

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXXI—No. 20

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Mr. Chuter Ede's "Blot"

NO Freethinker need disagree with our Home Secretary when he characterised the 1735 Witchcraft Act as a "blot" on our Statute Books for, of course, it was based on Holy Writ, and what Holy Writ has to say about witches, sorcerers, and their familiar spirits, is just unmitigated nonsense. But when he said that its removal would mean the removal of the *last* blot, he was going a little too far.

In essence, there is not the slightest difference between a Spiritualist who tells you that when you die you go on living in a "Summerland," or in a "Seventh World," or whatever is the jargon he uses, and a priest or parson who tells you, when you die and you are a thorough believer in Christianity, you will go straight up to Heaven and sit on the right-hand side of Christ Jesus, and live for eternity afterwards. There is not a scrap of difference in this between a Christian priest and any Spirit medium. Whatever either says about "immortality" or about "life" in Heaven or Summerland is just sheer wishful thinking, or deliberate fraud. No one has any idea whatever of what happens when we die except that we are as dead as mutton; and if a medium can be charged on this score with fraud so can a Christian priest. The laws relating to Witchcraft were part of the crafty way with which Christianity quashed opposition, and they should have been abrogated when judges began to see that witches, as such, were myths.

If any case, if Spiritualists want to make their beliefs into a religion they should have exactly the same right to "worship" as have other religious sects. We do not prosecute Mormonism—quite rightly—but if there is a bigger modern fake than the Book of Mormon we should like to know it. Even the hopeless rubbish written about thirty years ago by the Rev. Vale Owen on the "worlds" we pass on to when we die is not more fraudulent than the Book of Mormon; but if people want to be thus humbugged, just as they are humbugged about the Bible, why should they come under special laws?

It is as utterly impossible in a police court to *prove* whether a medium is fraudulent as it would be to prove that a clergyman is a fake. A medium might well go off in a trance, or indulge in automatic writing, and be perfectly sincere about it. And we know that priests and parsons in general really believe that they have had a call from God. Cases of deliberate fraud can always be dealt with like other frauds, and it is high time for such a stupid Act as the Witchcraft Act of 1735 to be repealed.

But when Mr. Ede calls it the "*last* blot" on our Statute Books it is evident that either he has forgotten our Blasphemy Laws or that he does not consider them a blot; and he will be confirmed in this opinion if we Freethinkers do nothing about it. This is exactly what the Home Secretaries of all Parties all want. To kick up a shindy now and then, and to send a deputation to the House of Commons at very rare intervals are what

we have been in the habit of doing. We have always been courteously treated, and always were blandly shown the door; and that was all for the time being. But the Blasphemy Laws are still here, and they are about as foul and impudent a "blot" as it is possible to imagine. According to them, this is a Christian country, and the Christian religion must not be attacked—or laughed at. It is true that we are allowed to criticise it so long as this is done in "scholarly" language, but that has been only a later development. As far as the Blasphemy Laws themselves are concerned we are not allowed to poke fun at such a solemn religion as Christianity, and those of us who do, can come under these Laws. If there are enlightened judges who refuse to consider them in the name of common sense that is only because one would have to try dozens of eminent men in all walks of life and who certainly have blasphemed within the meaning of the Act.

When the Fraudulent Mediums Bill came before the House of Lords it was supported even by Roman Catholic peers, and by such a distinguished soldier as Lord Dowding who is himself a convinced Spiritualist. But the really significant speech came from Lord Simon. Here it is as recorded in the *Daily Express* (May 4, 1951):—

VISCOUNT SIMON, a former Lord Chancellor, said: "I have no personal confidence in the value of communication with the dead through mediums.

But since there are honest and reputable people who believe in it, the law should make proper provisions for their rights.

To treat an honest Spiritualist medium as though he ought to come within the ambit of the Witchcraft Act of 1735 [which the Bill repeals] is a thing of which we should be ashamed.

The bad old days when John Bunyan was thrown into prison because he was a dissenter and an inspired thinker, the days when Tom Paine was denounced and his name became a byword because he wrote *The Age of Reason*, and the day, not so long ago, when Charles Bradlaugh was pursued and assailed because he declared himself an unbeliever, are gone—and gone forever."

The Bill, which is supported by the Government, was given a Second Reading.

Now, why is this speech significant? As readers will readily see, when Lord Simon had to give "examples" he did not go to eminent Spiritualists who had been attacked or unjustly imprisoned. He went to Bunyan, who was a dissenter, it is true, but he also went to Thomas Paine and Charles Bradlaugh, and what he had in mind was not the blot of witchcraft but the blot of blasphemy. And if, as he says, the "bad old days" are gone for ever, how does he explain the retention of these obsolete Blasphemy Laws in a land which proclaims religious freedom and toleration?

It may be said that what really matters nowadays is the way one attacks religion. To attack it in foul language will never be tolerated and should not be in a civilised

country. We agree. Our case against organised and supernatural religion is so strong that there is no need to use bad language. But bad language can be dealt with as a misdemeanour in the police courts and there is not the slightest reason why the cry of "blasphemy" should be invoked. And it is time that Freethinkers made this plain.

The blunt truth is that Christianity is, as old Joseph Symes said many years ago, essentially a persecuting religion. Roman Catholics never hide the fact, and Protestants are constrained to admit it while attempting to palliate the admission by pretending that this was, as Lord Simon said, in the "bad old days." Those bad old days are with us as long as the Blasphemy Laws are not repealed, and it is no use disguising the fact. Neither Paine nor Bradlaugh suffered imprisonment, it is true, but G. W. Foote did a year at the hands of a Roman Catholic judge and there are still some with us. The long list of prisoners for blasphemy includes Robert Taylor (who did three years), and George Jacob Holyoake, and it would be interesting to know what Lord Simon would say these days of the passages from their speeches which the Law decided were blasphemous and which gave Taylor, a highly cultured scholar and practising surgeon, three years in the foul jails of George IV.

There must be dozens of unbelievers in the House of Commons—and one can only hope that one or more of them will try and emulate the Spiritualists, and will do their best to remove what may or may not be the last blot, but what certainly is one of the worst that was ever passed into law. Who will take the lead?

H. CUTNER.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

MONTHS ago I wrote with the above title; I gave illustrations of faulty expression drawn from current writing and speaking. Some notice was taken of my article, I received letters disputing a few points, and an old Freethinker met me in the street and asked if I thought I could write better nor Shakespeare. I answered "Yes," and that shook him. Now I am not a regurgitating animal, nor am I a biblical dog, but I am now compelled to return to the subject.

It may be remembered that I quoted one of my own blunders when I asked "Are the kittens eating themselves yet?" Not only did the members of my household ridicule me about this, they seized every opportunity of detecting and commenting upon blunders in speech, on the radio and in the press. I had scores of illustrations brought to my notice. My kittens had come home to roost! So I now try to work the mischief out of my system.

Our neighbour had a serious illness lately. One morning early I saw the doctor's car at the door. I said "I wonder how old Mrs. Brown is this morning?"

Like a shot came the answer "Seventy-five." Yes, my daughter would say that! But, except for fun in the home circle, we must guard against super smartness. One valuable point I would make is that speaking and writing must be regarded differently. Had I said "How is old Mrs. Brown?" there could have been no ambiguity, but my meaning was not misunderstood. Still in writing one must see that the words used are so grouped that they are incapable of being understood except in the sense intended.

I wouldn't waste a paragraph of a paper discussing whether Tommy *wants* or *needs* a good spanking.

Whackford Squeers is the best authority here. Kick the little blighter in the pants, that's practical.

Bacon says ". . . writing makes an exact man." That is only true if the writer realises the exacting medium he is working with, and where the written word and the spoken word must frequently differ *to convey the same meaning*. A dramatic student will be taught to say "yes" in six different ways to express half a dozen different moods. But the writer has usually to work in an adjectival phrase to qualify his affirmative. What the inexact writer never sees is that, while his work reads well to himself, its meaning may not be crystal clear to every reader. True, he has inverted commas, exclamation marks, italics and a few other aids to help the reader, but sarcasm, hyperbole and leg-pulling are difficult to register in type. And, anyhow, when one reads aloud one does not tell the listener about the punctuation.

Apart from the recognition of the basic differences in the mediums of speaking and writing, there is far too much slovenly and muddled expression in our press, radio, school and Parliament, in advertisement, in business and in slogans. What does the bootmaker convey when he puts in his well dressed window a notice NOTHING LIKE LEATHER?

I never carry a notebook. If I have to write anything I scribble on the backs of envelopes, or the margins of papers. As I generally lose these or throw them in the fire I carry most things in my head. Here are a few blunders I have encountered lately.

Comment by the B.B.C. on an appeal by "war criminals": THESE MEN WERE SENTENCED TO BE HANGED LAST FEBRUARY.

In a talk about an early book by H. G. Wells, we were told over the radio to JUST SUPPOSE MARS WAS INHABITED FOR A FEW MINUTES.

A sporting authority in a B.B.C. talk said A GOOD GOLFER TAKES CARE TO MAKE FEW MISTAKES.

Mr. Cleverly Tickles writes: HE LIT A CIGARETTE WITH GLAZED EYE AND TREMBLING FINGER.

There is the old example, I NEED MY HAIR CUT BADLY. We all know that the correct way would be I BADLY NEED MY HAIR CUT yet many writers and speakers persist in that type of error. In most of the howlers I notice, a simple transposition would put the matter right. I must say I can see no sense in a planet whose inhabitants had such a short life, while, as a sportsman, it was always my endeavour to avoid mistakes. In literature it seems a cigarette is never lit unobtrusively and without expressing emotion, but I am at a loss as to the ownership of the glazed eye and trembling finger. Some cigarette, some queer lighter!

What is the most common error in the everyday utterance of educated persons? Millions use it and I have heard Winston Churchill say it in the House. But William Cobbett is dead, and his grammar unread, so they go on saying

THESE SORT OF THINGS.

Having honoured the Opposition, I must give a turn to the Government. Mr. Attlee says . . .

WE MUST TRY AND MAKE GOOD USE. . . .

Our Mr. H. Cutner is also a TRY-AND-DO ER. Mr. P. C. King ought not to speak of FOUR ALTERNATIVES, and the scholarly lingual authority, Mr. Roy, should write "AS in Italian," not "LIKE in Italian."

I am not a strict grammarian. I would not check a child for saying "that's him." If I pick up a magazine and read "'It's me,' I answered with an utter disregard for grammar . . ." I know the writer is a prig, and I go

no further. My study of Esperanto showed up a lot of foolishness that adheres to our language, and I could not think of a great Frenchman saying "L'ETAT C'EST JE." But there is one fearful mistake that I must mention, and that is the use, or rather the mis-use of the word "either." I am constantly hearing it from professors, authors and Members of Parliament. During the Boat Race, the commentator told us

CROWDS LINE THE ROAD ON EITHER SIDE.

If I were to ask on which side of the river the people gathered, and was the other side deserted, I would be thought barmy. For undoubtedly "either" means one of two things *and one only*. I am sure there were crowds on *both* sides, and that that was supposed to be the message broadcast. But why in thunder is "either" constantly used when "both" or "each" is certainly intended? And how are we to discriminate when "either" may require to be used in its correct connotation? I confess that when the whole English speaking world seems to be against me, I feel I am like the dear old lady's soldier son, all out of step except her Jimmy. In the recent international School Quiz, won by my old school, Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, there were numerous occasions when the speakers spoke of "either side" (referring to *two* things) and this seems to mean that in educational establishments pupils are instructed that what I find fault with is good English. Horrible thought that I may be wrong! I invite an authority to put me right.

J. EFFEL.

THE DREADFUL CATHOLIC

THERE has been controversy concerning the bodily assumption of the B.V.M. (I think this is the way Catholics themselves refer to one of their supernumerary goddesses). Such controversy is good mental exercise for religious types past reclamation and, of course, part of a day's work for those with vested interests to conserve. But it is unfortunate that rationalists allow themselves to be drawn into it.

The sceptical rationalist (and it is difficult to see how any rationalist can be more) finds in heaven, assumptions, bodily or otherwise, and immaculate virgins, hypotheses that have no noticeable utility in the present state of knowledge. It is admitted that most present-day knowledge is hypothetical and that the choice of hypotheses is largely a matter of individual preference. But this makes it all the more important that choice is exercised upon grounds of utility; there are so many helpful doctrines that need investigation that to give credence to those that explain nothing, is to stand in the way of philosophical progress.

Yet this is exactly what those rationalists who debate the bodily assumption and other technical points of Italian mythology do. To talk about anything is to give it existence; and every rationalist who says (or even, perhaps, thinks) "The bodily assumption is a farrago of nonsense" is playing the Romanists' game. If it is a fact that Rome is the particular enemy of all those who claim any kind of intellectual existence at all, then it is the duty of rationalists to fight her to the limits of their ability. And ignoring is far better strategy than debating.

There is no doubt that the Church of Rome is the enemy not only of the intelligentsia but of mankind in general. She represents, of course, the biggest force for evil in the world to-day.

This is not because of her perverted history nor of her muddled philosophy. Most countries teach tendentious history and the best philosophy is muddled enough to be condemned with the worst. It is not even on account of her bad ethics; or her brutalising and disgusting sex

taboos; for all these she shares, to a greater or less extent, with most of the world's religions and creeds.

What gives the Catholic Church its odd venom is its peculiar success in propagating its morbid doctrines. This it achieves by "catching 'em young and treating 'em (extraordinarily) rough" as it admits though perhaps not in exactly those words. It has all the crimes and punishments of the more primitive Judaic religions, together with a few extra hells, appropriated from even earlier civilisations. These it flaunts before the terrified eyes of its victims at the earliest age possible, as soon as ever they can understand the meaning of sufficient scarifying words. The earliest days of childhood are, even in a civilised society, days of strange fears, half-comprehended phobias. It is little wonder that in the Roman world, few children ever regain their moral sanity.

It is in the realm of sex-teaching that the effect of this knavery is seen at its worst. No child, taught from the cradle that any kind of sex feeling or thought is "mortal sin" has the slightest chance of growing into a normal balanced man or woman. And none has the slightest chance of happiness in one of the most important spheres of human activity, that is, as wife or husband. It is no coincidence that Neville Heath and most other sexual perverts were devout Catholics. Anyone with any kind of acquaintance among Catholics can see the fruits of this inhuman teaching for themselves.

It is this, if nothing else, that makes Catholicism a force to be opposed by every individual who has for his ideal, not an abstract system of philosophy but the happiness of the human race.

I. de L.

BRIEF ANODYNE

(From the Russian)

Hunger and passion, endless like the sea,
Plague men and women: that is, you and me.
They call, they torture us, pursue men far;
None can avoid them, being what we are.
But with one glass of wine our grief we swallow;
A void is filled; our life no longer hollow.

A vapour of content then wraps us round;
Our grief forgotten, joy doth now abound.
The bitter cup of sorrow filled with brightness,
A weight is lifted; all our world is lightness:
But mark this fact my Muse is loath to sing,
This nimble spirit speedily takes wing.

Nothing endures: the fire soon burning low,
Upon the walls darker the shadows grow;
Our vision bright is rapidly extinguished,
Our rosy world as speedily relinquished;
By feelings of great loss are we oppressed,
Old discontent takes lodging in our breast.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS — A MODERN DELUSION. By Frank Kenyon. Price 5s.; postage 3d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.

WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD? By C. G. L. Du Cann. An inquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

ACID DROPS

In spite of the Education Act and the way in which the Bible Society is constantly boasting about the millions (or is it billions?) of Bibles which are printed every year, we learn that Canon Braley told the Worcester Education Committee that he was "shocked and staggered" to find so few Bibles in schools. He wants all children to read the Bible, and no doubt with a little searching they might tell even the Canon a thing or two about the "spicy" bits in time. But what else? What earthly good can a knowledge of the lamentations of Jeremiah or the meals of Ezekiel do for education? To that, we never get an answer.

And what about the teachers? Do they know the Bible? Could any one of a bunch of average teachers tell us offhand what was the special message of Nahum or Zephaniah, or the exact meaning of Revelation? There are, of course, a number of Christian cranks even among teachers, but would these agree among themselves as to what really is Christianity?

We often meet an account of some well know Christian who, in his or her early days, had "a phase of youthful atheism"—the description applied to Evelyn Underhill by the Rev. J. Bishop in the *Christian World*. We hate to convict any reverend gentleman of a terminological inexactitude, but it is really impossible to believe that Miss Underhill, who may have known a lot about Christian Mysticism, knew anything whatever about Atheism—any more than does Mr. Bishop. These people almost always call ignorance of religion "Atheism," whereas it is simply—ignorance. That was the case with Miss Underhill who could write yards of stuff about salvation and God's glory, and who had, we are told, a "burning sense of God." Miss Underhill knew just what she read about God and no more; and all of it was nonsense.

Roman Catholics have always opposed Birth Control, but here in England, their opposition counts for very little. In Ireland, however, it is a different tale for the "hierarchy," backed up by fanatical politicians can do almost what they like in censorship and withholding knowledge. But while Rome objects to all contraceptives, when it comes to "nature" everything is declared all right. For example, the infantile mortality rate in England is about 36 per 1,000—in Eire, it is 83 per 1,000. The Church would never call *this* Birth Control, of course, and for that matter has never even tried to lower such an appalling figure. After all, do not the poor mites go straight to the Catholic Paradise—Purgatory?

When, in 1947, the Health Act in Eire gave the public authorities the right and duty to educate the people in health matters, especially with regard to motherhood and gynæcological care, the "hierarchy" interfered at once. It claimed that this "was an un-Catholic trespass on the rights and duties of the family and the Church" (according to the *Manchester Guardian*). There followed from the Church the most embittered attack on Dr. Browne who was the responsible Minister, and he had to resign though he "as a good Catholic," still followed the hierarchy in matters "of faith and morals." And no doubt with an infant mortality of 83 per 1,000, the Church still fondly believes such a death-rate comes straight from God Almighty.

It is the proud boast of the Church of Rome that it is exactly what it was in the days of Christ and his Apostles and that it has not changed one scrap in nearly 2,000 years. On the other hand, Archdeacon A. P. Shepherd, resigning from the Church of England, has come to the conclusion that its work is hampered by "medieval" rules, that its constitution is a relic of medieval times, and altogether its progress is retarded by its medieval institutions. So Dr. Shepherd feels he has to resign and devote himself "to more spiritual and devotional problems." It would be most interesting to learn what these problems are, and why they are not just as medieval as any which he is throwing overboard from the Church of England. In actual fact, "spiritual" problems are not only a relic from medieval times—they are a relic of primitive Animism.

In his Address on the opening day of the Festival of Britain, the Archbishop of Canterbury very carefully informed his hearers that music came from God Almighty—we think he also added from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and that we only got it through God's Grace. He kept up this kind of twaddle for quite a while, and no doubt duly impressed his Christian hearers; but his whole Address made one wonder how any man, and particularly one with more than ordinary intelligence, could really believe in this kind of primitive nonsense. But for one thing we are grateful. The Archbishop did not insist that Jesus Christ was the greatest composer, pianist, and singer who ever lived.

During the past three years, according to the Rev. R. Finigan (who is a Methodist) there has been an extensive house-to-house campaign in Australia trying to rope in converts, as well as "lapsed" Methodists—for, as in the "old country," there is extensive apathy to religion. "There is the same indifference," Mr. Finigan avows, "the same decline in church attendance, the same secularisation of Sunday. Added to that, there is the ever present influence of Communism with its materialistic philosophy." So religion is having a desperate struggle for survival even in Australia, though the rev. gentleman hopefully adds that Methodism is making headway among the more ignorant savages of "the islands adjacent to Australia." We just love this kind of optimism.

That other very optimistic body, the Christian Evidence Society, which has for so long courageously tried to find some evidence for Christianity and has so egregiously failed, had its yearly meeting the other day with the ex-Bishop of Chelmsford as its principal speaker. Dr. Wilson appears to have been forced to tell his audience that they had to take "heed that the Christianity we defend is the true Christianity," and that it must "be kept in line with the original revelation of holy scripture." Whether this was a sly hint that Christian Evidence speakers had departed a very long way from the "original revelation" we do not know, but it looks like it.

But we must be fair to Dr. Wilson. He stood squarely for Christian "terrific things"—for "the reality of God, the death on the Cross of the Son of God, and his Resurrection." And no doubt also for all the other things which all good Christians must believe in—Miracles. Heaven and Hell, and Angels and Devils. In other words, he wanted no watered-down, pale-pink Christianity. What was good enough for Christ, was good enough for him and presumably for all the members of the C.E.S. And we hope all C.E.S. speakers will take this to heart, and not kow-tow to blatant Materialists and Atheists.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, 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 FRIEDENKER (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.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

The Annual Conference of the National Secular Society went with a swing from beginning to end. The reception room on Saturday evening was filled and everybody had a lot to talk about, with refreshments and some excellent entertainment to help things on. The business sessions were well attended, and decisions reached on all resolutions, with plenty of discussion, toleration and good feeling being marked features. At the Conway Hall in the evening, Messrs. H. Day, T. M. Mosley, J. M. Alexander, G. Colebroke, L. Ebury and F. A. Ridley were all in excellent form, each one receiving well-deserved applause for their fine contributions. The President, as chairman, gave the final speech, and the meeting closed with everybody looking as though they had spent a really good evening. Altogether, the Conference was well organised, well attended, and served the usual good purpose for the discussion of matters common to the welfare of the N.S.S. and its work.

On Tuesday, May 22, a public discussion on "Do Sound Morals depend on a Belief in God?" will be held in Denison House, 296, Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1, at 6-30 p.m. A panel of speakers will deal with questions invited from the audience. The Rev. Canon Marcus Knight, M.A., B.D., will be in the chair and the speakers are the Rev. T. Corbishley, S.J., G. W. Scott-Blair, M.A., the Rev. G. John, M.A., C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A., the Rev. P. Cohen, M.A., and G. N. M. Tyrrel. Admission is free, with reserved seats at one shilling each.

Bradford readers, interested in a happy day on Sunday, June 10, can join the party being organised for an outing on that day to Temple Newsam, Leeds, by the Bradford Branch N.S.S. Meet at Stanningley bus departure point, at 2 p.m. A meal can be obtained at the destination, or sandwiches carried. Tea will be arranged. The party will be under the guidance of Mr. Haigh, and it would help in the arrangements if those who intend to join the party notify the Branch Secretary, Mr. W. Baldie, 2, Kingsley Crescent, Baildon, Shipley, Yorks.

"NATURAL THEOLOGY" IN THE MODERN UNIVERSE

IN the first of the "Epistles" traditionally ascribed to Paul of Tarsus, his "Epistle to the Romans," occurs the following text, one of the most famous in the whole vast corpus of Christian theology:—

"For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, so that they are without excuse, because, knowing God, they glorified him not as God."
(Revised Version.)

The above text of the Pauline writer may be regarded as the key text of Christian "Evidence," of what the Catholic Church calls "Natural Theology," and the Protestant theologians hold that it is first necessary to "prove" the existence of a personal "First Cause" before it can be sought to demonstrate the truths of Christian theology. Indeed, in the most powerful of the Christian Churches the Vatican Council of 1870 has officially recognised this prior necessity, in which, at least, Rome is perfectly logical. Since, if no God exists, the very idea of Divine Revelation itself becomes absolutely meaningless.

In its New Testament phraseology quoted above, the argument of "Paul" expresses the classic formula of Theism in the form adopted and subsequently canonised by Christian theology. However, the same fundamental idea also occurs in other religions. The Muslim Doctors, with the famous Al-Ghazali (11th century), "The Proof of Islam" at their head, have repeatedly formulated what is, in effect, the same argument as that of the author of the "Epistle to the Romans." Nor is it only in orthodox theology that this argument is advanced. The English and French "Deists" of the 17th and 18th centuries used it extensively. In the most famous of Deistic works, *The Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine repeats, substantially, the same argument as "Paul." It is in his creation, in the great Universe which we see all around us, that the Existence, the Power, and the Benevolence of the Creator is manifest. (We are, perhaps, sometimes inclined to forget that Paine wrote his most famous work with the double objective of "refuting" Christianity and Atheism. Paine was, in fact, one of the most eloquent apologists for "Natural Theology." The numerous Christians, from President Theodore Roosevelt down, who have called him an "Atheist," merely demonstrate convincingly that they have never even read *The Age of Reason*!)

Thus, for some 19 centuries, the argument of the early Christian author who wrote the "Epistle to the Romans" has occupied a central and key position in the vast armoury of Christian apologetics; countless theologians have repeated, commented upon, and eulogised his theme; whilst countless preachers have extolled in the glories of the firmament, the grandeur and glory of God the Creator. It was quite in the spirit of "Paul" that the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, uttered his famous dictum:—

"Two things, and two things alone, arouse in me the emotions of wonder and awe: the starry vault above us and the moral law within."

To-day, how stands the famous argument in a Universe upon which Copernicus and Darwin, not to mention the telescope and microscope, have directed their investigation during the 19 centuries since "Paul," the Jewish convert to early Christianity, set to work to lay the foundations of the new "science" of Christian apologetics?

To start our inquiry, it is, first of all, necessary to investigate the kind of Universe which the early Christians, including the writer "to the Romans," actually conceived as existing. In which connection, we must, of course, realise that "popular science" in the sense in which we know it to-day, was virtually unknown in the world of antiquity amid which Christianity originated. Such "popular science" is, in effect, the result of the invention of printing, and did not exist before it, at least upon any scale that could be called significant. The classical culture was, actually, a close monopoly of the ruling oligarchy of (in the first century A.D.) the Roman Empire and its clients; the vast subject masses of the Empire, who made up the overwhelming majority of the population, were complete strangers to this culture; the "culture" of the masses was the animistic, anthropomorphic, geocentric "culture" of popular religion, which is displayed in almost every line of our New Testament, to the manifest regret of "liberal Christians" in our own day!

There is no room for reasonable doubt that this popular religious culture was that of all the writers of the New Testament, including the author of "Romans." Like other New Testament writers, "Paul" was not devoid of literary ability of—as Bishop Barnes has complained—a rather diffuse kind. He had obviously had some training in rabbinical theology and, if the other Epistles are by the same hand, was familiar with some Greek literary classics, at least to the extent of being able to quote them. But of scientific thinking, or even of any exact acquaintance with the actual scientific knowledge possessed by the contemporary educated classes in the Graeco-Roman world of his day, there is not a single trace. It is, of course, true that, lacking technical instruments of precision, even the scientist of antiquity always had a very limited knowledge of natural phenomena. Did not even the great Epicurus, that ancient prototype of Rationalism, go on record with the unfortunate remark that no heavenly body is actually bigger than it appears to us? (cf. Diogenes Laertes—*Lives of the Philosophers*.)

However, if the age of exact instruments still lay in the distant future, the classical thinkers had, at least, got beyond Animism and had discovered the permanent principles of scientific—of objective—thinking, as we can see from their surviving fragments.

Even this limited scientific progress lay quite beyond the ken of "Paul" and his early Christian fellow-scribes who wrote our New Testament. Their Universe was a tiny shut-in globe, surrounded by the celestial abode of the supernatural, whence they expected at any moment the physical descent of Jesus when, as "Paul" himself wrote in another Epistle—if both are by the same hand—"we shall be caught up to meet him (Jesus) in the air." Similarly, in this world there is no conception of the evolution of species; as in all animistic thought, everything proceeds for the sole benefit of mankind and nothing else need be even considered.

To such a Lilliputian world made by God solely for the benefit of man, it was not difficult to "prove" the existence of the Creator from the, at first sight, impressive order of the Universe, as seen by the naked eye. To-day, vastly greater knowledge has destroyed the naive illusions engendered by deceptive appearance. We now know that the principal phenomenon actually visible in the Universe is waste; worlds are wasted, profusely drifting derelict and purposeless throughout space; innumerable species perish for every one that survives; of the innumerable seeds of potential life only a mere handful are fertilised successfully into organic life. "Shortages" represent the

normal order of the Universe! Taking the cosmos as a whole, frustration is seen as its normal routine; achievement as its exceptional accident.

The "struggle for existence" which must have been the primary interest of any actual Creator who had any connection with "this sorry scheme of things" is utterly amoral and has only one canon, itself meaningless by any moral criterion, survival. Any hypothetical Creator whom it is to-day possible to conceive at work in the real world, could only be shown to work even by trial and error upon the assumption that error was his normal procedure and that his successes were incidental.

The actual Universe as disclosed by modern science, if it be regarded as "evidence" for the existence of a Creator, could only be regarded as the work of a bungling novice, utterly amoral, a kind of celestial "Caliban," if not a predominantly malevolent Being.

Modern scientific investigation into the nature of the actual Universe has completely demolished "natural" equally with supernatural theology. To "Paul," and even to later theologians the argument as set out in "Romans" could be put forward in good faith and sound convincing. To-day, its use by uneducated Christians merely indicates their ignorance, and when used by educated theologians it is difficult to acquit them of deliberate insincerity.

F. A. RIDLEY.

IN SOUTH AFRICA

THE Malannazis are busy tearing up the South Africa Act of 1909, by which the Union of South Africa got established. Under this Act the four then colonies of South Africa, viz. (1) Colony of the Cape of Good Hope; (2) the Colony of the Orange Free State, or rather Orange River Colony; (3) the Colony of Transvaal, and (4) the Colony of Natal, got welded together as the Union of South Africa as from May 31, 1910.

The Malannazi Party, now in power with a composite majority of 13, took it into their heads to remove the names of all coloured voters in the Union from the voters rolls. This is being done to assure the return of still more Malannazi members to parliament with the next and following general elections as well as, possibly, by-elections which may become necessary before May 18, 1953.

This whitening of the Constitution on which the Union of South Africa is based means that other measures may be piloted through parliament by which, for example, the English language will be driven out of our educational system. So far I have written nothing but politics, which is a subject not much in favour with *The Freethinker*, but to explain the situation further to you I must do this because behind it all lurks the dreadful spitting cobra called Religion. The Dutch Reformed Churches, all four varieties, lurks in the shadows behind almost every move of the Malannazi lunacy. According to this Church's Bible only humans with lily-white skins are fit to enter the Calvinist Heaven. On earth the Calvinist God divided humanity into different races or racial groups which are on different social levels according to Calvinist civilisation.

This policy or dogma according to the Calvinist Malannazis is based upon their Bible's contents, and they quote chapter and verse in this Book of Books to support their actions. So far I have not seen a single quotation from their Bible. All that appeared in the newspapers were vague statements about the sanction of what they aver as having the support of the Word of God.

This tearing up of the Constitution means that by 1953, the year of the next general election, it will be a miracle if the writer of this letter and thousands of others will have a vote. A National Registration Act will come into force by which the Malannazis can do as they like. One man, the Minister for the Interior, will decide under this Act who may vote and who not. No appeal can be lodged against his decision and neither need he give any reasons for his decision.

This country is on a straight path towards a complete Police State. A State in which any person who does not accept the dictates of the Malannazi group will be an outlaw and fair game for anyone who may choose to make his or her life a hell on earth.

A feeling of horror overshadows one at the thought that Calvinism is one of the chief factors, if not the chief factor, lurking in the shadows as a driving force behind the Malannazi campaign.

JOHANNA DUTOIT
(Natal).

FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

PARADOX.—Something apparently absurd or incredible, yet true. Thus one enunciates a paradox by saying that the main purpose of religion is to fight God, which is another way of saying that its primary purpose is to find an intelligible and even praiseworthy motive in the vagaries of nature. As the chief purpose of man in the world is to defeat nature, he is eternally at war with God. Religion, by denying the plain realities of nature, attempts the same purpose.

Poetry, which includes the Bible, is simply a beautifully embellished lie set to music. Poetry has to deny reality, but it does so more or less speciously and sometimes even convincingly. It never, or hardly ever, has to profess the obvious absurdities on which religion takes its stand.

For proof of this let us see what happens to some "civilised" countries agriculturally. Firstly, man discovers an island or continent just as God intended it, which is to say, unspoiled by man. Man promptly starts to defeat God's plan by cutting down all the forest trees, ploughing up all the undergrowth and taking all the goodness out of the soil. In a very short while, comparatively speaking, he has created a dust bowl. By getting rid of the trees he got rid of the rain which their chief purpose was to attract.

This is religion's chance to step in and draw God's attention to the desert conditions man has created and ask Him please to send along some of the rain man has driven away. Sometimes these people even go as far as to tell God that he must not send a really torrential rain to further erode their dust bowl, but a gentle soaking rain, which will bring financial benefit to the petitioners.

Here we see both man and religion trying to defeat the plain purpose of God, or what is otherwise known as the balance of nature. Science works sometimes to the same end, but much more thoroughly. When, owing to ignorant exploitation of the soil, large areas of land in S. Africa were devastated by prickly pear, science came to the aid of man after religion's petitions remained unheeded. Science imported an insect appropriately known as Cactoblastis which was, in its country of origin, an effective agent of God in keeping down the growth of prickly pear. Freed from its natural enemies and with thousands of square miles of its natural food on hand, the jolly old insect did its job only too well. Not only did it wax exceeding fat, but proliferated until its population could be counted in trillions, by which time its natural food was eliminated. What then? Obviously God's plan was for it to eat, so it had to eat something and turned its attention to planted crops.

Paradoxically too, it may be noted that in one short simple prayer for rain religion is able to both assert and deny God's omnipotence. It is asserted in the belief that he can send the rain and denied in calling attention to what must be already known to an omnipotent being.

F. W. RENNIE.

CORRESPONDENCE

EUGENE SUE

SIR,—I was much interested in Mr. Cutner's article on Sue's "Wandering Jew" and Dicks' "English Library." I "took in" the latter from the first number, which, looking back, I think must have been in 1884, when I was 14, for a number of years and made my first acquaintance with much early 19th century fiction in its pages. If I remember rightly, the first volume started off with *Ernest Maltravers* (Lytton) and *Charles O'Malley* (Lever) as its chief serial stories. I also made the acquaintance of the "Wandering Jew" in its pages. It fascinated me, and when in later life I discovered *Le Juif Errant* in a second-hand bookshop, and having learned enough French in the meantime to read it comfortably and understandingly, I went in and made myself master of it. It was the original edition in four volumes, with many plates and illustrations in the text by Gavarni, and I spent many happy hours in reading it and renewing my early recollections of it.

It was pleasant to find that Mr. Cutner was also one of the readers of Dicks' "English Library."—Yours, etc.,

A. W. DAVIS.

FREEMASONRY

SIR,—Mr. Augustus Vaughan now replies that he was present at the meeting when a Lodge Chaplain dubbed Mr. Campbell Everden a stupid Atheist. I accept this, but I cannot accede third party statements, for it is he that is in the box and not the chairman whom he now seeks to support his statement that Mr. Everden was a Master Mason.

He is also no doubt correct in that the Rev. Mr. Anderson was responsible for the charge that a "stupid Atheist" cannot be a Freemason; for it was in the year 1735 that Bro. William Rich, who was a member of the Swalwell Lodge, caused to be published *Book M. or Masonry Triumphant*, now believed to be the alleged pirate of Bro. James Anderson's *Constitutions*.

Now, may I transgress for a moment? Prior to this, insofar as the Swalwell Lodge is concerned, there were what is known as the 19 Orders of Antiquity, the first reading: "That every mason be a true Lodgeman to God and the Holy Church; that he use niether error no heresy, nor desert discreet and wise men's teaching." A glance at the book (secured from Foyles) given in response to my request for reference and stated to be *Freemasonry and its Etiquette*, reads the *Etiquette of Freemasonry*, and the author, an old Past Master.

Thus, Wm. Vaughan has not supplied any datum to strengthen his case that Mr. Everden was a Master Mason, but has been guilty of the well-worn and lubricated Christian dodge of confusing the issue by giving false and suppressing vital information.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. RICHARDSON.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. EBURY and Mr. ALEXANDER, Highbury Corner, 7 p.m.: Mr. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. ELSMERE and Mr. S. HOUGH.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.; F. A. RIDLEY and C. E. WOOD.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 20, 11 a.m.: Professor BARBARA WOOTTON, M.A., "Constructive Unbelief."

“NEUROSES AND SACRAMENTS”

THIS is the title of a book by Father Keenan, O.F.M. It indicates the attitude of the Church towards modern psychology, described by Dean Inge as a psychology without a soul. It is not surprising to find him using the age-old dialectic trick of tying his opponent down with definitions and logical criticism while giving himself the utmost latitude in theological vaguery. Diagnosing neurosis, he says, is comparatively easy but this is very different from defining it; and if the psychiatrist or psychoanalyst is concerned with objective diagnosis, the patient is concerned with his feelings, with its emotional repercussions. Most of us think of it from the patient's point of view.

For the specialist, he says, the criteria is observed behaviour, comparing the abnormal with the normal. But you assume that your abstraction of the Normal Man is correct and his behaviour a sound standard. But your mass observation will not be free from preconceived ideas. If you are a rabid communist you cut out capitalists, they are not normal; if you are a materialist you regard the religionist as abnormal, both in thought and in practice. Your ideas of men govern your abstraction of Man. But if Normal Man acts according to his nature, the Saints, then, would be abnormal and your Normal Man would be an abstraction minus a spiritual dimension.

We are all to some extent neurotic. The various types of neurosis, psychosis is an extreme or total form, have the character of a flight from the external world; not localised but said to be functional; a disordered personality, with not any sort of hierarchy or order; and he contrasts a lost Atlantis with an attainable Paradise. He offers nothing new as treatment of psychological disorders, but, disdaining the Myth or History controversy, he challenges modern psychology with mystical theology in the Mystery of the Incarnation; elaborated for the benefit of non-Catholic readers. With the humanity of Christ as the Norm, as the deeper objective criterion of neurosis, the neurotic can, with Grace, live out the Gethsemane of Christ.

The humanity Christ took from Mary his mother is flesh of our flesh, said St. Paul, like to us in all but sin. As various as the need of men, the sacraments, with a material thing—bread, water, wine, oil—or an utterance—are a union of the spiritual with the material; as with Confirmation, Matrimony, Confession, Holy Orders, Eucharist, Extreme Unction; with faith, hope and charity, giving sanctifying grace in participation within the body of the Church; with Baptism giving initiation into the Mystical Body of Christ. The Old Adam is reborn in Christ, and He may be closer to the neurotic than to the sane, as to the sorrows of Martha and Mary, the anxieties of Nicodemus, the lunatics and possessed.

In concern for various neuroses, frustration, anxiety, schizophrenia, we are lost in a maze of mystical theology, just as with Freud's psychoanalysis we are confused in metaphysical doctrine, or in mystical symbolism in Jung's analytical psychology. Just as one can see mysticism in modern psychology, with such theological terms as inhibition, or mystical terms as sublimation, so also can one see the influence of modern psychology in the development of Catholic theology; for, with the use of hypnotism in abnormal psychology, it is a development from the cult of mysticism which is intimately connected with Catholic monasticism. It is a mysticism but with a different orientation.

Following the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline Epistles, the fourth century *Mystical Theology* by Dionysius, has been described as a text book of mysticism as the anonymous medieval *Cloud of Unknowing* has been referred to as a handbook of mystical practice. With systematisation in the *Rule of Perfection* by Father Benet, and simplification by Cardinal Berulle and Ignatius Loyola, leads up to the sixteenth century cult of mysticism, which was followed by the cult of animal magnetism. With the magnetic analogy of Paracelsus, there is an inversion, a change in attitude, with an irradiation from the mystic instead of an astral light influence upon the mystic, which was developed in Mesmer's idea of a magnetic fluid.

Mesmerism became hypnotism with the experiments of the neurologist James Braid, and the use of hypnotism in abnormal psychology by Charcot and Janet heralded modern psychology. Freud discarded hypnotism in the “free association”; so also, with Bernheim's idea of suggestion, and Coue with his auto-suggestion. But it is this inversion, this change in attitude towards the subject, that characterises modern psychology. Just as, to James Braid, hypnotism is a neural function, so also to Coue, auto-suggestion is what one does oneself. With Father Keenan and Catholic mystical theology, only Divine Grace can cure the neurotic, he must live out his Gethsemane, but Coue said, with auto-suggestion, the patient can cure himself.

This inversion, this turn-about-face, is also seen in Father Keenan's argument; for modern psychology is not based upon an assumption of a Normal Man, but arose in the study of the abnormal; the so-called Normal Man is the problem—as degrees of abnormality. It is the humanity of the mystical Christ-Norm that is an assumption and an abstraction. Not only is the Christ as incomprehensible and indefinable as the abstract Normal Man, but is historically linked with the Logos, a personification of Reason taken from ancient Greek philosophy, but this is so ambiguous that J. M. Robertson found no less than sixteen different meanings to the word “Logos” in Philo. And it is the Christian who thinks of Normal Man in the idea that all men are sinners.

This mystical theology is primitive psychology and it is not surprising that, together with its crudities, it should contain some psychological truth. For, just as Father Keenan defines neurosis as a flight from reality, from the external world, that is precisely what the early Christian mystic did, and some still do, in their monastic cells, in flight from the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Father Keenan is trying to reconcile a modern and a traditional interpretation of similar psychological facts, but there is a world of difference between neurosis and sin.

H. H. PREECE.

MODERN GODS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

We have such beautiful pylons,
Angel high, spreading
Endless cabled fingers
To sag a voltage death along
The embraced earth;
And always managing somehow
(The Power and The Glory)
To stand in front of every sunset.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.