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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The French Revolution and Christianity

THE French Revolution of 1789 must always constitute for Freethinkers one of the most memorable events in human annals. For the first time in history Throne and Altar were simultaneously overthrown, not, as in the earlier revolutions inaugurated by the Reformation, merely with the object of installing new forms of Christianity, but to set up a democratic regime in the State and a secular regime in the sphere formerly dominated by religious ideology. The modern secular age came out into the open with its slogans of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality" as secular ideals to be achieved in this world and not in some future supernatural sphere.

Although the outbreak of the French Revolution was due immediately to causes of a political nature, to financial bankruptcy in the State and to the obvious breakdown of the old order in the practical tasks of administration, it had also a long preliminary preparation upon the ideological side by the half century of brilliant criticism of Christianity and of the Catholic Church by Voltaire and his colleagues in the celebrated *Encyclopædia* which had gone far to discredit the whole principle of authority in the State as in the Church.

The Revolution did not begin with any conscious desire to abolish Christianity in France, any more than it, at first, aimed at establishing a republic in the sphere of secular politics. On the contrary, its initial programme in both Church and State did not go beyond a rather sweeping series of reforms aimed, fundamentally, at abolishing outmoded feudal abuses rather than at destroying the traditional institutions of the French people.

Nor were the clergy, at any rate, the poorer clergy opposed to the initial stages of the great Revolution. The "Estate" of the clergy took its seat together with the secular Estates and co-operated actively in the initial abolition of feudal privilege on August 4, 1789. The new reforms substantially improved the hard lot of the plebeian parish clergy under the pre-revolution system.

However, a split soon manifested itself within the ranks of the clergy. The Cardinals, Bishops and the higher clergy had lost heavily by the destruction of feudal privilege and, in common with the rest of the French aristocracy, they came to take up an openly hostile attitude. In this attitude, they were supported by Pope Pius VI who from the very start was hostile to the new regime, no doubt due to the fact that the French possessions of the Papacy, Avignon and other towns which had belonged to the Papal States since the Popes had resided there in the Middle Ages, were now incorporated into revolutionary France.

The gap between the Catholic Church and France widened rapidly. On June 12, 1790, the French Government imposed a "Civil Constitution" upon the Church. Under this measure the Church was definitely subordinated to the State. In future all clergy had to take the oath of allegiance to the State. The Pope condemned

this Constitution and recalled his Nuncio from Paris on May 31, 1791. Within the French Church itself, a sharp split soon became manifest in the ranks of the clergy between the clergy who accepted the Constitution and the "non-jurors" who refused to do so, and who included most of the aristocratic officials of the French Church.

Up to the present, the ecclesiastical reforms effected by the revolutionary regime had not gone beyond reforming French Christianity: if the Government had no belief in Christianity, it kept its disbelief to itself. Now, however, the Revolution, under pressure of sabotage from the Court and the threat of invasion by the reactionary European monarchies, began to move rapidly to the left culminating in the proclamation of the Republic in the autumn of 1792 and in the subsequent execution of the King and Queen. The "non-juring" clergy showed active hostility and in La Vendée assisted in stirring up an armed rising against the Republic when already engaged in resisting the invasion of foreign armies out to restore the old regime in France.

This state of things led to the rapid growth of anti-Christian feeling in the republican ranks and to a serious and temporarily successful attempt to abolish Christianity. Severe penalties against disloyal clergy were the prelude to an organised movement to destroy Christianity completely.

The first form taken by the movement was the widespread appearance of the "Cult of Reason" which, on the 20th of the revolutionary month of "Brumaire," celebrated the "Feast of Reason" in Notre Dame, where a gorgeous ritual culminated in a beautiful actress receiving the homage of the Republican congregation as the personification of the Goddess of Liberty singing, "Come, holy Liberty, inhabit this temple. Become the Goddess of the French people."\*

The ceremony in Paris was widely repeated throughout France. In general, the cult of the "Goddess of Reason" seems to have been more patriotic than theological in character. However, the "Hebertists," the extreme left of the revolutionary party, carried on a violent atheistic propaganda in their paper, the *Père Duchesne*.

Hebert and his atheistic colleagues were guillotined largely on account of their outspoken atheism by Robespierre in the spring of 1794. This formidable Tribune of the Jacobin Club had no use for Atheism, "the Goddess of Reason" or for Christianity. He determined to eradicate all three. Like his English colleague, Thomas Paine, who had recently written his *The Age of Reason* in Paris, Robespierre was a follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his Deism as well as in his Republicanism. "Atheism," he declared, "is aristocratic, a Supreme Being who humbles triumphant pride and avenged outraged innocence is essentially the idea of the People."

\* The oft-repeated statement that a prostitute impersonated the "Goddess of Reason" seems to be a Christian slander of the lowest type.



At the height of his power, Robespierre proclaimed Deism as the national religion of France at a magnificent ceremony arranged by the painter, David, at which the great orator himself presided "as, simultaneously, Dictator and Supreme Pontiff" on 23rd Floreal (May 12, 1794). The worship of the "Supreme Being" was solemnly proclaimed as the State-cult of the French Republic. Religion was restored officially, but it was Deism, not Christianity.

A few weeks later, Robespierre was executed and Deism perished with him after its short-lived reign. The succeeding "Directory" tried to encourage an ethical Humanism under the name of "Theophilanthropy," but this also short-lived movement with which Thomas Paine was associated, met with little popular success.

In 1802, the "First Consul," Napoleon Bonaparte, made his famous Concordat with the Pope, and Roman Catholicism was restored, on terms, as the State religion of France. Napoleon, himself a Deist rather than a Christian, was actuated by political motives, for, as M. Aulard, the French historian, tells us, "In short, he re-established the Roman Church in its dominant position, not, certainly, for piety's sake, but for policy. He thought he was going to dominate the Pope, and through the Pope the conscience of Mankind."

F. A. RIDLEY.

## EMINENT NINETEENTH CENTURY PERSONALITIES

PROFESSOR BASIL WILLEY'S *Nineteenth Century Studies* (Chatto and Windus, 1949, 15s.), reviews the period from the time of Coleridge to the days of Matthew Arnold. These essays are stimulating and suggestive if occasionally disconcerting, especially when their author surmises that the exemplary lives led by John Stuart Mill and other Rationalists may have owed much to the unconscious influences of religious forebears. He avers that a candid Christian may well inquire whether men guided by utilitarian principles alone can be relied upon to face the trials and tribulations inherent in social service without the love of God in their hearts. Willey concedes that, "Such people there undoubtedly are—Mill was one of them—and they deserve all homage and praise. But they are rare, and I suspect that most even of these are really moved by energies springing from a source which was formerly religious . . . We cannot love our fellows much unless we love God more."

This seems puerile in the light of the truth that the Ages of Faith were the era of mental prostration, persecution, dirt, darkness, disease, misery and despair for the mass of the population and, when moral values in high places and low alike, seem to have reached their nadir. In truth, it was only with the advent of The Age of Reason that men's intellectual outlook began slowly to widen on humanitarian lines.

Willey's study of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is instructive and his influence on later writers is clearly shown. At a period, opines our essayist, "when conspicuous intellects—Byron, Bentham, Shelley, the Mills—were known to think it all humbug and opium: at that very time Coleridge was showing that religion was a higher and a more philosophical thing than had been dreamed of either by its enemies or its so-called friends."

At an earlier date an advanced Unitarian and a fervid admirer of Priestley and Godwin, Coleridge like Southey and Wordsworth abandoned his former enthusiasms. As Willey observes: "When we recall his early Republican

ardours, his sonnets to Godwin and Priestley, and his pantisocracy and then contemplate him as the sage of Highgate, denouncing Jacobinism and the godless Revolution, exploding the 'rights of man,' defending inequalities in rank and property and opposing the Reform Bill, we may feel that we are witnessing one more illustration of the Tory reaction of that age."

When dealing with Dr. Arnold, of Rugby fame, Willey deprecates Lytton Strachey's malicious account of that pedagogue in his *Eminent Victorians* and discusses him very appreciatively as a Broad Churchman and reformer of public school education. Dr. Arnold viewed with misgiving the Tractarian movement which he considered mistaken in its idealisation of the past and its insistence on the importance of apostolic succession and other figments, while completely ignoring the evils of our generation. "When we look at the condition of our country," Arnold declares, "at the poverty and wretchedness of so large a part of the working classes, and the mental and moral shortcomings of both rich and poor our duty is 'not so much to reform the Church as to create one.'"

Arnold's very mild heresies were frowned upon by the ultra-pious and it was hinted that he was scarcely a Christian at all, and with greater justice, much the same was said of Dean Stanley in later years.

Willey's chapter on Newman and the Oxford Movement is a discriminating study. Whatever may have been Newman's capacity as a thinker, he unquestionably ranks as one of the greatest English prose writers of his century. He also proved a most attractive personality to many of his contemporaries. Dr. Arnold's son, Matthew, was an undergraduate at Oxford when Newman was still in the Anglican fold and in recalling his student days forty years afterwards, he surveys the doubts and difficulties of belief from which Newman sought shelter in Romanism and declares that he had followed a course no rational thinker could adopt. But before Newman's conversion he seemed to Arnold the younger, the embodiment of all that is beautiful in Anglicanism and he asks: "Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful?"

While Newman powerfully influenced those who came under his spell, to many the worldly-minded Manning was Newman's unscrupulous enemy—proved repugnant to the still, even Newman's sincerity appeared doubtful to the great Huxley who affirmed that a Freethought manual could be compiled from his writings. On the other hand Newman's candour made him suspect to influential Catholics, while our distinguished Freethinking poet, Swinburne, paid him a fine tribute in his *Two Legends* as:—

"One the last flower of Catholic love, that grows Amid bare thorns their only thornless rose,  
From the fierce juggling of the priests' loud mart Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart  
From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows  
With prayers and curses and the soothsayer's art."

It was fitting that Oxford, Arnold's home of free causes, impossible loyalties and forsaken beliefs, should be the centre of the Tractarian movement. In that city of spires, ancient traditions were sacred and even the recrudescence of superstition was desiderated with old



time intolerance restored to counter the insidious activities of Latitudinarians whose concessions to Rationalism weakened the Christian verities. Thus from the bitter controversies which convulsed the Oxford movement emerged the indisputable truth that there exists no logical alternative to Romanism save Rationalism in its undiluted form.

As we know and regret, a group of able men accompanied Newman when he became a convert to Catholicism, that last asylum of the distracted and dismayed. Then, the publication of the heretical *Essays and Reviews* penned by Anglican scholars; the Gorham judgment; the Colenso controversy and other developments were held to justify all those who had forsaken a State-created and Parliamentary-controlled English Church.

As Newman's *Apologia* indicates, he was never completely convinced that he had attained certainty. His and others' soul's salvation, seems to have dominated his mind, both before and after his conversion to Rome. Perhaps his most poignant confession appears in his *Apologia*: "Starting then with the being of a God . . . I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth of which my whole being is so full . . . If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living, busy world, and see no reflection of its Creator."

Again, the denials and disappointments of human life, the ill success of the good and the triumphs of sinful men, the pains and suffering of innocent creatures, the idolatries and corruptions of the modern world—"all this," laments Newman, "is a vision to-dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind a sense of profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution."

Carlyle, Mill, Bentham, Comte, George Eliot and her circle, and the two Arnolds are all surveyed in this series of essays. If Willey's conclusions are sometimes invalidated by theological prepossessions his studies are pre-eminently those of an erudite man of letters.

T. F. PALMER.

## THE JUVENILE JESUS

WHEN the valiant Freethinker, Richard Carlyle, was sentenced to three years in Dorchester Gaol for selling Paine's *The Age of Reason*, he wrote in his publication, *The Republican*, August 6, 1820, that a very important book had just been published by Mr. Hone; a book above all others to open the eyes of the British public to the imposition now practised upon them under the name of Christianity. Its title is, *The Apocryphal New Testament, being all the Gospels and Epistles, now Extant, and attributed during the First Four Centuries to Jesus Christ and His Apostles, but not included in the New Testament by its Compilers*, London 1820. A title, said Carlyle, that will gall the priests far more than *The Age of Reason*.

The explanatory introduction by Wm. Hone to his *Apoc. New Test.* gives complete particulars relating to its 23 books, their order, names and number of verses in each, together with their historical authenticity and more modern events concerning Church authorities who decreed that these scriptures should not be included with those writings which compose that half of the *Holy Bible* called the New Testament.

*The Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ*, containing 28 chapters, was translated in 1697 by Prof. Hy. Sike, Master of Oriental Languages at Cambridge University. It was accredited genuine and used by the Christians according to the authority of Eusebius, Athanasius and Chrysostom.

From the 462 verses of which the 28 chapters are made up, the following revelations are transcribed, and end thus:—

"The whole of the Gospel of the Infancy, by the assistance of the Supreme God.

And when the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he played with boys, they made animals of clay; asses, oxen and birds, which Jesus commanded to walk and to return; also, the sparrows to fly and he fed them. Then Joseph took Jesus to work making gates, milk-pails and sieves, for Joseph was not skilful at his carpenter's trade, and as often anything was required longer or shorter, wider or narrow, Jesus would stretch forth his hand, presently, and the work became as Joseph would have it. The King of Jerusalem ordered Joseph to make a new throne to fit the niche where the King sat, and Joseph made the throne too small by two spans short on either side, but Jesus holding one side of the throne and Joseph the other side, both pulled, and the throne became the proper size, and those who saw this miracle were astonished and praised God.

Returning from the carpenter's shop one evening, with his Father, a boy ran so hard against Jesus who fell flat, and the boy died that moment.

At another occasion a boy fell from the house-top and was killed, then Jesus with a loud voice called the boy's name, Zeinunus, who then stood up and spoke.

There was at Jerusalem a schoolmaster named Zaccheus who wrote out an alphabet for Jesus to learn and bade him say Aleph and then pronounce Beth; but, Jesus replied to the master, tell me first the meaning of the letter Aleph and then I will pronounce Beth, and when Zaccheus threatened to whip Jesus, the boy pronounced the letters and explained their meanings and shapes, why some were straight and others were oblique, some had points with double figures, of which the master did not know, and was so surprised that he said, 'I believe this boy was born before Noah!'

Joseph with Mary took Jesus to a more learned master who finding the pupil too forward, lifted his hand to smack Jesus, and immediately the master's hand withered and he died.

Then said Joseph to Saint Mary, 'Henceforth, we will not allow him to go out of the house; for everyone who displeases him is killed.'

When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with his parents to lodge in the house of a newly married man, but by the influence of sorcerers could not enjoy his wife. But by lodging in this house that night, the man was cured of his disorder and the newly married man provided a great entertainment, for Joseph, St. Mary and Jesus.—AMEN."

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

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## ACID DROPS

**Every year** it appears about 500 clergy are lost to the Church of England, and it can only recruit about 360 in their place. With the population of England 50 years ago at 32 million, there were 20,000 clergy; now, with a population of 45 million, there are only 15,000 clergy. We feel tempted to add, even that is 15,000 too many; but the figures are a clear indication that our clerical population is going down as the lay population rises, proving indubitably that any mandate for religion is surely disappearing in England.

**Churches of all denominations** are feeling the pinch, and are frantically making plans for big recruiting campaigns and funds to carry them on. Our young men no longer feel the call of Christ. However, it is a splendid chance for our young women who so often ape the men. Why do they not insist upon their right to enter the Church as fully ordained priests, dog collar and all? The scheme should particularly appeal to spinsters as celibacy is a sort of Golden Rule for holiness. And, after all, the Church need not pay them as much as it is now contemplating paying curates.

**Although, according to the Bishop** of Darwin, he has never made a convert to Christianity from the Australian Aborigine, the Oenpelli Mission Church in Darwin is nearly always sure of a full house every day. For the natives receive a food check when attending morning service, but if they do not attend, their food is withheld for the day. So reports Mr. E. Evans, patrol officer of the Native Affairs Branch, who was sent to investigate complaints that natives were hungry. Christian charity is purely altruistic—we don't think!

**The following advertisement** appeared in a London shop window: "The Corpun Educational Association Offers Parents and Teachers an unique service. Canes, Tawes, Birch-Rods, also helpful informative literature. Spare the rod, spoil the child." The advertisement surely should have been capped with another Biblical text—"Suffer little children to come unto me."

**Although the Catholic Encyclopedia** admits that Matthew made a mistake when he quoted that ridiculous "prophecy" in Isaiah for the Virgin Birth, this does not, of course, invalidate the Virgin Birth in Roman Catholic eyes. The priest who replies to questions in the *Universe* is quite angry that anyone refuses to believe in the dogma, and adds "one might expect it from an atheistic tub-thumper in Hyde Park but not from an educated man." The idea that because someone is "educated" he ought to believe in such superstitious rubbish as a Virgin Birth is quite amusing; also the suggestion that Atheists "tub-thump." As a matter of fact, Roman Catholics tub-thump quite as ardently in the Park as anybody else—though the only people who applaud them are Roman Catholics.

**Reviewing a book** by Cecil Roberts *And So To Rome*, Mr. D. Leahy, in the *Universe*, deals lengthily with the way Galileo was treated by the Church—doing his best to exculpate Rome, but admitting that the Inquisition went a little too far in the end. The apology was naturally necessary as Galileo was right, and Christ's Divine Rock was quite wrong. But in concentrating on Galileo, Mr. Leahy could miss saying what he should have said about Bruno as well. Was there any excuse here? And—though

it was not in Rome—what about the way Vanini was treated? When the Holy Church tore Vanini's tongue out of his mouth with red hot pincers, and Vanini gave a deafening cry of agony, that cry came running down the ages and is still ringing in the ears of the Church; and there it will ring till Voltaire's "infamous" is as dead as the religion of Osiris.

**Many years before the war**, Mr. Shaw Desmond exultingly claimed that Materialism was fighting in the last ditch—and since then he keeps repeating the same thing in almost every article he writes. The slightest excuse is enough to bring in the complete annihilation of his obsession—Materialism; and so we must not be surprised to see the subject cropping up almost every week in the *Psychic News*.

**His latest forecast** is that God, the Mover, marks "the end of the Reign of Law as we have known it, and with it, of mechanical Materialism . . . (and) of Fate and Determinism." It is difficult to imagine more rubbish than that Mr. Desmond gives us whenever he touches on Materialism. But it nicely fills out his articles.

**Yet another "inviolable" rule** of the Church will be broken now that the Lower House of the Convocation of York has approved the proposal that Bishops shall have the power to allow women to officiate at church services. The heart of St. Chrysostom—who regarded women as "a necessary evil"—and that of St. Clement—who thought it "desirable to turn from the sight of women"—must have warmed to Canon Hussey who opposed the proposal and said "he shuddered at the thought, for it would be dreadful if the Bench of Bishops consisted of a lot of old women." Presumably the Canon has seen a "gaggle" of bishops in their frippery, and will admit that it is rather difficult to tell the difference.

**In this holiest of Holy Years** one could surely expect the Mother of God at least to try to uphold the Miracle department at Lourdes; yet we read of a pilgrim whose condition *worsened* at the holy grotto and died on the way back. Is Our Lady so busy looking for Peter's bones in Rome that she has no time for Lourdes?

**If religious authorities** carry on as they are now doing it is going to be difficult to distinguish parsons from ordinary people, which, insofar as priests are concerned is a serious matter. It seems that efforts are to be made in training these men of God to "improve" their parsonic voice. To help candidates to understand what it sounds like gramophone records will be made in order that they may hear themselves. What a penance! However, we still think that Christianity, in order to hold its own, will need something other than merely the voice of Donald Peers.

**The Lord's Day Observance Society** in the person of "Misery Martin" is definitely going to oppose the Sunday opening of the Festival of Britain next year. Similarly, the Festival authorities are determined that at least the "cultural" section will be opened on Sunday, and legislation is to be sought to authorise this, which is going to put Parliament in rather a predicament. If special legislation can be passed to deal with the Festival, then the whole Sunday question can be reviewed, and it is quite on the cards that the Exhibition will be "business as usual."



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. CORBETT.—Very useful article. It will be used.

A. TROWBRIDGE, R. MASON.—Thanks for cuttings.

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.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (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), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

## SUGAR PLUMS

Will any readers in the Belfast district willing to co-operate in holding some Freethought open air meetings commencing in July get in touch with Mr. J. Effel, Brookvale, Hazelwood Park, Belfast. Mr. Effel is a good speaker, and any form of help would be appreciated.

Mr. J. T. Brighton will make another visit to Darlington to-day (June 18) and lecture from the Market Steps at 7-15. This is part of an effort to revive the local N.S.S. Branch, and will any readers willing to help, make themselves known to Mr. Brighton before or after his lecture. Freethinkers all over the country should be prepared to uphold the freedom won for them by stalwarts of the past.

Truly, the way of the transgressor is hard, for not only is our "Red Dean" repudiated by his Archbishop, who recently advised overseas civic authorities and Anglican churches to ignore him, but he has also had to make some undignified retreats over fences after being pelted with eggs and stones during his lecture tour in Canada. To add to his embarrassment, the Dean had to sit "with bowed head" and unable to retort when the Archbishop attacked Communism in his sermon on Whit Sunday at Canterbury Cathedral. However, the Dean can afford to smile, for nothing but death can remove him from his position at Canterbury, even though he is, as the Archbishop publicly stated, "completely unrepresentative of the Church of England."

There is now a possibility that the Edmonton Congregational Church, which has been for sale for 18 months, will become a synagogue. Presumably, the Jewish partner in the firm of dope distributors will carry on business as usual!

## TWO NOTABLE REPRINTS

BEFORE the first World War, one could buy a copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species* for as little as 4½d., and thus enjoy one of the world's masterpieces at a very low cost. For, whatever the anti-revolutionists said at the time of its first publication and ever since, no other work delivered such a smashing blow at the Christian religion, changing as it did, almost in one night, our whole conception of the Universe and what it stood for.

The Church, as soon as it recovered from the shattering impact of what Darwin's researches meant to it, could only feebly reply, and if the reader wants to be amused he should read some of the books produced by the scandalised clergymen of the day. One of these erudite gentlemen, for example, went carefully through the *Origin of Species* and collected all the sentences in which the ever-cautious Darwin, always refusing to make any dogmatic statement unless it could be proved, had used the words "probably" or "possibly" or "we think" and similar terms. He must have been quite sure that his little work would be taken up by all the Christian world as an impregnable defence of the Bible against the Atheism of Evolution; and dozens of other clergymen made similar desperate attempts to stave off the rising tide of infidelity so ably supported, on the scientific side, by the facts and conclusions of Darwin's epoch-making work.

For the *Origin of Species* was an epoch-making work. The theory of Evolution had been dimly seen by many thinkers and writers—a glance at Edward Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution* proves that—but it was left to Charles Darwin, plodding steadily on, gathering a fact here another one there, patiently observing life in the animal world with all the gusto and enthusiasm of a keen naturalist, to make the theory into something more, to make Evolution recognised by all thinking people as the real motive power in the Universe.

It was not possible, of course, for Darwin to provide the only key that fits the problem. His theory of "Natural Selection" as the cause of the evolution of plants and animals from the earlier forms may not cover everything, and is certainly not the complete or only key; but that he was right in the main is increasingly recognised.

Whether the present generation of young people have read Darwin as a necessary part of their education, I do not know. But those readers of this journal who have not should immediately remedy this deficiency for the *Origin of Species* is a thrilling pioneer work and indispensable to modern thought. And more than ever we should know what Darwin thought and wrote about the problem in 1859 when his first edition was published. All, or nearly all, of the reprints appear to have been made from later editions in which Darwin, rightly or wrongly, felt it was necessary to change, expunge, or modify some of his conclusions. It was therefore a very happy thought of Messrs. Watts to give us a reprint of this first edition in which, as Dr. C. D. Darlington who contributes a splendid Foreword to it, says, "Here is Darwin's book as he first presented it to the world. Here is his theory unspoilt by later hesitation, unimpaired by yielding to the trivial and captious critic..."

The *Origin of Species* is not an easy book to read. In this reprint, there are nearly 450 pages which require concentration, study and thought, but the effort will repay the reader a thousandfold. To say you have not read Darwin is like saying you have not read Shakespeare and that is a position I hope no Freethinker will take. In



addition, Dr. Darlington's Introduction to the book could hardly be bettered, for it gives the reader the best possible genesis to Darwin's thought and progress. Especially does Dr. Darlington stress the great part played by Mendel in discovering some of the laws of heredity and how they "fulfil his (Darwin's) theory." What Dr. Darlington has to say, however, on the way Darwinism is accepted in Russia will not, I am afraid, be to the liking of rigid Marxists most of whom are quite ready to give up even Evolution if, in the opinion of Russian scientists, Darwin clashed with Marx.

This fine reprint is beautifully produced, costs 15s. net, and, as books go these days, is well worth it.

The second reprint is in the Thinker's Library at 2s. 6d., and its handy size makes it possible to slip in one's pocket to read as occasion gives opportunity. It is Herbert Spencer's *The Man Versus the State*—that forthright attack on collectivism and totalitarianism by one of the world's greatest philosophers and thinkers. It is not the fashion these days to read Spencer. His books are long, they require deep study and time to digest, and for these and other reasons there are some Rationalists even who sneer at him as out-dated. This is egregious nonsense. Spencer was a pioneer Evolutionist, head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries as a brilliant thinker. It was he who, as Clodd points out, formulated the theory of Evolution "dealing with the universe as a whole some months before the publication of the Darwin-Wallace paper in which only organic evolution was discussed." Spencer has never been given the credit due to him for that except by those who knew and loved his work.

It is, however, most unlikely that those anti-religionists who call themselves Socialists, Marxists, Communists, Fascists, Nazis—in short, all those who are struggling so earnestly for a totalitarian "democracy" (call it by what name you will) will read *The Man Versus the State* for it must go counter to everything they stand for.

Spencer was a staunch Individualist, and hated State interference with the liberty of the subject. In his day, his individualism had perhaps less meaning than in our own, for there was far less State interference then. What he would have said had he seen the complacency with which people now accept the grossest forms of totalitarianism, I shudder to think. But I am quite certain that such an antidote as this little book of *Essays* was never more necessary.

And totalitarians will even like less Prof. Heath's excellent Introduction, urbane and witty, defending all that is relevant in Spencer and clarifying so much that is necessary when Spencer is so little read. Nobody who loves Liberty should neglect this work and its lessons. "It has been common," comments Prof. Heath, "since his own day, to decry Spencer . . . Nevertheless Spencer was a great man. His defects were the defects of his qualities. He never compromised on any principle he held to be true: and he laboured for many years without gain at his attempt to bring together in one great scheme the cosmic, biological, sociological, and ethical affairs. When he became famous he refused academic honours."

What such a man, therefore, has to say on ethical and sociological questions should be taken to heart by all who have the progress of Man at heart. I heartily recommend this book.

H. CUTNER.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY.** By F. A. Ridley.  
Price 1s.; postage 1½d.

## WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

(Concluded from page 231)

WHERE then, can be found evidences of this Christian morality? Certainly not in its own practices. For example, look at some of the ideas suggested by Mr. Bowers. It is not merely a religious notion, it is decidedly a Christian idea, that there are "many men who have resisted the sexual urge until they were married, and been better for it." It is a typical Christian fabrication, fostered within the folds of the hideous cloak of secrecy which deliberately hides the fact of male and female masturbation, or alternatively claims that masturbation is not sexual experience. The man—or woman—has yet to be born, granted normal sexual virility, who will achieve the married state without masturbating. Again, the Christian attitude to extra-marital coition was "put on the spot" most cynically by the Founder of the Creed. If we accept their great authority, the Bible, by that devastating invitation, "Let him who is without sin . . ." Apparently Jesus was a better judge of human nature than is Mr. Bowers. But what is to be made of the claim " . . . and been better for it?" Can there ever be offered real proof of this claim? At what point in his life does a man stop being better for waiting? Or is it claimed that if he never marries, and never had carnal knowledge of a woman, then a man is *best* off? Are there people who really accept this nonsense? It is not the slightest use to argue that what is intended is in relation to morals. The morals of the married are not a whit superior to the single. In fact, in the light of this claim it is the single who are the more moral. This idea is best considered alongside the divorce lists and psychiatrists' case-books. While still dealing with Christian morality, and having mentioned the seducer, examine the legal position of seduction. Seduction is not, in the legal eyes of Christian England, a wrong against the seduced, but against her "owner" (chattel-law), of her or her services, and entails the seducer in the risk of the "punishment" of an action for damages not by his "victim," but again by her owner.

Further, one aspect of Christian morality is based, as Mr. Bowers rightly emphasises, on the fear of "unpleasant consequences." Hardly moral! The issue, as seen by Mr. Bowers, is however, confused still more by the continued pretence that women and girls are devoid of passion, and so are always the victims of the "determined pressure of youths . . ." This is sheer nonsense, as anyone who knows anything of youths and girls can easily demonstrate. If the title "victim" can be used at all in the sexual sense, apart from rape (and even in rape it is difficult to ignore the element of temptation, the old folly of playing with fire), it is more usually deserved by the male, as any honest woman can testify.

This injustice to women, however, this notion that they either have not or should not display sexual appetite, is not merely one of the pillars of English Christian morality; it links closely with the unhappy fact that ninety-five per cent. of English married women never achieve a satisfying sex-life. The vicious repression of normal sexual desires, dignified by the name of Christian morality, has caused many women to seek relief in everything that the Christian brands as immoral. Finally, on Christian morality, the Freethinker has learned that Christian marriage itself, the touchstone of their moral system, is immoral, based as it is on chattel-law, regarding the woman as so much property, along with the ox and the ass, instead of a partner of man with her own



rights. How then can marriage be offered as justification of the commencement of coition?

The arguments of Mr. Bowers' protest, from beginning to end, are the arguments of those who know little of sex and far less of humanity. They are the ideas inherited from a discredited doctrine, ideas depending for their existence on the distorted minds of men (men only, mark you). Women are not consulted by these moral arbiters, men who have for ages regarded woman as chattel, plaything, and animal, all in one. To accept the Christian attitude to sex and to women is to perpetuate the many injustices done to women in the name of godliness. To reject Christianity in its entirety, is to reject its morality, a morality that has produced a condition between the sexes, by its prevention of sane sexual education, that stirred so great a writer as H. G. Wells, to refer to the "clumsy fumbblings of ignorant animals." A society that can arbitrarily castrate its animals, or as heartlessly deny to whole herds of cattle, because of the introduction of artificial insemination, the right of access to their lords and masters, merely to advance its own commercial ambitions, or to avoid consequential inconveniences, can lay no claim to be called moral. Nor can that same society forget its callous ignoring of the right to sexual happiness, and creative satisfaction if so desired, of the "surplus" women robbed of their opportunity to mate by Christian and immoral wars. Nor will it be acquitted of immorality until its attitude to illegitimate children is changed; nor while its stand on venereal disease, grimly summed-up in the claim that it is just punishment for sin, continues to be so frankly bestial. Contraceptives are part of enlightenment, as is prevention of illegitimacy and disease. But for Christian standards, bastardy would not now be a stain, and syphilis would have been conquered, a horrifying comment on Christian morals.

Women, as real companions of men, can never take their proper place in our lives until it is understood that they too, have sexual rights. Those unnatural and inhuman and unfeeling creatures, mainly the aged and the withered, who regard sex as filth, and pass on to youth their base ideas can never appreciate that sex, with its proper understanding and enjoyment, is the crown of life. Men and women alive today, the actual heirs of un-numbered millions of acts of coition, should recognise that sex, as phrased so finely by Llewellyn Powys, "... is the beautiful spiked backbone on which the fair grace of the flesh is built."

Christian morality has long since dishonoured itself by its own beastliness. Morality is morality only insofar as it is adapted and adaptable to human needs. To cramp the free spirit of passion, the only real creative force on earth, to limit it to the bitter confines of a vicious morality, is to deny the wonder of life itself.

G. WHIT LIBBY.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### LAST THINGS FIRST

Sir,—Yesterday I had occasion to attend a meeting of the Income Tax Commissioners for the hearing of an appeal on behalf of a client.

It appears that there were about twenty cases listed for hearing, some appellants being called for 10-30 a.m., others at 11 a.m., and more at 11-30 a.m. The last appellant to arrive, at about 11-45 a.m., was the Bishop of Warrington with his Accountant. At a convenient opportunity a note was sent in to the Clerk by the Bishop's Accountant. In result, the Bishop's case was taken next and being apparently a contested case lasted from noon until 12-50 p.m. (note that the average time for a hearing is under ten minutes), meanwhile, some twelve appellants, many of whom had already waited for an hour and a-half, continued their vigil. Without exception

great indignation was felt, for no word of explanation or apology had been proffered.

Before leaving, the Bishop addressed Job's descendants with a curt "I'm sorry, I have an appointment." How much more gracious would those words have been at the proper time?

I left the meeting at 1-15 p.m., when there were still five cases to be heard. I and two other professional men had travelled 25 miles to this meeting but presumably a professional man's time is valueless and he has no appointments.

Verily, the first shall be last and the last shall be first.—Yours, etc.,

EDWARD DYSON.

P.S.—Things we would like to know: Is a Bishop more concerned with saving minutes than with saving souls?

## TWO POINTS

Sir,—(1) I have not the slightest intention of going into a discussion with Mr. Roy as to the "origin" of Osiris. I am quite content to agree with John M. Robertson that he was a vegetation God with solar and lunar traits later added.

(2) If Mr. Roy had read my article more carefully he would have seen that it was I, not Prof. Farrington, who said that Marx was jealous of Darwin—as he appears to have been jealous of everybody else. For the rest, I am quite capable of judging for myself, without bothering about the sacred imprimatur of "true" Marxists, or "revisionist" Marxists, or even "pettifogging Philistines," any aspect of Marxism I choose to study.—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

The Church pleases to style Materialism "The Gospel of Negation." Indeed! What do we deny? A solitary fact, truth, an object of knowledge, or what? The priest cannot answer. We simply deny their bold affirmations, originated in ages of ignorance, and which at the present day are farther from being maintained by the data of science than ever before. Materialists affirm that nature is all, that it is supreme, and that it contains within itself all the elements and the cogencies needed to evolve cosmic and animal life. This the Church denies. Which is the "Gospel of Negation"? Which is the true unbeliever?—O.W.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Darlington (Market Steps).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK. (St. Mary's Gate).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, June 21, 8 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK. (Bombed Site, St. Mary's Gate).—Lectures every Lunch Hour, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Messrs. F. A. RIDLEY and R. A. CALVERLEY. (Highbury Corner).—7 p.m.: Mr. R. A. CALVERLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Messrs. T. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

South London and Lewisham Branches N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Mr. C. E. WOOD.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Humanism and Theism," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.



## THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

## XI

THERE is no excuse, unless it is human perversity and ignorance, for the teaching of false ideas to children; and this refers especially to the false ideas of religion. The bad effects of religion on the intellect are intolerable. If men were taught good sense instead of religion, the world would no doubt be somewhat different; but it is too much to expect them to be taught good sense; for who would be their teachers?

The general effect of religious teaching is to misinform concerning the basic elements of life; and to unlearn religious teaching is sometimes a part of the process of unlearning which a man may follow until he discovers that nearly all that he was ever taught about life is false.

It is strange that men should be exposed to the false and useless teachings of religion which are disastrous to the intellect. It is strange because in the innocence of childhood they do nothing to deserve being deceived.

The impossible tales of religion are taught to children, greatly to their harm in many cases, while such necessary and inescapable matters as sexual problems are left in darkness and ignorance; and the ordinary religious view of the sexual relations is not only false but harmful.

A man's religious education prepares him best to be a nincompoop. The unrealistic, fictional, and intellectually pernicious dogmas of religion have no value.

As is demonstrable by experience, men are the most intelligent and the most powerful of the animal orders. The Brahmans and the Occidental theosophists, the latter of whom are frequently imitators of the Hindus, would have it that the animal species are in continual evolution and that men are reincarnated according to their goodness or badness after death in higher types of beings or in lower animals. This doctrine is not demonstrable on any ground. Man is not the desirable summit of creation toward which all other beings should evolve. To be reborn as a lower animal insensible of its ills rather than as a man would not be a terrible tragedy; for which, better, to be a man subject to ills of which the brutes are not conscious or to be an animal which, to whatever ill it is subject, feels only the pain of the present moment and usually lives tranquilly? The Brahmans, in urging men to the religious life in order that they may escape rebirth as animals and may be reborn in one of the higher Hindu castes or in order that they may finally be absorbed into the Absolute, simply play on the universal abhorrence and contempt which men have of animals because of human superiority over the animals. In view of what the world is and of the suffering attached to human life, the desirable mode of evolution would be the opposite of the doctrine of the Brahmans and the theosophists. To be reborn in successively lower forms of life until you were past the protozoa and past the vegetative state and finally in the inanimate and unfeeling solid, liquid, or gaseous state of the mineral world would be the ideal mode of escaping the world and rebirth and suffering and of sinking into nothingness of a sort. It would appear to be the destiny of men to be resolved from their present state back to inanimate matter and for the energy or whatever it is that constitutes their personalities to be absorbed into the flux of things. This is another example of the naturalistic examination of religious theories, showing that they are not based on intelligence.

Hell has, perhaps, had its origin in the dread of men of a life after death; at any rate, it is rather certain that

one of the first uses to which the priests, who have had a part in its invention and description put it, was as a means of frightening men into obedience to religion and morality. The gain of the priests in extracting obedience from men is often an easy life supported by their labour and money; but hell has another use: The Christians condemn to hell those whom they cannot force to believe their myths and those whom they hate. An enemy or a disagreeable person on whom they cannot physically avenge themselves may be mentally sent to hell to burn forever and ever. Hell is thus a useful social conception.

If there were a hell after this world, to die would be simply a passage from one hell to another hell; and there would accordingly be no cause for alarm about going to hell. There already exist in this world all the torments which can be imagined to exist in a hell where no more could be suffered than is suffered here.

Christ said that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in the outer darkness and in the furnace of fire which, it is supposed, are in hell. That is a bright prospect for the damned who do not believe in him.

Hell has been believed in by the Hindus, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Jews, the Arabs, and by the Christian nations. From this it might be concluded that it has been believed in nearly all over the earth; but this does not make its existence less imaginary. The belief in a hell for the wicked has originated, like other popular beliefs, because of a trait of human nature; and that trait is the desire to see evil doers and one's enemies and those who do not agree with him punished; for physical punishment has universally been used to obtain obedience from both children and grown men. Also, it is apparent that evil doers are not always punished in this world; so what is more convenient than a hell for them where they will roast forever and ever?

The fact that the punishment of eternal damnation somewhat exceeds the wrongs committed by some men in this short life for which no one asks before birth and that to be damned by a god who made all things, including damnation, is the greatest of injustices; is fatal to the belief in hell as far as intelligent men are concerned.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR (U.S.A.)

## RONDEAU

Who can read my heart; which of you can spell  
The message that its hieroglyphics tell?  
Who can count its beats; assess their speed,  
That speak of languor or of urgent need?  
Who can read that heart, peruse it well?  
My doctor reads and says, "Sound as a bell."  
But knows not whether airs of heaven or hell  
Have lodgment there, or if it sing or bleed. ●

Who can read my heart?  
Not Jung and Pfeister, with their jargon fell,  
Nor Freud and Adler, wizards who excel  
In their own psycho-analytic creed,  
Can read that sphinxlike heart; not one, indeed,  
Save that dear one, with whom I happy dwell.  
She can read my heart.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

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