

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Again Atheism

THE meaning of Atheism is short in expression and easy of understanding. An Atheist is one who does not believe in God. Essentially it means that and nothing more. It has no essential connection with morals, although it may affect conduct, as a very warm day may make one man irritable and another one happy and generous. If a godité says that the atheistic conclusion is faulty, or untenable, that may be accepted as possible—with the comment that the godité must not set out with the assumption that foolishness is a monopoly of his. Up to date the faultiness of Atheism has been *asserted*; it has never been demonstrated. More than that there is a presumption in favour of Atheism that cannot be claimed on behalf of godism. The origin of gods—now fairly well understood—belongs to the infancy of humanity; Atheism to a later and more developed stage. Religious belief precedes intellectual maturity, Atheism follows it. Right or wrong Atheism indicates a certain degree of intellectual development; godism is part and parcel of a teaching that amounts to little more than mimicry. Given human nature as it is, disbelief in God is a product of intellectual growth. I do not assume that later conclusions are of necessity more correct than early ones. Development may move in the wrong direction as well as in the right one. The Christian Church was a development, but it was growth in the wrong direction, and there is an obvious distinction between an idea or a conclusion that emerges from understanding and one that carries no greater authority than the chattering of a trained parrot. In a vast majority of cases the Atheist earns a position, the Theist merely occupies one that has been prepared for him. The Theist is like an hereditary monarch, his position has nothing to do with ability or understanding. Put briefly, Atheism of necessity involves some degree of critical ability. Godism is a matter of sheer imitation. In one of our newspapers we noted the phrase that a prominent politician came of a "religious stock." The wording was suggestive, but not very complimentary. "Stock" is a word that is properly connected with animals.

Atheism and its Critics

There are three newspaper cuttings lying before me. They furnish one with some information concerning three ministers of religion. These are the Bishop of Warrington (the Most Reverend Gressford Jones), the Rev. Mr. Pickering, Vicar of Christ Church, Southport, and the Rev. Percy Ineson, Methodist. They all agree on three things, the sinfulness of man, the rapid growth of Atheism, and the falling-off of church attendances. We will take them in the order mentioned.

Bishop Jones is disturbed by street rows in Liverpool which in some mysterious manner he derives from the

growth of Atheism. But so far as I know Liverpool rows have always been common occurrences there. Indeed I recall that the worst of these riots between Catholics and Protestants were on the occasion of my earliest visit to Liverpool some fifty years ago. But according to the Bishop, the connection between Atheism and crime is so prevalent that a "number of writers have broken away from Atheism and are now eager to bring their readers back to God." I know many writers who are very shy of making Atheism known to the general public, but the cause of this is the intolerance of Christians, and the extent to which sales may be affected. But why should an outbreak of street fighting in Liverpool lead to lawless Atheism? The Atheist, as such, is not concerned with lawlessness, although he may have a keen eye on the value of some of our existing laws, and the method of their application. If we were not afraid of hurting the Bishop's feelings we would be inclined to say that he is just a common liar, ready to say anything that will resist the breakdown of his creed and buttress the power of the priesthood of which he is doubtless a worthy specimen. I am reminded by what has just been said of John Ruskin's reply to some clergymen who had advised him that the poor and sick had no friends but the priesthood. Ruskin retorted that if that were true it was a far more deadly indictment than he had heard; for it meant that over the centuries during which the Church ruled, it had not managed to create a sense of brotherhood amongst the people whom they controlled.

Now I am not for a moment assuming that in the ranks of—call it criminality, there are not to be found some people who do not believe in God. If that were the case I should be inclined to believe in miracles—and the truthfulness of bishops. I would not go so far as to say that the majority of the clergy consciously in defending their creed deliberately foster falsehood. But such cases do occur. I have also known clergymen who did their best to stick to the truth and act honestly to their opponents. But I do not think I would venture to put the present Bishop of Warrington in that category. I agree with the Bishop as to the growth of Atheism; it is the connection of a philosophic conclusion connected with belief in gods with criminality that puzzles me. It may be interesting to the Bishop—and others—if I call attention to a few simple facts concerning an occurrence of some twenty-five years ago. I was not concerned personally with what follows, except so far as I was interested in trying to protect one whom I knew to be perfectly honest in act and intention.

The man was charged with the offence of blasphemy—an offence that simply cannot be committed by an Atheist. I did what I could to protect the "sinner," but with a naturally prejudiced jury (it is astonishing that hardly ever in a blasphemy trial is there even a sprinkling of unbelievers among the jurors) and a Christian judge it is odds in favour of a verdict of "guilty". The Atheist was

convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment—in spite of medical certificates that the man was in a state of ill-health. He went to prison as a sick man and came out of a Christian gaol a dying one. He lived but a few months afterwards.

During his imprisonment I visited him several times, and on one of these visits I noticed that every arrangement was made to allow preachers of the gospel to visit regularly members of their own sect. It seems that while Christians may steal together, assault together, or forge together, they will not pray together. The delicacy of the Christian conscience is very great. And so great was the desire of the Government to see that prisoners did not miss religious comfort that if in the list of appointed preachers there was not one of the kind a newcomer desired, a special preacher would be found.

Why could not this privilege be enjoyed by Atheists? A weekly or monthly visitor would be a great gift. We are all ratepayers and it is unfair—to use the cant of the day—to think only of Christians when we are dealing with prisons. Statistics prove that our prisons are filled—with some exceptions—by godites, but we stand for the rights of individuals. The privileges and comforts of prison life should be as open to Atheists as they are to Christians. So I appealed to the governor of the prison for the extension of privileges to Freethinkers. I received a courteous reply that the rules had never been given that interpretation. I then wrote to the Prison Commissioners asking that the privileges of prison life should be extended to all the guests of His Majesty the King. I got much the same reply as I received from the governor. It was even suggested that such an alteration could only be made by Parliament. My joke was beginning to assume a rather serious character. The reply of both authorities seemed to suggest that non-godists were rather a rarity—in prisons.

I wrote to the Home Secretary asking that the rule concerning visits to prisons should be broadened, so that Atheists were treated in the same way as members of Churches and chapels. The reply received almost shocked me. It was to the effect that there was not a sufficient number of Atheists in His Majesty's prisons to warrant any alteration of existing practices.

The sacred atmosphere of English prisons was to remain unsoiled. Someone had to protect wife-beaters and forgers, burglars and bullies, swindlers and bigamists, all the clientele of our prisons were to be kept free—so far as it could be done—from contamination with men and women who did not believe in God.

But here, however, is a situation to which the Bishop of Warrington might pay attention. He should inquire just how many Atheists are in prison. Figures would be far more convincing than the foolish foaming at the mouth of priests in the pulpits. Lies in ordinary life are bad enough, but they are not quite so contemptible as the lies that are uttered where no reply is permitted, and a cowardly slander is sanctified by the name of God.

I think I may deal very summarily with the two remaining representatives of God. Both are alarmed by the drop in church attendances. The Vicar of Christ Church, Southport, is saddened at the falling-off of attendants at Church. He says that "at a generous estimate only 15 per cent. of the population are consciously worshipping Christians.

Sixty-five per cent. have no vital contact with the Christian Church. They are, as far as we can see, living without God or any Spiritual hope whatever." That is the plain straightforward lament of a tradesman, who sees his hitherto customers carrying their patronage to other firms. But when he says "there is a colossal slump in faith and morals" he is adding a slander to a truth. And that will not do. There is, indeed, a slump in the religious valuation of right and wrong. But allowing for the evils that follow all wars—with both victors and vanquished—our vicar is not speaking the truth. The war is leaving us with the disturbance of morals and customs that follows every war. Men cannot fight for years without altering the moral outlook for both good and bad, but this war has at least given us something in the shape of a counter balance. There is abroad a stronger wish and determination that life shall be made better than it has been. That high ambition will fall short of its aim, but life will move in the right direction. And that direction does *not* lead to the Church.

From the point of view of decency the Rev. Percy Ineson is well in front of the Bishop of Warrington. But his handling of history, his explanation of the dropping away from Church that it goes back to the Renaissance is a very dangerous line of defence for a Christian to adopt. For the new birth of the European world was based, not on Christianity, but upon the old pagan Greek philosophy and science, developed considerably by the brilliant development of Mohammedan Spain, backed by other parts of Mohammedan culture. In this country the breakdown of the Roman Church led to the establishment of the English Church, accompanied by the development of science in many directions, and always with the growth of sheer Atheism—mainly among the better educated sections of society. Then followed the scientific and social developments of the nineteenth century with a marked and declared growth of Atheism. To-day Atheism is stronger than it has ever been, and of great importance, it is being openly avowed. On the religious side the Christian bog of the terrors of Atheism has lost its force. We are witnesses to the steady decay of an exposed superstition.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

CHURCH AND CROWN IN CONFLICT

IT was only by degrees that the Papacy became predominant over the priesthood, while the bishops themselves gained greater power in civic affairs. The Church was feudalised. Bishops enfeoffed their estates and, as vassals of princes and kings, in their turn became suzerains of lesser vassals. As a contemporary historian testifies: "They rode to war with their feudal trains, held court, administered justice and collected feudal dues within their lands quite like their neighbouring lay nobles. Since the support of every church incumbent was derived from the landed endowments of his office, church property inevitably became feudalised."

From the ninth till the twelfth century the Roman Churches formed semi-independent bodies special to the several National States of Western Europe. The Pope was vaguely regarded as the spiritual head of the Churches, but outside Rome he exercised little authority and the first local Councils that were convened

assembled at the command of the kings. So, as a rule, the Crown retained a practically complete control of the episcopacy and every appointment to the higher ecclesiastical offices was subject to the king's desire or approval.

With this system the clergy were dissatisfied. Under Karl the Great, the Church was compelled to submit to secular control, but St. Augustine's ideal city, in which the spiritual power stood supreme, had always been the aspiration of the more zealous and ambitious clericals. So, when weak or ultra-pious princes wore the crown, the clergy embraced every opportunity to strengthen ecclesiastical authority.

Pious trickery that would have disgraced any worldly enterprise was employed to exalt the Church above the State. Even a deeply devout ruler like St. Louis was humiliated by Pope Gregory IV. and his confederates to increase the power of the Church. For this Pope assisted in the degradation of the French ruler, and only permitted his restoration after he had granted the right of the Church to depose him and had undergone penance for sins of which he was innocent.

As no precedent existed for the lordship of prelates over princes it was deemed advisable to fabricate evidences of the Papacy's predominance both in Church and State. As Professor Thompson intimates: "Forgery was no new thing. In 833, Gregory IV. had been presented with forgeries which convinced him of his right to interfere in the politics of Europe; and the forged 'Donation of Constantine' had appeared even earlier, though it had not yet been used to validate the claims of the Church. About 856-857 appeared the forged 'Decretals of Isidore' composed of forgeries already in circulation, new forgeries, and some genuine documents borrowed from other collections, and attributed to Isidore Mercator. The purport of the forgeries was to diminish the power of the archbishops over the bishops, and to exalt the papacy."

After the nominal adoption of sacerdotal celibacy, the Church turned her attention to lay investiture. The purchase of clerical appointments from the Crown was of common occurrence. With the death of Pope Benedict VIII. the Roman aristocrats split into factions, while each strove for mastery of the Papacy. To preserve its ascendancy "one faction even elected a layman to the office—John XIX., a brother of Benedict VIII." Benedict IX. and Sylvester III. were successively deposed. Then the former was restored, but he soon sold his tiara to Gregory VI. To suppress this scandal a synod was assembled which dethroned two Popes and compelled the abdication of a third. Two Pontiffs appointed by the German Emperor Henry III., died almost immediately, and Leo IX. reigned in their stead. Leo resented imperial interference and, seconded by Hildebrand, the future autocratic Pontiff, Gregory VII., made France and Germany familiar with a more rigorous system of clerical administration.

With the death of Leo in 1054 and that of Henry III. in 1056, the Roman patricians seized the Lateran and proclaimed Benedict X. as Pope. To pacify the contending parties and provide a more seemly method of Papal appointment, it was agreed that elections need not be restricted to Rome and that "a minority of the college of cardinals might canonically elect." Thus, the nobles as well as the Emperor, were excluded from Papal elections.

Hildebrand became Pope as Gregory VII. in 1073 and secured the Emperor, Henry IV.'s approval of his appointment. He assured Henry that his existing rights would be respected, but nothing was said of the rights of his successors and every subsequent Emperor who ventured to influence a Papal appointment was stigmatised as a simoniac.

As sovereign Pontiff, Gregory proclaimed the Pope's prerogatives which he was determined to uphold. The 27 articles later published in the Dictates of the Pope contain far-reaching claims. It was asserted that the Pope stands alone in his right to be called universal, and that he only possesses the right to

select, depose or restore bishops; that he alone may convene general synods and that no writing shall be deemed canonical without his consent. Moreover, Papal decrees were declared irrevocable; that the Pope himself can never be judged by any mortal; and that the Roman Church has "never erred and will never err to all eternity." Also, the Holy Father may absolve subjects from their oath of allegiance to heretical rulers, and that he may grant permission to subjects to accuse their temporal sovereigns.

Thus Gregory VII. claimed the overlordship of Catholic Christendom and he strove zealously to establish a strong Papal dominion in Germany. During the Regency necessitated by Henry IV.'s accession to the throne at the age of six, the lay and clerical officials brazenly embezzled the royal demesne. Civil strife had devastated large regions of Germany, much of which insurgent Slavs had despoiled. When Henry IV. assumed authority, he tried to recover his stolen property. He built castles which he garrisoned, and was driven by enforced poverty to tax the previously untaxed peasants for their timbering and grazing in the Crown forests. The magnates and peasants consequently rose in revolt in 1073 and peace was not restored till 1075.

The Pope decided to profit through the distracted state of the country, and now forbade the Emperor to use his previously admitted claim to lay investiture. Henry replied by summoning a score or more bishops who dutifully pronounced the election of Gregory as invalid, and the angry Emperor called upon his Papal enemy to descend from his throne and remain accursed through all the ages.

The domineering Pontiff then deposed and excommunicated his royal adversary "in a document so worded that St. Peter himself seemed to do the deposing." Gregory also absolved Henry's subjects from loyalty and forbade them to obey his orders. Civil war, instigated by the feudal barons resulted, and Henry was degraded from his kingly office until he made peace with the autocratic Pontiff.

Momentarily restored to Papal favour, the ban against Henry was withdrawn. Still, turmoil in Germany continued, and Rudolf of Swabia was proclaimed as a rival ruler. Henry IV. requested the Pope to excommunicate Rudolf who had appropriated Church property, and threatened Gregory that, if he failed to do this, a new Pope would be appointed. So in 1080, Gregory VII. again excommunicated Henry while many German bishops were persuaded to pronounce Gregory's deposition. Meanwhile Italian bishops set up Guibert of Ravenna as Roman Pontiff.

By 1081, however, Henry had so strengthened his authority that he was able to invade the Papal dominions and Rome surrendered in 1084. Gregory escaped to the Castle of St. Angelo and Pope Guibert crowned the Emperor. The Roman citizens renounced Gregory, but when the Duke of Norman Italy entered the fray the Germans withdrew and the Romans returned to their former allegiance. Then when the Norman soldiery had so pitilessly sacked their city that their ravages were worse than those of the barbarians of old, the Romans, who had been slaughtered and enslaved in thousands, blamed Gregory as the author of their sufferings. The Norman bandits detained Gregory as a State prisoner at Monte Cassino where he died in 1085, protesting in exile his integrity to the last.

Now Henry IV. appeared completely triumphant, but his dominions were exhausted by the many commotions of preceding years. Yet, in 1091, he seemed supreme, when his undutiful sons rebelled and Henry was once more excommunicated by Pope Pascal II. In 1105 he was driven to abdication, but still he scorned to admit that his conflicts with Gregory lacked justification, or that he had persecuted the clergy. He was gratefully protected by the cities he had consistently safeguarded until his adventurous life closed in 1106.

ACID DROPS

Mr. Melville Dinwiddie, Scottish director of religious broadcasts, told the Aberdeen Presbytery the other day that there are larger audiences for religious broadcasts than ever before, and fewer listeners are directly antagonistic to them. Really, after this we must give up all attempts to do down to history as the greatest liar in the British Isles. The curious thing is that the vast numbers that long for religious singing do not manage to fill the churches. We are left wondering what is it that brings happiness to myriads who revel over religious broadcasts and yet turn up their noses at the religious mystic in charge.

A curious fellow is the Bishop of Chelmsford. The other day a writer launched what the Bishop calls "a devastating attack on the Church of England." So the Bishop retorts with the number of clergymen who joined the Forces during the war; they were, he says, airmen, etc., and several were taken prisoners; some, of course, were killed. We are not surprised. What does puzzle us is what the Bishop is aiming at. Does he wish us to believe that while millions of men and women have faced death during the war, animated by a sense of duty only, the appearance of Christians is a miracle? The Bishop appears to have a poorer estimate of preachers than we have. The Bishop's defence of clergymen reminds us of the man who hearing someone saying that a friend of his was not fit to live in a pigsty at once insisted that he was.

The most striking aspect of Christianity is that it can be anything at any time and in any situation. When it suits the occasion the Christian rises above nationality, we are all the children of God and all are equal in the eyes of God. But under other conditions the Moderator of the Church of Scotland discovers that our first duty is to set everything right at home, and not bother over others. So there you have it. Christianity is a very good creed—for all who wish to say one thing to-day and some other doctrine to-morrow.

The situation of the Churches must be very serious for the "Church Times" to publish a letter from a captain who says that in his hearing the assistant chaplain declared at a parade service "The poor Church of England is out of date. No wonder the man in the street has little time for it. Its sacraments and doctrines no longer make any impression on him. We must get rid of them and substitute something that will make our services more attractive." That is the trouble with a religion that comes direct from God. The giver, God, forgets that time alters man's sense of values, and what is unquestionable in one generation becomes sheer nonsense with another. Human nature develops. Gods do nothing but shrink, with the prospect of annihilation before them.

It will be remembered by many—the majority appears to have very short memories about important matters—that when the Russian revolution occurred those who are called, perhaps sarcastically, our leaders of the people drew some fearful pictures of the revolution and particularly where religion was concerned. Religious worship was banned, priests—as priests—were killed in wholesale numbers, and every church was closed. Some of the leaders of religion were killed several times only to turn up alive and kicking. Of course what the revolution had to face was that the Russian Churches were the agencies by which the people were kept in ignorance. But churches that could claim a not very large number of followers were not closed, and priests who steered clear of politics, as priests, were unmolested.

Now that the situation has altered and the superiority of "Atheistic Russia" over the old Christian Russia is admitted by all, there has set in a theory—in religious and certain other circles—that Russia is again returning to Christianity. It is doing nothing of the kind. The professed Atheists were always in the minority but it is growing in numbers. It was the younger generation on which the revolutionist trusted, and from all that one can gather the "plan" is working as well as one could expect, particularly as Russia has taken a vital part in the greatest, certainly the largest, war the world has ever known.

Before the invasion of Poland by the Nazis that country was substantially Fascist. But it was a stronghold of the Roman Church and the Vatican—the papacy had not then discovered that it was a champion of democracy and it was content with things as they were. A "concordat" with the Polish Government was framed and the Church gave the Government the blessing to Poland that it gave to Fascist Spain which Franco has also discovered is a "democratic" country. The Jew baiting by Poles, as our readers will remember, was continued in England until the British Government, rather unwillingly, called them to order and the persecution was weakened but not wiped out. But the Poles are now looking for protection and help from Russia, and that does not suit the Vatican's plan, so we must look to Rome (Catholic Rome) doing what it can to disturb the existing arrangements between Russia and Poland. At present the Roman Catholic papers are shrieking for freedom for the Poles, particularly since they have repudiated the concordat with the Church. In this situation we are witnessing what might have happened had Germany got control of the atomic bomb before the Allies. Nothing counts where the interests of the Church are at stake.

We would also call attention to what may also occur in Germany. That can hardly be called a Roman Catholic country, but it is certainly one of its strongholds. Nor can sensible people fold their arms and shut their eyes to the game the Vatican may play. Neither can we expect the German people, as a whole, sitting down and thanking the Allies for the methods that must be adopted if Hitlerism is to be killed. The mass will feel their hardships without appreciating that they were responsible for a war that came very near crushing civilisation. In such circumstances there is offered a splendid opportunity for Rome to pose as a Saviour from the "brutality" of non-Catholic countries. Of course our forecast may not work out. In that case no one will be more delighted than ourselves. But in these matters conditions are apt to repeat themselves, and it might not be a waste of time if we kept in mind the fact that a large number of those who posed as admirers of the Hitlerite plan are still with us. For the moment they are quiet—after a fashion.

"Why," asks the "Church Times," "is the state of Church life on the whole more flourishing in rural than in urban areas? It can hardly be doubted that the larger number of priests in proportion to the population, and the effect of Church day schools and Sunday schools in rural areas are contributing factors." The "Church Times" is too modest. It is the comparative army of priests and religious instruction being always to the front that is the real answer to the question. Given a free air and religion in villages would wither to the same extent as it does in cities.

The Catholic "Universe" solemnly prints the news that a priest, a son, and nun, members of the same family, watched their father being ordained into the Roman priesthood. It is often noted that the same diseases run right through a family; but usually it is kept quiet. At any rate the rest of the family have our sympathy.

We are indebted to the Roman Catholic "Universe" for the information that flying over Mount Ararat an airman saw Noah's Ark lying there. The "Universe" regards it as a miracle that this structure, seen by one of Stalin's followers, should have been chronicled. It decides it was "God's monument and a text." If only the papacy could buy the plot of land on which the Ark rests? What a source of income to Rome!

One more congenial statement from W. E. Sangster, Minister of Central Hall, Westminster. He has discovered that the soldier who was driving nails into the hands of Jesus when on the cross found that he was grasping "the hand of a working man." Now many have speculated how Jesus earned his living. We know now he was a working man. Yet all we know about him as a workman appears in connection with his mother's husband. He was a carpenter and found that one piece of wood was too short. So Jesus pulled one way and his mother's husband pulled the other until the plank reached the proper size. We cannot beat that. It was the plank that ruffled the hand of Jesus.

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by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

The following letter which appeared in the British Medical
Journal will be of interest to many of our readers:—

"Sir.—The therapeutic value of spring or spa water was
originally on account of its powers of rejuvenation, and the
sanctity of the holy wells in this country probably goes back
to the days of the megalithic civilisation of some two thousand
years B.C., which derived its ideas from Egypt or Sumer via
Crete and the Iberian peninsula. The alleged healing wells
were not discovered by the medical profession but by the
pilgrims who thronged them as places of sanctity, which thus
attracted the doctors. Harrogate waters, for example, were
not discovered in the 16th century; the original patron saint
was possibly the Egyptian Horus the Child—according to the
views of the late Dr. Rendel Harris and others—in his
capacity as the deity of rejuvenescence. Later he was
supplanted by St. Mungo (with St. Robert), who, as a 'twin,'
possessed the powers of his predecessor, as do all Dioscuri or
Heavenly Twins.

"The holy well is generally the fountain of eternal youth,
whose popularity has now been supplanted by the glands of
the monkey. Prof. Stanley Davidson's report on the negative
value of spa waters—the subject of an annotation in the
Journal of August 25 (p. 259)—instances how long religious
superstition can remain in the minds of so-called educated
men and women. It is said that the Phoenix rejuvenated
himself not only in the fount of youth but also by fire.
Possibly he was also aware of the doubtful value of sacred
spa water and utilised an alternative and more reliable
method.—I am, etc.,
LOWELL WEBB."

From the American "Freethinker," August, 1945:—

"Chapman Cohen has done it again. He has written
another fine brochure that will remain a classic. Paine is a
great subject; Chapman Cohen is a great writer. It is
needless to say that 'Thomas Paine: Pioneer of Two Worlds'
is a great little book. Congratulations to the author!"

It will be remembered that some time ago we published a reply
from the B.B.C. Director of Religious Broadcasts in reply to
whether he really believed that the Devil took Jesus to the top
of a hill and showed him all the nations of the world. On a
round earth, that was an event worth noting. The story is, we
need hardly say, in the New Testament, and as Christians swallow
so much there is no reason to vomit when asked to swallow this.
But the Director, Dr. Welch, is also a preacher by profession.
Yet his reply was that the miracle with Jesus and the Devil

SPECIAL!

From date the address of "The Freethinker," the National
Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, will be
41, Gray's Inn Road, Holborn, W.C.1. It is a few steps
from the Holborn Hall. There is a good bus and tram
service and the offices are not more than about seven
minutes walk from Farnival Street. Owing to war
conditions, repairs and decorations at our new offices
cannot be done as quickly as we should wish, but we have
every confidence that the move is for the better. Mean-
while, our trouble is to find workmen to do the necessary
alterations that must be done to fit our convenience. If
some of our friends can send us a painter and decorator,
a carpenter, and someone used to electrical work, we shall
count him as one of the beloved.

never happened. He added that "the temptations of Jesus were
something that took place in his mind." In plain language Jesus
was often in the state of mind which enables a man to see green
elephants walking around his bed. Men have been burned for
less.

Since, the gentleman who first wrote has been experimenting
with other Christian preachers all of them well known. He used
the same text: Jesus and the Devil. They are quite significant
for if there is no Devil the best part of the aims of Jesus are
worthless. Here are some of the results. The Rev. L. B. Ashby,
who writes every Saturday in the "Daily Telegraph," replied:
"I entirely agree with the Director's letter. Everything else
means nonsense." He does not mean that the rest of Dr. Welch's
letter was rubbish, only that it is rubbish to swallow what the
New Testament tells you about Satan versus Jesus. The other
persons thought it wise to say nothing. Still it is something to
be officially told that Jesus mistook brain trouble for deep
religious truth.

Statistics may be dull things, but they may be very interesting.
For example: The "Church Times" gives nearly three columns,
and an editorial, dealing with some figures concerning infant
baptism in various cities. It gives the number of baptisms to each
ten thousand of population. They run: Sheffield 15, Oxford 12,
Hereford 12, York 12, Chichester 11, London 9. Of course, this
is not suggesting that there are not many baptisms outside the
Church of England, but it may be taken as a fair sample generally.
That will not provide much comfort to Christian leaders.

In commenting on these (religiously) disturbing facts, the
"Church Times" sums up its uneasy leading article by saying
that: "Before the war it was already being said that most
worshippers were either under twenty or over forty years of age.
The most significant statistics in the next few years will be those
that indicate whether the men and women between those ages are
returning to the Church." We question whether the Editor has
any real hope that such an unusual result will occur. Men may
live their lives and not know the truth. But the truth once
known cannot be swept aside. Pull a man's nose and it remains
pulled for ever.

To horrify the good Englishman the "Universe" says
that in Russia there is a death penalty for a priest who baptises
any child under eighteen. We question the penalty, but is it
much worse than parents branding children as belonging to this
or that religious group before they are old enough to understand
what is being done?

A Mr. Russell lets himself go in the "Church Times" on what
he calls the "crisis in Christendom." He says we ought to
"atomise ourselves and our faith." But the outstanding feature
of the atom in practice is to wipe things out, and so we think
Mr. Russell is too late. To most independent minded and
educated men and women real historic Christianity has already
been "atomised," and our chief work is to prove to the world
that it has been done. In any case we think Mr. Russell's simile
ill-chosen.

HENRY J. HAYWARD

LAST month Henry J. Hayward, President of the Auckland Rationalist Association, died aged 80 years.

His was a very interesting, full and complete life, and it is safe to say that the cause of Freethought never had a more doughty champion. The very strong position now held by the Auckland Rationalist Association is the result of many years of unselfish labour and enthusiasm which he devoted to the cause he loved so dearly.

Hayward was a man of much erudition, an omnivorous reader with a well-stocked mind. He was a very gentle man in every sense, but when it was a question of stating and standing by his opinions, no matter how unpopular these opinions were amongst the mass of people, he was a veritable rock. Mr. Frazer, the Prime Minister of New Zealand and the New Zealand Government both pay tributes to his sterling character. He did magnificent work in spreading the cause of Freethought and real democracy in the land of his adoption.

Mr. Hayward was a man of many parts—a great lover of music and an accomplished musician.

Last year he published the story of his life. It was called "Here's to Life," the impressions, confessions and garnered thoughts of a free-minded showman. That book revealed, although he never meant it to, the real beauty of his character. In it he says, speaking of his visit as a boy to the House of Commons: "Amongst my political heroes was Charles Bradlaugh. In my boyish way I had upheld in the Press the cause of Bradlaugh, and once I received a letter from that heroic man. And so the card the usher took from me was addressed to the Member for Northampton: and with charming courtesy he came to vouch for my character to enter."

Here is his description of a lecture which he had heard from Oscar Wilde in the Midlands of England, on "The House Beautiful," "Ugliness was God!" It was the "Crusade for Beauty" by Oscar Wilde associated with that great Englishman, William Morris, craftsman and social reformer, that revolutionised the ordinary homes of England. What a brilliant, strange, tragic genius he was, and what a wizard of words, too. Playwright, poet, essayist, epigrammatist—a star of the first magnitude in English literature!

But Hayward's great hero was Charles Bradlaugh. Speaking of him he said:—

"Bradlaugh was the greatest speaker I have ever heard and I have listened to John Bright, Gladstone (four times), and Joseph Chamberlain often.

To his courage, even we in New Zealand, a world away, owe much, for in our legislature all members have the unquestionable right to refuse the oath and to affirm instead."

Then the stage called the young Hayward and he toured as manager with a company known as "The Brescians," many of whom belonged to his own family.

Then 15 years after a stage career in every part of the British Isles came the call to New Zealand. With his own company he toured with remarkable success; but his quick brain realised the possibilities of the cinema, then in its infancy. So Henry Hayward brought the cinema to New Zealand, and with such success that some years later he was controlling some 68 cinemas with a capital of over £1,000,000.

Then came the financial crisis which struck New Zealand as it did every other country and Hayward's fortune vanished in a night.

So at 62 he started all over again and, as he so graphically puts it in his book, talking of this disaster: "I did not lose a single night's sleep over the debacle for I had ceaselessly continued my ascetic living and philosophically realised that riches are life's greatest illusion."

For many years I have had the pleasure of maintaining the friendship of Henry Hayward begun so long ago, and I have had many most interesting letters from my old friend. They were rich in true philosophy, full of fine thoughts ably expressed, and in them he never descended to the petty mundane things of life. He was always generous in his praise of other men where they deserved it. He was a great admirer of the "Freethinker" and of the valuable contributions of its Editor which, he said again and again, marked him as one of the greatest Freethinkers of his age.

He was the author of several books: "Why Churches are Emptying," "Creeds are Dying—Why?" also "The Life of Madame Curie," of whom he was a most devoted admirer.

The work that he did in combating superstition and spreading knowledge in a young country like New Zealand will always remain a permanent monument to his life.

During the war we heard a great deal from politicians about the heroism and the fine qualities of the "common man." As if it had taken the war to bring out these qualities!

But Hayward knew and realised all this long before the politicians sang their new anthems.

The following extract from his writing illustrates his belief in the ultimate triumph of man:—

"Do I write myself down as a pessimist of humanity's future? No, indeed! I am far from that, for as I have wandered the world I have found everywhere among the common everyday folk—the average labouring folk—a gospel of simple and national brotherhood that shames their political leaders and government. It is the common man and woman of the world that will ultimately solve its problems and wipe out the divisions that diverse nationalities and diverse religions have selfishly made.

"I do not call myself a Socialist or Communist, as I dislike labels, for I am a Freethinker, and the liberty to think freely and live freely is greater than any 'isms' freedom shelters, but the slogan 'Workers of the World, Unite!' commends itself to my best self, and that each should give to the State according to his ability and receive according to his needs. Grandfather Adam—or shall we say Grandfather Protoplasm—smiles at the exclusive conceits of national patriotism and sectarian religions, as well as 'racial purity.' There is no royal section of humanity, we are all arisen through the tortuous processes of evolution, and the world and its fullness belongs to all its people. Aided by its wondrous inventions and its technology, Nature's prodigality is more than sufficient to give generously all the needs that life demands to all its peoples. Yes, it is the common folk of all lands that will bring peace and brotherhood to the whole world, unswayed by wealth and purified by common suffering. They alone, ultimately, will rear aloft their International Flag.

"Red, red, red as the blood that beats through every man's veins, the cruel nightmares of war, capitalism, and the useless selfishness of individual wealth and tiresome possessions, will dissolve as internationalism grows."

F. A. H.

COURAGEOUS AUSTRALIAN PAPER

HERE I would like to add another to the previous examples I have already given of the courage shown by Australian daily papers, in contrast with the cowardice of the Press in other parts of the world, in giving publicity to views that are manifestly offensive to the Church.

It is conceded by all that "The Sydney Morning Herald," the oldest-established daily newspaper in Australia, still continues to be the most reputable daily in the Southern Hemisphere—reputable in the sense of coverage and presentation of

news, in the regard in which it is held by newspaper readers, and in status generally.

Sydney has two morning dailies. The other is "The Daily Telegraph," with a daily circulation similar to that of "The Herald"—say, 300,000. A remarkable tribute by "The Telegraph" was to devote, in its issue of June 2, two full pages—roughly 10,000 words, with photographs—to the present managing-director of "The Herald," Warwick Fairfax, together with the founding of the paper by one of his forbears, and the development of it through various members of the Fairfax family. Special reference is made to Warwick having a £1,000,000 inheritance and the family tradition he has to guard.

These particulars are necessary to fully appreciate this extract from "The Telegraph's" tribute:—

"Last December, after there had been a lot of smug and woolly contributions about Ethics and National Life, the Spiritual Path to Economic Salvation, and so on, Warwick Fairfax did what few men are game to do—stated in print exactly where he stood on religious matters, well knowing the powerful intolerance of the unorthodox and personal in matters of faith."

Here, continues "The Telegraph," are some of the things he wrote:—

"People as a whole to-day believe in science. They believe in evolution, and they believe in the laws of causation as they affect the world of phenomena which we know. I was brought up in a Church of England school, and was a constant attendant at church, but never in my hearing did any teacher or preacher explain how to reconcile the Bible and the Church liturgy with science or philosophy.

"So to-day, boys of 11 or 12 in the best schools are taught about evolution and about Adam and Eve in watertight compartments, with not the slightest help in reconciling such apparent contradictions.

"The boy hears the story of Genesis; he hears how the sun was made to stand still for Joshua; he hears of King Saul being castigated by the Prophet Samuel for not killing every man, woman, and child in a conquered country; and he hears of a Christ born by parthenogenesis, capable of performing miracles, and at last physically and literally dying and coming to life again.

"And, finally, the Bishop of Newcastle tells us that we cannot be Christians unless we believe every word of the Apostles' Creed, which includes belief in the 'resurrection of the body.'

"It would seem to me a terrible thing if I were to emerge at the sound of the Last Trumpet just as I am, complete with short sight, chronic dyspepsia, and a tendency to hay fever, and with those other failings—physical, mental, and temperamental—which I do so much deplore.

"Frankly, I do not believe it."

Could there be anything more outspoken even in a Free-thought paper, in this instance, all the more staggering to Christians in coming directly from the head of a paper which they had long regarded as the supreme citadel of religious faith?

As further revealing the character and courage of Mr. Fairfax, I think "Freethinker" readers will like to have this additional extract from "The Telegraph":—

"As owner of 'The Herald,' Warwick Fairfax might be forgiven if he had caused his paper to retreat from or modify the strong anti-Chamberlain line taken during the appeasement period.

"All the right people were against him—the Governor-General of the day, the Prime Minister, co-directors of the paper, colleagues at the club, practically all the big advertisers, and 90 per cent. of his readers.

"A group of advertisers waited upon him threatening that if he did not change the policy they would withdraw their ads. He listened pleasantly, slanted his eye-shade a little—to remind

himself, perhaps, that he was a newspaper man and no man's stooge—and said goodbye.

"Months later the editor heard of the visit, and asked why he had not been told at the time.

"'It wasn't important enough,' said Warwick."

Wouldn't Britain—and, for that matter, America too—be much the better off with a few daily newspaper proprietors after the pattern and mould of Warwick Fairfax?

I certainly think so.

J. Y. ANDERONEY.

CORRESPONDENCE

FREETHOUGHT AND FREEDOM.

SIR,—The statement by your contributor, C. McCall, in his article "A Plea for Individualism," that the Freethinker ". . . cannot avoid being considerably disturbed by the tendency, in the present age, for the coercive forces of the State to subordinate the individual" is rather misleading. Does he mean the Fascist State in which power is held by a few scheming opportunists, or the Democratic State in which the will of the people is expressed through a representative constitution? Fascism is still with us in the "present age" but fortunately now on its last legs. The tendency, however, after many hard lessons, is towards an extension of democracy.

Mr. McCall will agree, I believe, that the ordinary man has never before had such opportunities as are presented at this stage of history, to live as a politically and economically free individual. And there can be no true individualism without political and economic freedom. Our poor "individual" of past eras was nothing more than a wretched slave or bondsman, unless he had been lucky enough to be born of "noble" parents—or the clergy. Even at the beginning of industrialism he was subject to the "Gradgrind" wills of unscrupulous profit-grabbers. To-day his status is high. He is to have even a sound education which will help him further towards thinking for himself. The Freethinker is surely not disturbed at a tendency which leads to such an advance!—Yours, etc.,

(MRS.) J. H. WHITFIELD.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., MESSRS. SAPHIN, HART, WOOD and PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Dr. J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc.: "The Study of the Mind; 19th Century."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, at 3 p.m. and 6.30 p.m., Mr. J. V. SHORTT will lecture.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. A. REILLY will lecture.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY will lecture.

Road (Lanes.).—Friday September 28, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Todmorden (Market).—Saturday, September 29, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street).—Sunday, 3.30 p.m., Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK: "The Vatican Peril."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: Brains Trust.

THE WORK OF THE DEVIL

QUESTION: Have Catholics to believe that the Devil can possess one when he wants?

ANSWER: Not "when he wants," but when God may permit.

QUESTION: Does the Church still exercise its powers of Exorcism. If so, to whom should one apply?

ANSWER: Yes, if necessary. The Bishop of the diocese should be consulted.

DEAR reader, the above extracts are not, as you might think they are, taken from some ancient catechism dealing with the questions of superstitious and medieval ignoramuses. They are taken from the current issue (September 14, 1945) of "The Catholic Herald," and represent the latest and most authoritative pronouncements of a Roman Catholic theological expert, in reply to questions submitted by stooges in the religion in which one goes to the Church itself for all the answers.

Plainly and simply the first of these answers to correspondents means that people are to be found who still believe in a Devil in 1945; that the Devil remains a useful instrument of Rome's fearsome philosophy; that the Church still teaches and its followers still believe (only some, we hope) that the Devil can "possess" one; and, most astonishing of all, that the Devil is actually an agent of God himself, for he can do his nefarious work only when God permits him to do so! The second answer, again plainly and simply, means that the Church still teaches that evil spirits can take possession of a human being, and that they can be cast out by a Bishop, and, by logical inference, that the Bishop has power to interfere with the work of God by casting out the Devil when the Devil, as an evil spirit, is merely carrying out God's little scheme of things by doing what God permits him to do.

I always suspected that the dignitaries of the Roman Church were greater than God himself, and now my suspicion is confirmed on the best authority.

Can you credit it? Half way through the twentieth century it is still possible for such cesspools of medieval mental stagnation to be discovered in a modern journal—products not of simple lack of education, but of gross miseducation, for even the uneducated to-day could not behave under the influence of such ideas excepting as a result of miseducation. Did somebody say that religion is a dead horse? Maybe it is, maybe it ain't. But if so, the carcass stinks to heaven and wants removing.

Poor deluded creatures, who can still torment their primitive imaginations by evil spirits and devils, whose only reality lies in the fact that, so long as they are believed in, so long will they have access, if not to the bodies at least to the minds of their victims.

No wonder that an ex-Catholic young lady wrote to the Editor of "The Freethinker" a week or two ago, saying: "I am much happier now that my mind is not shackled by fears and superstitions."

Tragic as the position may seem to be, however, there is abundant cause for hope. The thin ray of sunlight cast by Freethought into the foggy realms of religion has been rapidly broadening for many years, and is now a wide golden beam sweeping a distinct path of its own on which enlightened humanity may tread more firmly, safely and sensibly, and, beyond that distinct path penetrating in varying degrees into the densest patches of human darkness. The example of the young lady who is now "much happier without fears and superstitions" can no doubt be multiplied to the umpteenth degree among people who have had similar experiences; while on the other side of the picture we find ever-recurring examples of the awareness of religious institutions that their hold upon the minds of people is rapidly slipping away.

As an antidote to the depressing contents of the answers column of "The Catholic Herald" we can often find in the same journal at other times evidence that the Devil is working hard and successfully at the task of destroying even that branch of Christianity which has longest befriended him, such evidence being manifest in complaints of lack of interest in Catholicism, lack of enthusiasm for its many varied "branches of penetration" into communal life, and actual loss of membership plus such imbecilities as the attempts by certain of its prominent clergy to introduce a "Non-Frat" ban with Protestants at dances in order to prevent leakage by mixed marriages. But the rot won't stop!

It is not long since "The Catholic Herald" rather complacently paid to "The Freethinker" the compliment that this journal was not so gentle with Catholicism as in former days. Suppose this to be true, "The Catholic Herald" knows why. I think. To-day the world is faced with harsher and sterner problems than in the more leisurely days of yore. Philosophic tarradiddle and the turning of nice phrases in theological controversy may have suited a bygone age, but with a new world to build, with immediate action necessary if the worth-while part of civilisation is to be retained and developed, with Fascism still to be stamped out in its more subtle forms, and with the rapid historical movements of the past twenty or thirty years, the Church of Rome has fallen more accurately into perspective than formerly, and, superimposed on the background of religious "other worldliness," we can discern more clearly the black silhouette that stalks in the forest of dark reaction that belongs to this world.

The greatest of Christian shams is being exposed. The enemy of human liberation is recognised behind its priestly garb. Even its own supporters are recoiling in disgust. It is a new Revelation. It must be the work of the Devil himself!

FRANCIS J. CORINA.

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