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## IEWS AND OPINIONS

### Farewell to the Church

THERE are books which say much but their significance is nought. There are other books that say little, and signify much. And there is yet a third class of writings the importance of which lies in their being symptomatic of certain phases of public opinion. We are inclined to place in this last category, although it might well claim to be placed in the second as well, a small booklet with the title *An Englishman's Farewell to His Church*. It is a little book of only 75 pages, but its appearance is highly significant. And this significance lies not so much in what is said, indeed, nothing is said, with which readers of this journal are not perfectly familiar, but to the person who says it. For the writer, whoever he is, we exclude female authorship on internal evidence, evidently says farewell to his Church with reluctance. And whilst giving up the Church and every doctrine of orthodox Christianity, he still writes as a religious man. It is the pressure of facts that has driven him to write his farewell, and it is this consideration that makes his little treatise of so great interest.

Here is a deliverance that impresses one with all the weight of an unchallengeable truth. Addressing the Church the writer says:—

"Men are leaving you because you have nothing to give them. You profess to give more than all the world can give them, more than nature, literature, art, science, travel and creative work can give them, but in truth you give them nothing. They find they can live their lives as well without you as with you, you are not true. Now, in the world which neglects you, pays no heed to you, goes its own way to eternity, and does not even trouble to attack or to mock you, so indifferent is it to your existence. In this world there is perhaps no greater hunger and thirst after truth, but there is an instinctive, ever-increasing sense of the value of truth."

This is not an indictment drawn by an avowed Atheist, but one who attacks the Christian Church in the name of religion. And the indictment is undeniably true. Here is a great Church absorbing annually many millions of money, having in its service many thousands, and yet with positively nothing to offer the nation in return—nothing, that is, on which the vast mass of thinking men and women place a value. Art and science, literature and music, politics, ethics and sociology, each goes its way independent of religion or its message. The mass of people no longer seriously bother with it. They feel that the Christian teaching is not true. And large numbers of the clergy know it is not true, their apologies do but serve to betray their uneasiness and exhibit their lack of candour. In the eyes of millions of the best brains of Europe—among both the educated and uneducated classes—the clergy are considered as no more than hired advocates of an intellectually discredited cause.

The extent of this established imposture blinds many as to its real nature. And yet it needs little reflection to realise what a huge fraud is Christianity. Take, as does the author of the "Farewell," such cardinal doctrines as the Fall of Man, Miracles, the expiatory death of Jesus, or the resurrection of the body. How many educated, thoughtful people believe in these things? How many of the clergy even, believe in them? Here and there some may believe, but the majority, do they believe? Everyone must realise they do not. For we see that what they now mean by these things is not what the Church once meant. They keep the old formulæ, but they give them a new meaning. And no one is justified in giving an entirely new and contradictory meaning to an old formula, and in declaring that he still holds to the original belief.

It is not alone that educated people have ceased to believe in orthodox Christian doctrines. There is more in it than a mere suspension of judgment such as belief implies. They know that these things are not true. They know that the fall of man is a myth, that the resurrection is a fable, that miracles do not happen, and a virgin birth was a downright absurdity. So long as the doctrines are spoken of with any definite or intelligible meaning, we know they are wholly and irretrievably false. And for our own part, we quite decline to believe that the majority of the clergy are so foolish, or so ignorant not to know what a decently educated secondary schoolboy knows. Such belief is really inconceivable. The educated world has kept up this sham of the simplicity of the clergy long enough. They are not more simple, neither are they less self-interested. They are simply furthering their interests by methods which, while discreditable from the point of view of intellectual rectitude, are made permissible by the practice and tradition of the Christian Church.

The significance of *An Englishman's Farewell to His Church*, is plainly charging the dishonesty of the Churches that he had so long trusted.

Written by an avowed Freethinker, the importance of the booklet would be no greater than that of an ordinary anti-Christian pamphlet, even though much more was said. Being written by one who still professes belief in a god, and even in a Christ, of a sort, but it must be taken as symptomatic of a fairly general frame of mind within the Church and as indicative of the mental attitude of a much larger number outside. Quite correctly, the author says that "Men who march with the time spirit" pay no heed to the compromises and adjustments, the hair-splittings and quibblings of theologians. Their doctrines form no part of the lives of men and women. Theologians may explain, but men go on knowing the doctrines are not true. Nothing can re-establish them. They have been decisively disproved. And no Church, no institution, can stand for ever against this general contempt. While the contempt is, so to speak, subconscious, the Churches may still maintain a bold front, but so soon as it wells into consciousness, so soon the end of the Church

for that man or woman has come. To-day this is occurring on a scale larger than has ever before been the case. "An Englishman's Farewell" is an indication that for honest and thoughtful men and women the Christian Church has no message and offers no habitation.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### THE STORY OF A CONSCIENTIOUS CLERGYMAN

STEWART DUCKWORTH HEADLAM was a many-sided man. A cleric who disconcerted the Bishops, celebrated Mass in Anglican churches as a sincere believer in the Real Presence, who adored Christ as an incarnate divinity. He was also convinced that man's earthly habitation should be the centre of human felicity, and that the Kingdom of Heaven should be here and now.

The standard authority on Headlam is Mr. F. G. Bettany, whose biography of that reformer was published by John Murray in 1926. Nearly all the intimates of Headlam who survived him, furnished information for this book. These include the Webbs, G. B. S., Selwyn Image, H. G. Wells, Frederick Verinder and various others. "But after all," observes his biographer, "it is to Stewart Headlam himself that I am most indebted. In conversation with me during 1917-1918 and subsequently, he covered most phases of his career, and notes of the talks were submitted to him and approved by him after long and careful study."

The son and grandson of underwriters at Wavertree, Headlam was born in 1847. Educated at Eton and Cambridge, he was ordained deacon and became curate at St. John's, Drury Lane, in 1870. Under the liberating influence of Maurice, Headlam disclaimed all belief in eternal punishment and embraced Maurice's brand of Socialism. Heresies such as these were then deemed dreadful in religious circles, and Headlam was soon regarded as a black sheep by most of his clerical brethren.

Despite his unpropitious surroundings, Headlam visited his poor parishioners, sympathised with their afflictions, condoned their relaxations, and soon became popular with the children. But the elder boys in the Sunday School asked embarrassing questions, for, notes Headlam, "those were the days when Bradlaugh's influence was strong over working men, and my boys had felt the influence directly and indirectly." Moreover, it was in Drury Lane that Headlam became acquainted with the drama and the actor's profession. He saw Irving's *Hamlet*, visited the opera and became an enthusiastic admirer of the ballet. This was, of course, most unclerical, but it laid the foundations of the future Church and Stage Guild. Also, one evening, "Headlam recognised on the stage a couple of girls who were communicants, and he spoke of his discovery that they were dancers when he met them subsequently. They implored him not to let the other church attendants know how they made their living, because if the nature of their work were once known, they would be cold-shouldered in the church."

Headlam's vicar still believed in Hell, and thus grew uneasy concerning his curate's heresy and, as the time approached for his full ordination, his Bishop wished to inspect Headlam's sermons, but finding his views unpalatable, deferred ordination, and his vicar reluctantly requested his resignation.

In 1872, however, Headlam was fully ordained into the priesthood, and became curate of St. Matthew's,

Bethnal Green. There, his activities found fuller scope and proved the main formative period of his life. As the curate of a Radical rector, Septimus Hansard, who encouraged his intimacy with working class leaders, he helped to establish the Bethnal Green Museum and opened a campaign to assist the National Sunday League—a body founded chiefly by Secularists—in its agitation for the Sunday opening of art galleries and museums.

Friend Verinder was then a pupil-teacher in the National School, and he testifies to Headlam's benign influence over teachers and scholars alike. He started continuation classes in which the then just published Green's *History of the English People*, Shakespeare, Tennyson and other eminent writers were studied. Visits to the theatre and walking tours took place and, as usual, Headlam became the idol of the children.

In 1877 Headlam delivered a written address on Theatres and Music Halls which ruined his prospects of preferment. An actor who was present had seen clergy men waiting outside the theatre where he performed, warning people who entered of the danger incurred in witnessing profane plays, and he asked Headlam to submit his manuscript to the editor of the *Era*. In that periodical it appeared, and its publication incensed the Episcopacy, and "from that time onward he was a marked man in the Church."

Headlam was again martyred. His Sunday School was closed and his humanitarian activities appeared at an end. Still, his Church Guild was saved, and the people of Bethnal Green never forgot his splendid services when they returned him as a member of the London School Board, who advocated Secular Education, and later, made him and Percy Harris their County Councillors. Headlam was also instrumental in securing the return of Mrs. Fenwick Miller—another heretic—to the London School Board, as an Independent who supported Secular Education.

When Headlam began his public career, Bradlaugh's influence over the cream of the working classes was immense. Headlam therefore decided to beard the Freethought lion in his den. The bold utterances of the secular leaders of the time won popular applause, and Bradlaugh's bravery in exposing the sins of the Church and State was especially appreciated. His indictments of the Scriptures pleased his audiences and infuriated his opponents. Fortunately, the letters Headlam wrote at this time have been preserved in which he describes his encounters with Mrs. Harriet Law, Austin Holyoake and above all, with the arch-infidel, Charles Bradlaugh himself. "I have had another evening at the Hall of Science," he avers, "Bradlaugh lectured on slavery in America, which, with the exception of one bitter sentence against Christians, must have done all his hearers much good."

In his speech in opposition, Headlam disavowed all belief in the infallibility of the Bible, but pinned his faith on Christ whose humane teachings constituted true religion. "Bradlaugh replied," his critic continued, "thinking I was Hansard, and thanking me for all the good work I had done in East London, wondered what the Bishop would say to me, and how he was to treat me while I belonged to the Church which published thousands of tracts teaching the Bible's infallibility. . . I replied I was not Hansard, but was glad they recognised his work, and that now they knew there were at least two good Christians."

Bradlaugh was "very courteous." Headlam observes that he praised his broadmindedness and remarked that

if the Bishops would give him a brief he could easily convict his critic of heresy. He also praised his adversary's sincerity, and offered him the hospitality of the columns of the *National Reformer* to enable him to state his case. "Next Sunday," proceeds Headlam, "Bradlaugh lectures on Christian Culture, and is sure to say some nasty things about Christians, and we deserve it. How much nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven are these men of the Hall of Science than the followers of Moody and Sankey!" After the discussion the adversaries parted with a hearty handshake and Headlam observed that the Hall was filled with people who now knew "that a parson does not worship the Bible, or believe that men will be kept in punishment for ever, or object to museums being open on Sunday."

Headlam not merely opposed the Secularists: he also grew to appreciate their standpoint. For years Bradlaugh and Foote were on cordial terms with him and also with his loyal adherent, the late Frederick Verinder. Indeed, Headlam himself said: "I value few compliments I have received so highly as one paid me in a Freethinker pamphlet, which exonerated me from the charge so often brought against professing Christians that they did not live up to their principles. It marked a turning point in controversy."

Not only did Headlam send a sympathetic telegram to Bradlaugh when he was confined in St. Stephen's Tower during the Parliamentary Struggle, but he willingly served as Chairman of the committee of the Hall of Science Classes. Also, he publicly advocated the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. But to his Fabian Society membership and his relations with G. B. S., the Webbs, H. G. Wells and other celebrities, a future article may be devoted.

T. F. PALMER.

## TWO REVERENT RATIONALISTS

MY title may seem somewhat unfair to the authors of two new books which now lie on my desk. But one of them, "Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa," is by the Rev. P. Hadfield, M.A., B.D. (Watts; 8s. 6d.). A clergyman may presumably be referred to as a reverent Rationalist if he writes a book on a Rationalist theme. The other volume is Mr. Alfred Machin's "What is Man?" (Watts; 10s. 6d.) and it is to its theme rather than to the identity of its author that I would extend the term "reverent Rationalist" here.

Mr. Machin is in many respects a follower of Sir Arthur Keith. Now Sir Arthur, as most people who read this journal will know, is an Atheist; but it is in his political more than his religious views that Mr. Machin follows in the footsteps of the veteran.

It was, I think, in his "Essays on Human Evolution" that Sir Arthur Keith said that "war is the life-preserver of nations." Mr. Machin, taking over this Fascist slogan, improves it thus: "With mankind ownership of the earth, of the right to exploit the fruits of the earth, is the main source of war. Periodically the wealth of the world is redistributed. This is a large part of the struggle for existence, in which natural selection finds opportunity to advance the progress of man."

That this is supposed to be part of Evolution's answer to the question posited by Mr. Machin's title is, I suppose, a detail. But I think that it is time that someone with authority put forward an answer to this school of anthropology led by Sir Arthur Keith, which would presumably see in the atom bomb and the development of bacterial warfare the greatest hope for human progress. One does

not, of course, expect to see anywhere in such literature any acknowledgment of the ideas of Kropotkin or of that much-neglected book, "Mutual Aid." Indeed, the basis of Mr. Machin's case is that man is naturally an anti-social animal who hates work.

I said, however, that Mr. Machin might be regarded as a "reverent Rationalist," of, perhaps, the same type as Lord Raglan, who recently hailed the Church of England as a barrier to the spread of Romanism. Here is a quotation, not from an evangelical bishop, but from Mr. Machin, this supposedly scientific writer:—

"It has been well said that we can hope to get some better knowledge of the Creator only by studying the Creation. Here is the earth . . . What is it all for? What does the Creator aim and intend by this mysterious, gigantic, yet enormously slow process of evolution? What happens to living things when they die and quit this material world? Are there other worlds, spiritual worlds? All this remains a profound mystery."

The reader will no doubt have realised by now that I do not like Mr. Machin's book. I hold that it is at fault in its premises; that it is closely-argued, but that it cannot for a moment be sustained against the attitude of mind of the thinker who has tried to work out a comprehensive theory of the way in which men can work together in peace rather than war. For, if man is a lazy, anti-social animal, how does Mr. Machin account for the miracles of organisation and cohesion shown in war? If men will not work together for peaceful progress, how comes it that they work together for the destructive ends of war? The ideas behind the book, in fact (though this is no doubt unconscious, as it has always been in the writings of Sir Arthur Keith), are ideas which Hitler or Mussolini would have hailed with joy, tending to the glorification of the omnipotent State and the slave-directing tyrant.

When one turns from Mr. Machin's book to the Reverend Mr. Hadfield's one is conscious of a complete change. Mr. Hadfield is an observer of some acuteness, a follower of Sir James Frazer and A. M. Hocart. He works out an interesting theory as to religious and political organisation among the peoples of Africa, and he does it well. Clergymen would appear to be good scientists when they are able to forget their creed. And Mr. Hadfield's creed nowhere appears in his book. It is, indeed, impossible to say to what Church he would own allegiance.

But it seems to me that there is something wrong with the way in which Rationalism is developing when we get, from an avowed Rationalist, what is, in effect, almost a mystical work, worshipping the god of Evolution instead of the God of the Hebrews, whereas from a clergyman there comes a thoughtful study of the way in which savage tribes have evolved their own ritual and ceremony.

Readers who compare the two books, if they did not notice the names of the authors, might well, indeed, think that they had become reversed. And that, as I have said, is an indication of something wrong, and something quite unexpected in the state of opinion in this country—at any rate in theological and allied fields.

JOHN ROWLAND.

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## ACID DROPS

Does the depth of man's credulity and ignorance ever sink so low as when in connection with religion? Almost every "miracle worker" who has visited our shores has been exposed for the fakes they are (one even preferred aspirin to faith). Yet still the march of faith-healers goes on. More than 10,000 people waited all night, some for as long as six days and nights, in a rain-swept muddy field near Munich, to see the German "New Day Messiah" in the hope that he would cure the blind and the lame. Up to date, the only cures officially claimed are a "lame duck and a spavined horse." On the other hand, two people went mad and many collapsed, causing the Red Cross to work overtime. Will the credulous never learn? Another "miracle" worker started near Munich, with what result the world knows only too well.

The first of a series of Eucharistic Congresses was recently held in New York, and 6,000 people heard our Bishop of London preach on "The Catholic Life in the Prayer Book." To bolster up these all-believing Christians were 700 conforming clergy, and 26 live bishops, all in a long procession, and no doubt everybody was thoroughly satisfied including God Almighty. These picturesque revivals of the Old, Old Faith are supposed to prove the truth of Christianity—but do they? Has a single Freethinker been converted by these primitive and naive exhibitions of human stupidity? But it requires another Ingersoll to flay such credulity and superstition—and Ingersolls are never born twice in one century.

The *Church Times* is delighted that attempts now being made in Canada to improve the divorce laws are going to be more or less shelved for three years. It appears that the General Synod of the Church of England in Canada through its Lower House voted in favour of the innocent party in a divorce to remarry. This was too much for the Upper House which, not being able to throw out the measure completely, managed to get the Lower House to agree to a Commission to study the problem and report in *three years*. Three years' grace, thank God! Probably the *Church Times* will then whoop for joy if another Commission is appointed to study the final Report—and give their decision in another three years. It is a delightful game.

Nobody has banged the big drum for bigger families more than Roman Catholics and no body of people has attacked birth control more, but the latest figures for themselves published in the *Universe*, seem astonishingly low for such yelling propagandists. In 1934, the average in England was about 2.5 per family. In 1946, it had only increased to 2.39 and 2.41 in 1947. The Catholic ideal of from 15 to 20 children per family seems shattered but we never dreamed it could have been so low. And the moral? Why, Roman Catholics are using artificial contraceptives as much as Atheistic Communists. It must be a harrowing thought for R.C. bishops.

If the *Sunday Express* sports columnist really wants to know the answer to his question, "When does sport cease to be sport?" we could tell him. For recalling the recent exhibition of hooliganism at the Celtic v. Rangers football match, the answer is, when a team's fans are predominantly Catholic, as in the case of Celtic, and in the case of Rangers, Protestant. The former, we understand, are descendants of Ulster Orangemen. To complete the picture of a modern crusade, let us have a few

religious banners (this has actually happened) and with one side yelling "up with the Pope" and the other as vociferously roaring "down with the Pope," the hosts of the Lord could meet to do battle with bottles and any handy weapon, all for the greater honour and glory of God and the home team. We understand that, as in other religious disputes, a secular "Bobby" will in the future see that the peace is kept.

A photo in the *Daily Mirror* shows two bishops in a most appropriate costume, during the coronation of a bishop in the roofless bomb-damaged Llandaff Cathedral. The rain was pouring down, and the two chief functionaries did not look at all out of place dressed in their fish-head mitres. We feel that Dagon, the fish God, would have been flattered had he seen that thousands of years after the last ceremony to him, his emblem was still in use. Intelligent people could ask some pointed questions on this ceremony. For instance, even if God could not divert Nazi bombs from hitting his Cathedral, could he not, at the least, stop the rain whilst two of his vicars were doing their piece?

To Christians, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man is a beautiful idealistic phrase. But apparently, Dr. Malan, that natural descendant of Calvin, has no illusions whatever about it, and obviously holds that it does not apply to any people with a darker pigmentation than himself, even if they do believe in the same God as he does. Clerics in South Africa, not being made of the stuff that martyrs are made of, are refusing to marry couples of a swarthy complexion for fear of breaking the "Mixed Marriages Act," and as good Christians, they will no doubt defend their action by quoting Admiral Noah's curse on his son Ham, and the fact that they will glibly talk of the equality of man in the sight of God, will not embarrass them at all.

But after all, Dr. Malan need not go to the Old Testament. The Rev. D. A. Diederich, Moderator Designate of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, has added the full weight of his Christian authority in the Church to the segregation policies of the Malan Government. He has roundly declared that "they are in keeping with Christian principles"—and so say all of us.

Lord Rowallen denies that the Boy Scout Movement is a religion, but, he adds, the "Scouts' Promise" places first and foremost, Duty to God, and the religious policy is that a scout is expected to attend regularly the religious observances of his faith. Of course, the Movement is not a religion, but the fact that the majority of scout groups are sponsored by Churches is, we suppose, purely incidental and is not just a matter of keeping potential members in line; that would be too materialistic. At least the Roman Catholics do not quibble over the real reason for sponsoring scout groups, it is considered an important work, and a special prayer book is published for Catholic scouts.

## THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

Does Cardinal Griffin, who is ill with high blood pressure, think that the National Health Insurance is more efficacious than a pilgrimage to Lourdes?

If Joe Walcott, the boxer (who recently kissed the Pope's ring), had received the Papal Blessing before his World Title fight, would he now be heavy-weight champion?

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mrs. SHEL.—For the *Freethinker*, 3s. M. Feldman, 3s.

H. RILEY.—Thanks for cuttings.

E. W. JAMES.—We, too, suffer from well-meaning Christians who want to save us from the fires of Hell. We suggest that every time you receive a religious tract, you offer one of the N.S.S. leaflets in exchange.

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Readers in the London area should make a point of looking Monday, 24th October, and Tuesday, 1st November. Mr. Glanville Cook, Editor of *The Australian Rationalist*, is on a visit to this country and will lecture in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, on Monday evening, 24th October, on "The Roman Catholic Church in Australian Politics"; and on Tuesday evening, 1st November, Avro Manhattan, author of *The Catholic Church Against the 20th Century, Religion in Russia*, etc., will lecture in the same hall on "The Vatican in World Politics." The lecture begins at 7.30 p.m. and admission is free. The lectures are under the auspices of the Executive of the National Secular Society.

Mr. J. Clayton will lecture in the Failsworth Secular School, Pole Lane, Failsworth, to-day (9th October) at 2.30 p.m. and in the evening at 6.30. We wish him and the Secular School two very successful meetings, and feel safe in promising those who attend, interesting and instructing addresses.

The great success of last year's "Christmas" card among our readers, has induced the N.S.S. to arrange for another one—a very striking and original design. It will be printed in two colours and we hope all readers will avail themselves of using it for their New Year's greeting. In the meantime, we understand a few copies of last year's card are still available.

The article on Charles Bradlaugh to which we referred recently, published in the *Northampton Chronicle and Echo*, brought the usual clerical replies. The Rev. J. H. Watkins rushed to the defence of the Faith by pointing out that if Bradlaugh defeated the Church, how comes it that Northampton has only half-a-dozen members of the Rationalist Press Association? The idea behind this is that the R.P.A. has the monopoly of Freethinkers—or perhaps that is what Mr. Watkins desires to convey. However, we agree that if numbers are

the test, then Freethought cannot compete with either Buddhists or Roman Catholics. But as Mr. Watkins is a Methodist—it is not unfair to say that Methodists cannot, either.

Mr. Watkins refers to his reading every year the *Rationalist Annual* and insists that "it strengthens" his Christian faith. But supposing this is true, what has it to do with Bradlaugh's attack on Christianity? Does Mr. Watkins actually believe that he could reply to the great Iconoclast? Far better men "had a go" and they were promptly—though metaphorically—liquidated. The only answer the Christian Church could give to Bradlaugh when alive was to vilify him to the utmost, and wait until he died so that (1) they could claim him as a Christian without knowing it; and (2) to pretend that he never attacked "true" Christianity.

The sheep who so blindly follow their clerical leaders never, or very rarely, read Freethought literature, and no doubt they believe that Bradlaugh was easily answered. These parsons and priests are always saying that Freethinkers know so little about the Christian Church—in spite of the fact that almost without exception Freethinkers were born and reared in the arms of the Church, and most of them know Christianity quite as well as a bishop. The Christianity Bradlaugh attacked, is dead for most intelligent believers; it could not survive his devastating criticism. Most preachers these days are content to leave Hell, the Devil and Miracles alone, and concentrate on Jesus as a super Sunday-school teacher. And even that, Bradlaugh anticipated and annihilated.

## THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

I HAVE a profound respect for Chapman Cohen and for the profundity he always displays, but have always found myself in profound disagreement with him concerning religion and morality, and so also with the "Problem of Suffering or the Problem of Evil" as in "The Freethinker," August 7th. The problem as stated is not theological although theology is involved; nor is it a problem "created by theology," nor a question of "reconciling" theory. To theology God is as real as pain and pain is not theory but sufficient evidence of evil. The problem as stated is metaphysical, but the theologian is concerned with justification and not explanation.

There is no such problem with more primitive religions. To polytheism, the dialectic conflict of the Gods is no different from that among men, but the contradictions involved, were the concern of the Gods. Primitive religion was allogical and theology is a survival or revival of the primitive. Polytheism arose unconsciously with amalgamation of tribes into nations and empires, but monotheism, at its very inception, involved intellectual argument and metaphysical contradictions; with notions of mathematics, physical or natural law, and logic, with the paradox of multiplicity in unity. So that concern for political or social unity is paralleled by that for logical consistency in theory of unity in a universe or within universal law. It is here the problem as stated arises.

That the confusion is metaphysical is shown in Chapman Cohen himself. He has often warned his readers against the old trick of separating in fancy what cannot be separated in fact, and of mis-stating theory for fact. Yet he himself fails to avoid it. Concerning the "indifference" of nature, and of "morality" in nature, he speaks of nature as if it were the physical world separate from human nature and separate from us; and

as if "natural forces" are objective fact. Cohen's approach is metaphysical, and just as animism reads itself into other things so also Cohen reads his own method into the theologian. Now don't get me wrong, I am not arguing against his metaphysics, I wish only to point out that it is metaphysical. With his general argument I agree so far as it goes.

What I wish to emphasise is that we cannot separate ourselves from the problem. I agree that "goodness" and "badness" are "standards created by the organism itself" but with the addendum that we ourselves are the organism. The distinction is metaphysical, but which is which? It is also metaphysical to think of pain as subjective as distinct from objective; as abstract in reference to an outside world; but can we? Does not metaphysical theory and method need "reconciling" with fact? Cohen is right in what he says about the animistic implications of the language we use to "express our ideas in a brief, picturesque and vivid manner" but does not consider the intensity of feeling in the expression "evil" as contrasted with the mild expression "badness."

Cohen is right in saying that "we personify nature" and that this "does not exist outside ourselves." But we are not separate from nature and we implicate ourselves, for the act of personification expresses our feelings. Actual pain is too personal to consider as a metaphysical abstraction. We, as well as the theologian, are concerned in what Joad called the obtrusiveness of evil. And in saying that "on that confusion the whole of theology rests" Cohen fails to appreciate the difference between theology and metaphysics. As Bertrand Russell would say, metaphysics is abstract consideration of the possible, but with this theology has no concern except insofar as it may be useful. For instance, if theology accepts pain as an idea it is only insofar as ideas are claimed as reality, but theology is not tied to Idealism or to any other metaphysic.

Nor is theology concerned about the "existence" of pain. Schopenhauer argued pain as reality and human life as escape from pain. But theology has no use for such a metaphysic. In its concern with pain, theology, like metaphysics, is involved in logic, but there is a difference in its method. Theology is not concerned with logical consistency but with feelings. Such logical argument does not touch theology, which openly asserts its own illogicality, just as the Hegelians assert self-contradiction. The irony of Kierkegaard could show Hegels ease to be "comic" yet assert his own as "absurd" with the paradox of faith in acceptance of suffering as a sacred obligation. And so the same applies to logic. Theology only accepts logic insofar as it is useful.

Whereas metaphysics applies logic to assumptions and suppositions in abstract reasoning, theology, like politics, only applies logic to the arguments of its opponents; its concern is for justification of the alogical primitive past, and it is systematic in its method of seeking such excuse. Nor is theology theoretical, being equally concerned with ritual and ceremonial; with custom and what is customary; theology can eschew logical reasoning. To quote Kierkegaard again, he believed "because his father said so" although he had a poor opinion of his father's intelligence. To believe the ancient myths, which may not be historical "it is enough that someone said so." It is the meaning that matters and that is not judged by logic, but by feelings.

The point is that Cohen, in confusing the problem of suffering and the problem of evil, is mis-stating or misunderstanding the problem. Theology is not trying to explain pain, it is using and justifying the use of pain.

To Kierkegaard, faith is belief in absurdity to the point of suffering. The Christian's ability to suffer is the measure of his faith. Here we are back with the savage in the medieval trial by ordeal. We are here in this Vale of Tears to suffer. The early Christians gloried in the suffering of martyrdom and Kierkegaard called for a "heartfelt" return to the faith. The medieval Christian justified inquisitorial torture on behalf of Authority and discipline. And in ascetic self-discipline the "visions, voices and inspiration" appear as a consequence of mystical self-torture. To theology there is no Problem of Pain, only the Problem of Evil, and this problem is how to fight it.

Nowadays, says Cohen, "we simply put it down to neurosis" but he does not consider the inversion in personal projection of animistic personification. If we consider our feelings as motives, we cannot experience another man's feelings, and we judge the intentions of others by our own. As our suffering is not our own intention we are animated by good intentions and others are conceived as actuated by evil motives in animistic delusion. And this obsession is justified by Thomist analogy, by the subtleties of Jesuitical casuistry, and the irrational action of existentialist subjectivity, in our personal reactions to the "vivid" language in which we express our feelings. We can go further than Sartre who says God is excuse, for, if we realise ourselves in action, justification in action is vindication. As all this involves the relations of feeling to actions, theology cannot be separated from human nature, for the problem of evil concerns human nature.

H. H. PREECE.

## THE CROCODILE WEEPS

A LEVELLED ray of the setting sun fell on the anchorite's hand. The young disciple raised his eyes. "Oh," he exclaimed, "what pale hands! You know I used to love that poem because I thought it was 'Pale Hounds I Love.'"

The desert was afire with finality.

"No," said the anchorite, "no, this won't do at all." The yellow sunset moved to the tips of his fingernails, and he looked at the dusty grace of his young disciple. "See," he said, "I am going to lie down on the sand. You must put the heel of your sandal on my neck and then you must spit in my face."

The disciple filled the evening with his eyes. "I couldn't," he said softly, "I couldn't. . . ."

"I order you," the saint replied coldly. "It is my wish to humble myself before my Creator."

Wilfully, the boy shook his head.

The last light blazed up in the sky as a righteous man's anger, although already the first rustle of dark breeze was in the palms.

The saint took the boy's arm. He said, "Do you think it is permitted to avoid doing something which is painful? Is not our will the first sacrifice?" He gazed steadily at the lad so like a lost mariner in the desolate sea of sand. For an instant, the anchorite thought of the tortured mystery of that sea's own life. Then the sun slipped beneath the dunes like a toy ginger cat jerked out of sight by a long string.

Now the hermit's voice was gentler. "Look," he explained, "if you do this, which is unpleasant to you, I will promise God a comparable sacrifice. I will do something which will hurt me as much as this hurts you. When I wake to-morrow, I will tell you that you are very ugly."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CORRESPONDENCE

JAMES JOYCE.

Sir,—I respectfully suggest to Mr. Kean not to write nonsense. I don't take my views on books and literature "secondhand." I read *Ulysses* soon after it was published and have glanced through it since. My view that it is boring rubbish has not changed. I have not read *Finnegan's Wake* and doubt whether anybody has—but I had a good look at it. I consider that it is unreadable, boring rubbish. Here is a sample:—

"Greets Godd, Groceries! Merodach! Defend the King. Hoet of the rough throat attack but whose say is soft but whose ee has a cute angle, ho whose hut in a hissarlik even as her hennin's aspire. For now at least is longabod going to be gone to, that more than man, shoe-handed slaughtereer of the shader of our leaves."

Shades of the Jabberwock! At least, Lewis Carroll had humour. Mr. Kean has a perfect right to consider this tripe great literature and the work of a real artist. I have the right to differ from him. But my complaint is that Joyce is put forward as an out-and-out Atheist! This is really too much. He never left the Roman Church—like Hitler—and he never did anything whatever for Freethought. If he said anything in favour, it is so hidden by his "outstanding genius"—according to Mr. Kean, the greatest writer the Universe has ever seen, I suppose—that he appears to be the only person in the world who has seen it. I think our movement can do very well without Joyce and the unmitigated rubbish of his later works.—Yours, etc., H. CURNER.

"THE FRAUD OF FREUD."

Sir,—I must say that I found Mr. Percy Roy's title to his latest against Freudians somewhat shocking. Nearly all great teachers of mankind have been misrepresented by their disciples or followers, and Professor Sigmund Freud is no exception to that rule. Mr. Roy is, of course, quite within his rights to point out what he conceives to be the shortcomings of modern Freudian practice—as to which I offer no opinion here—but I repeat it is somewhat shocking to find one of the greatest underminers of religion termed a fraud in *The Freethinker*.

I wonder if Mr. Roy has ever heard of one of Dr. Freud's most important books, *The Future of an Illusion* (the Illusion being Religion). The English translation of this was reviewed by me in *The Freethinker* about twenty years ago, long enough ago for both Freudians and Mr. Roy to forget, perhaps. The purpose of the book is, as was pointed out in my article, to make a purposive examination of religious illusions, which the author hopes and believes will pass away when mankind is educated to reality.

Karl Marx's dictum: "Religion is the opium of the people" is not quoted, but Dr. Freud agrees with this, for in the book reviewed he writes that "the effect of the consolations of religion may be compared to that of a narcotic."

In the closing paragraph of my review I made two quotations from Dr. Freud's book, to give, as I wrote, Freethinkers a taste of Dr. Freud's quality. "He who humbly acquiesces in the insignificant part man plays in the universe is irrelevant in the true sense of the word." "Where questions of religion are concerned people are guilty of every possible kind of insincerity and intellectual misdemeanour." My article concluded with these words: "How often have we 'vulgar atheists' said the latter of our Christian fellows, and with what indignation has this been denied. Will they accept this hard saying more readily from a great scientist and genius? Iac ma doots."

I have before me as I write a brief letter from Dr. Freud, written in English by his own hand, and addressed to me, who had sent him my review. It is dated 1st March, 1929, and from it I quote two sentences. "I am glad the poor [his book] has found grace at least in the eyes of the Freethinkers. As for the effect to be expected I absolutely share your doubt."

May one hope that if Mr. Roy ever reprints his article he will so amend his title so as not to suggest fraud to one of the greatest friends of Freethinkers in our time.—Yours, etc., BAYARD SIMMONS.

THE CASE OF MR. WOOD.

Sir,—Discussions on such topics as Vitalism and Spiritualism can be useful if conducted in a calm atmosphere, but Mr. W. H. Wood hardly encourages this when he writes in the strain of his article, "More Vitalism," in *The Freethinker* of the 14th August, 1949. Because I (together with eminent biologists) repudiate the purpose in Nature, in the human sense of having a goal in

view, which is the only understandable meaning of the word, Mr. Wood tells me that I am in a bad way, conceited, and inferentially, a ninny! Mr. Wood appears to have veered right round from his pessimism of a few months ago to a boundless optimism, taking the whole universe in his stride. I am glad that he has rid himself of pessimism and the futility-of-life ideas he once appeared to hold.

Blighted atheist that I am, where did I say or infer that "man will never advance mentally beyond his present state"? Or "that we know all that we shall ever know"? Please, Mr. Wood, give your critics credit for some small degree of intelligence.

I wonder if Mr. Wood has studied the scientific works of Professor Julian Huxley and Sir Chas. Sherrington on Purpose in Evolution? Or are they also considered to be in a "bad way"?—Yours, etc., E. A. McDONALD.

[Although this controversy is closed we cannot exclude the above as Mr. McDonald is a South African reader.—Ed.]

OBITUARY

SARAH JANE SPEIRS

With deep regret we record the death of Sarah Jane Speirs, wife of Mr. R. Speirs of Sheffield, on 23rd September in her 75th year. She, like her husband, was a staunch Freethinker, and had been a member of the National Secular Society for 20 years. Her interest in the Society and the Freethought movement was maintained to the end. Besides her Freethought, she was also interested in the Labour Party, and during the whole of her life she acted as an alert and intelligent citizen. With a husband holding a kindred outlook on life, her domestic circle was a happy one. His loss is a grievous one and we extend our sincere sympathy to him and a surviving daughter. Her requests for cremation and a Secular Service were duly carried out at the City Crematorium, Birmingham, on Monday, 26th September, where a large assembly of relatives and friends, including members of the Sheffield Branch N.S.S., listened to a Secular Service read by the General Secretary. R.H.R.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "The Perfect Politician," Mr. FRED RATCLIFFE.
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 4, 7 p.m.: "Rationalism in 20th Century" (II), Mr. J. A. C. BROWN, M.B. Ch.B.
- Failsworth (Secular School, Pole Lane).—Sunday, 2-30 and 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The Latter Day Saints," Mr. M. R. BALLARD, (Utah, U.S.A.).
- Rationalist Press Association (Conway Hall, Small Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 11: "Reason and Belief in Social and Moral Behaviour," Second Lecture. "The Psychological Conditions of Rational Behaviour," Mr. BRIAN FARRELL, M.A.
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Some of Our Adversaries," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Religion and Psychology," Mr. B. S. J. SPIKES.

OUTDOOR

- Burnley Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. L. ERRVY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Bombed site, St. Mary's Gate).—Every day, lunch-hour lectures, 1 p.m.: Messrs. BILLING and WOODCOCK.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Mr. L. ERRVY.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.
- Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. BRYDEN and J. HUMPHREY.

## WHAT IS CONSCIENCE ?

THERE are two consciences—real and imaginary, social and superstitious—in most people's psychical build-up. A social conscience is a reality, like one's physical or mental powers. It bears no relation to its owner's attitude towards God. It is more reliable than a religious conscience. A person who lives an honest life in the fear of hell may immediately turn criminal if he suspects that he has been had. Citizens, peaceable only by constraint of Law, likewise become rapers and robbers when the Law's arm is shortened.

It is to the vast majority of people, possessing a social conscience in some degree, and an instinctive respect one for another, that we look for the maintenance of our social life and civilisation.

In practice, religion is often nothing but a salve to the sinner, which he applies to his bruised conscience to soothe it. He obtains remission of his sins, by confession or by payment, whilst his victims (if he thinks of them) are compensated hereafter. All in the garden is divine. His own life is only a manifestation of God's will, who works perfectly with such imperfect instruments.

Others cannot swallow such anodynes; they derive no comfort from them. They feel impelled to make practical atonement, put their misdeeds right here and now. They also try to see that their account balances on the side of right (even if they have no thought of a recording angel).

The state of conscience again may vary with the individual's chemical composition. An over-sensitive conscience may have its root in a sour stomach. The labourer, who swallows his ale without qualms, has probably only expelled, by physical labour, certain toxic properties of the blood which depress the abstainer's mind. Dyspepsia may create disgust for healthy appetites; the sight of food, to a person in the throes of *mal-de-mer*, is nauseating. These states of mind, if persisted in, become interwoven with the character.

Conviction, when it is linked to personality, is the hardest thing in the world to withstand. It needed a little child to have courage to say (in the old fable) that the king was wearing, not regal purple, but his "birthday robes."

Take a hypothetical case. If a priest, or sorcerer, threatened to slay a believer with an invisible sword, that man would flinch if the other betrayed conviction, and quoted chapter and verse. In order to wield occult power, a necromancer must be himself convinced. At least, he must possess the gift of counterfeiting conviction.

In the past, this gift was possessed by men commonly more lunatic than learned. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that masses of plastic humanity were ruled by half-witted creatures, by virtue of some imposing or terrible physical appearance. But it is very remarkable that their utterances—usually a conglomerate of sense and nonsense—should hypnotise people after the lapse of centuries, so that, even in the atomic age, they should be called Prophets. The vampire, Haigh, lived too late in history to go down as a Prophet, or God—but many, who had delusions in more ancient epochs, were celebrated as such.

It was also one of the manifold injustices of human society that other seers, living in times unfavourable to their ideas, should receive, not encomiums, but uncomfortable deaths by stones or faggots, for the practising of witch-craft, black-magic, devil-worship,

etc. Fortunately, being convinced themselves of the occult powers blamed on them, many such martyrs no doubt suffered with as much resignation, or masochist glory, as the saints themselves. It is disturbing to think of the agonies willingly endured for doctrinal points which now seem as trivial as details of breakfast or interior decoration.

It is hardly a compliment to people, but true of most, to say that they think more primitive professors, dwelling in deserts and skins (who thought the earth was a flat surface, with a roof of lights, and a pretty sun which sank every night, bored through the earth's Plutonic regions, and miraculously sprang up every morning) were more reliable authorities on the world's beginning, and possible ending, than all our present-day geologists, archaeologists, marxists, astronomers, etc.!

Sexual morality is, of course, a corner-stone of civilisation, although it may vary according to local custom. It is, of course, just as true that Nature cares more for new generations of living people than for dead books in Registry Offices. Registers themselves are an innovation, historically speaking. It is interesting to consider that people, often priding themselves on their purity of descent, still have some taint of neolithic bastardy, which persisted long after we descended from the trees to fashion tools and to scratch Mother Earth for our livelihood.

The moral of all that is that every custom and convention, good or bad, has come into being, and will go out of being, or be replaced by more advanced customs and conventions. If that was understood, people would not treat them as eternal ordinations. They would query how much they were social necessities (e.g., old school tie, cricket, dressing for dinner), and how much dead weights of tradition. If rationing was to exist for fifty years, it would no doubt become part of our ethics, and find its dihard champions in the new age of plenty. That approach to custom is false. What is good under one set of conditions may not hold under different conditions.

Only by virtue of reason can we have a true conscience. If it is lacking, we may live, not by a code of right, based on love for others, but by outside precepts (e.g., threats of excommunication). Such threats would glance off a mature conscience. Many continental Catholics, for instance, knew that Mussolini, Horthy, and Antonescu were wrong, although the Vatican did not say so; and they will work as a family of people, and build Socialism, knowing that they are right. When the merest rabbit of a man ceases to tremble at the Vatican's curse, then will the human conscience have been emancipated, and have become at last a reliable compass by which its owner may steer.

A. SLATER.

By the author of "The Myth of the Mind"

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