with being a decent character and a useful citizen . . . 'I will live by the golden rule', you say, 'and that is enough'." And what is our cleric's reaction to that? He remarks that "when you face genuine goodness you run headlong into life's deepest mystery and into all the basic questions of religion". And if you think about it seriously, you have, he continues, to choose between two explanations. The first is that goodness is "an accident in a material universe with no mind behind it, no purpose in it . . .". The second, that goodness "is not an accident but a revelation . . . light from a central sun, living water from an eternal fountain".

Now this latter quotation is mystically woolly language, to be sure. It may, in suitable cadence, sound sonorous, but it means nothing; and with it I am not as a freethinker concerned. The first "explanation" interests me more; but I would not describe goodness as "an accident". Goodness is compounded of a number of things, in which hereditary, environmental, intellectual and emotional factors play their part. One does not need to talk about "mystery" to account for it. In fact, he who uses this kind of language explains nothing at all, because to say a thing is mysterious is to admit you don't really understand it. Such words, of course, are the stock-in-trade of the clergyman, and it suits Dr. Fosdick to argue in this way. And so he goes on to point out that it needs more than "physical accident" to produce integrity, fidelity, courage, and sacrifice in the service of others. "I do not know what your moral problems are", he writes. "For myself, I am thankful that, in trying to live a good life, I do not have to picture myself in a universe with no Intelligence behind it, no ultimate meaning in it, no resources of eternal goodness to back me up". Yet why? If the task of living a good life becomes so much more difficult without the assurance of goodness pervading the universe, radiating from a central source, then this indicates to me that Dr. Fosdick lacks knowledge of the true nature of goodness. There are some things in life that have intrinsic worth, that need no cosmical or other justification, and goodness is one of them.

Dr. Fosdick cannot let pass the opportunity of making reference to what is so beloved of theologians—to goodness that is "a recovery from moral failure", to penitence that turns a man of equivocal standards to a life of righteousness.

Christianity is a religion obsessed with sin. From my observations I would say there are few, very few, real sinners who ever come visibly near good living. Theoretically, it is possible for anyone to become a master of his own life. In practice, it is far from easy. New habits must be acquired; old tendencies and old behaviour patterns—a whole host of them—must be abandoned. And

what about old friends and associates? It may mean parting from them, too, if their mode of life is indissociably bound up with a past from which escape is sought. It is true that almost everybody pays lip service to goodness, but few have the will to follow its path. It is, indeed, often thought dull to be good! He who would pursue goodness may need a stimulus; and for a certain type of individual Christianity may provide that stimulus. In saying this, some may think I am being too generous to a religion that is our old, common adversary. I want to be fair; but I don't want to be misunderstood. Christianity would not provide *me* with the necessary stimulus, because I do not believe in its inspiration, but it might help some. Dr. Fosdick, as we might expect, has no doubts about its regenerative power. He never saw a moral come-back that did not involve "a recovery of faith in God". Personally, I have known only a few Christians who were positively good people. I have known more who were negatively virtuous. Mere still who were neither positively good nor negatively virtuous. I have been shocked by some of the things professing Christians will do.

Christianity has always welcomed penitent sinners into its fold. I can think that it has made few of them into saints (as is supposed ever to have been its aim), though it may perhaps not unjustly claim to have made some men and women better than they were. But this much I know. Morality, to be a positive enlightened morality, must be based upon social considerations. If we do not steal or cheat or lie, it is not because God through Jesus has said it is wrong. It is because our experience of living in society tells us it is wrong. If we injure or tend to injure another by our conduct, we have done wrong. If our behaviour tends to undermine the fabric of communal life, it is bad behaviour. If the code we live by is to get what we want out of life no matter who may suffer in heart or in pocket, it is an evil code. Dr. Fosdick may make light of the Golden Rule, but it is upon it that the fine personal life and the well-being of society are founded. Goodness that is altruistic is yet more. It is a sort of habitual overflow of sympathy and kindness that makes a human being do more than he need to help others.

### CHURCH "SLOTH"

Surely the greatest perpetrator of sloth is the Church. And whilst in the individual sloth can be regarded with a certain amount of good-humoured tolerance, when applicable to the Church it becomes a capital sin.

In the many fields of science, effort and achievement have kept pace with evolution, yet in metaphysics little has changed in the last 2,000 years, which must account partly for the decline in spiritual and moral values.

Unless the theologians put their backs into it and compete with scientific evolution, religion will soon become—just history.

—Letter in *The Sunday Times* (21/1/62).

NEXT WEEK

THE RELIABILITY OF THE GOSPELS

By DR. EDWARD ROUX

## CORRESPONDENCE

## MAGELLAN

Your contributor, Mr. F. A. Ridley, in the issue of January 19th, is I think stretching a little the claim for Magellan, who was killed before the completion of the journey planned by him.

Although by sailing west he did reach the "Spice Islands" previously reached from Europe by sailing east, it was Elcano who brought the ship back to Spain and who was therefore the first to circumnavigate the globe.

C. N. AIREY.

## "HUMANIST"

I was very interested in Margaret Knight's article, "*Suggestio Falsi*" (19/1/62), reprinted from *The Spectator*, and we must be indebted to her for exposing the BBC's misleading broadcasts on Nansen. At the same time I feel that Mrs. Knight inadvertently exposes the weakness of the term "humanist" in the context of the broadcast she says, it would be likely "to be understood by most listeners as 'humanitarian'". That is the fault of the word: it is vague and ambiguous. That is why some of us dislike it. Had the BBC called Nansen a secularist or a rationalist there would be no room for misunderstanding.

ROBERT DENT.

## A CURIOUS ARTICLE

In his article in THE FREETHINKER (January 26th), G. I. Bennett castigates the general outline of the Jesus-saga in a manner which most freethinkers would approve even though his attitude to the so-called "Golden Rule" needs some qualification. At its face value, the rule is stated in terms of such general import that it requires far closer and applied definition to give it a practical import, the fallacy that lies at the root of most quotations of the reputed sayings of Jesus when applied to contemporary society.

But my purpose in writing is to enquire whether this article is to be treated in isolation or read in the context of Mr. Bennett's wider propaganda. Its author is well-known as an exponent of "ethical religion". Within the last twelve months he has, in the context of the South Place Ethical Society, adopted a highly critical attitude towards anti-Christian or anti-clerical writing under the auspices of this society. Latterly, he has taken up an attitude of extreme hostility towards any suggestion that humanists as such are at liberty to put forward in the name of humanism other than the conventional sex-morality despite the support of such names as those of Havelock Ellis, René Guyon or Norman Haire. When I read his present article, I was left wondering whether I am to read it in this far more restricted context of "reverent agnosticism". If so, it seems to me that Mr. Bennett's contribution would merely limit the scope of the freethought movement and inhibit its wider contacts and points of discussion. In any case, it is a curious article to come from one who elsewhere objects to anti-clericalism. I wonder what the clerics would make of it!

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

## SECULARISTS IN AUSTRIA

In ultramontane Austria nearly 4 per cent of the population declared themselves as "*kirchenfrei*", Secularists or of no denomination; they are thereby the third largest community, preceding the Jews who, with the two Christian denominations, have their religious representation in the Austrian Ministry of Cult (sic!) and Education. Dr. Reinitzer, Vice-President of the *Bund der Kirchenfreien*, has now suggested that citizens of no

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denomination, too, ought to be considered a religious community whose interests should be safeguarded through an official representative.

A speaker of the Ministry raised the point that, unlike religious communities, citizens without religious belief do not belong to a unified body of thought, nor are they organised in a single group that could represent them. Dr. Reinitzer retorted that, at the inception, the trade unions expressed the demands of the entire working class, irrespective of whether or not all workers were organised. What mattered was that interests could be closely defined, that as an entity they had definite civil rights and that these interests and rights had to be formulated and safeguarded.

"But how can you demand to be on the same footing as the Churches", countered the Ministry official, "seeing that you fail to have one unifying dogma, let alone a cult?"

"To be free of any dogma, this is just our unifying creed", replied Dr. Reinitzer. He reminded his opponent of the history of mathematics, when it was discovered that even the figure nought was a definite number, and he added: "You might call us the 'Trade Union of the Nought Creed'." O.W.

## THEATRE

I am not a Harold Pinter fan. It may be clever to write a play in which nobody does or says anything of consequence and then let "interpreters" point out its significance; certainly it can be profitable. *The Caretaker*, for instance, did well in London and is now a success on Broadway, but I don't believe it has any substance. At the Theatre Royal, Stratford, London, a short piece, *The Dumb Waiter* forms the first part of a double bill, and reveals Mr. Pinter's essential vacuity.

The second part of the evening is considerably more lively, when the TCD Players (from Dublin University) present a review, "*Would Anyone Who Saw the Accident . . .*" by two of their members, Terence Brady and Michael Bogdin. Not all the items "come off", and some suffer from the inevitable comparison with *Beyond the Fringe*, but a few are brilliant and none is dull. Among the best are a Pinter parody that outdoes the original, and a cricketering parson at a youth club. The Rev. David Sheppard ought to see the latter. C.McC.

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