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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Dead Horses—and Live Ones!

A CONSTANTLY recurring complaint against contemporary critics of religion is that they are busily engaged in "flogging a dead horse" or, in more classical phraseology, in "slaying the slain." "Dead horses" undoubtedly exist—in our era of universal "shortages" even the Ministry of Food has officially to recognise this zoological fact!—and it is necessary carefully to distinguish them from live ones. How far, to-day, is religion or, more specifically, the Christian Church a "dead horse"?

As and when viewed from a contemporary world perspective, the question can be answered without delay in the negative; over most of the contemporary world religion is still a powerful and persistent force. In the "backward" (that is, pre-industrial) lands of Asia, Africa and South America, there have been only minor changes in its pervasive power since the Middle Ages: an anti-clerical stronghold like present-day Mexico or a militant rationalist movement like that of our friends of the "Indian Rationalist Association," is, still, unfortunately, the proverbial "exception that proves the rule." Indeed, in such contemporary Catholic, Muslim, or Hindu lands as, say, Eire, Franco Spain, French Canada, Arabia, Afghanistan, or most of "Mother India," any Secularist who was foolish enough optimistically to "flog the dead horse" of religion in such areas as the aforementioned, would be singularly fortunate if *he* survived the flogging. Supernatural religion is still a world power and is likely to remain so for at least any time that concerns us and our generation.

Religion, however, like all things that pass beneath the sun, is subject to the fact of evolution. In the Western World and, perhaps, particularly in Great Britain, the pervasion and operative influence of religion throughout these areas has, undeniably, declined sharply throughout the past half-century since that pious, evangelical Christian, Queen Victoria, was gathered to her also-Christian fathers. In which connection the figures of declining church-membership—quoted and recently referred to in this column by the present writer—are extremely relevant. Between 1901 and 1951, so Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers inform us in their recently-published statistical survey, *English Life and Leisure*, the decline in total church attendance upon Sundays for all Christian denominations has fallen sharply from 31 to 13 per cent., nor is the above an isolated instance of religious decline. There can be no doubt that a concurrent decline has also taken place in such once universal religious practices in Victorian England as Bible-reading and family prayers, then practically universal in middle-class households—and the Victorian age was, essentially, *the* age of the middle class. To-day, in most English households, the Bible has reverted to its original status as a "fetish," respected but seldom consulted. Nine out of ten casual passers-by, if questioned as to their knowledge of the Holy Book, could not tell the difference between Habakkuk and the author of the Apocalypse! What a change since the days of the pious Victoria and the still more pious Gladstone! We have no

comparable statistics for religious observances in the current Western World to those quoted above in our English sociological survey, but the general position, except, of course, where progress has been forcibly retarded, as in Franco Spain, appears to be generally similar.

"Like causes breed like results." It is, no doubt, not an accident that the areas where religion has declined most sharply are the precise areas where the economic, political and social aspects of the Industrial Revolution have been especially potent in their impact upon current forms of traditional society. The "Materialist Conception of History" appears here to have an unanswerable case. Like all important sociological generalisations, its importance and relevancy have been exaggerated at times, but it is scarcely possible to deny in the face of the existing overwhelming evidence that industrial society, which is necessarily based upon the deterministic application of science, is essentially destructive of the animistic, that is of the religious view of the cosmos, or that in England, the historic cradle of modern industrialism, the current decline of religion is primarily due to the industrial basis of present-day English society. Nor, no doubt, is it an accident either that it is in the pre-industrial, predominantly still agricultural world that religion still thrives. In sociological perspectives, religion—that is animism—and agriculture have usually been Siamese Twins; show me an agricultural people and I will show you a religious one!

However the recent changes that have transpired in English society with regard to religion have been qualitative as well as quantitative: the kind of religion with which the Secularist Movement of at any rate the immediate future will have to deal, differs profoundly from that of the last century. For not only the precise figures quoted by Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers but other equally unimpeachable authorities combine in demonstrating that the balance of power *inside* English Christianity has changed sharply during the last half-century. For the formerly dominant bible-banging "fundamentalist" evangelical Protestantism that dominated the religious scene in the English Christianity of the 19th century has now fallen upon evil days and its future bids fair to be worse even than its immediate past.

Whereas the one Christian Church which still demonstrates some signs of vitality and is constantly gaining at the expense of the Protestant Churches, is the Church of Rome, an unpopular and insignificant religious minority in post-Reformation England. If Catholicism can continue its present growth relative to the churches of the Reformation as indicated in our authors' figures, it will be the only church that the Secularist Movement of the year A.D. 2000 need be seriously concerned with, as the surveys of that year would indicate.

It is hardly necessary in view of the illuminating articles appearing elsewhere in this journal, to remind our readers how serious such a situation could become. For Catholicism is the "Fascist," the totalitarian form of Christianity and, as such, it differs in kind as well as in degree from all other forms of Christianity. That "horse" is still quite lively and its capacity for *political* intrigue was

never more evident than now. The age of the great pioneers, of Paine, Ingersoll and Bradlaugh was one age; our own age is another and, in many respects, a different age. Evolution applies to Freethought, as also to its ancient foe, religion. The problems that beset the men and women of the 19th century have not passed unaltered to their successors in the 20th century. The great Freethinkers of the 19th century remain a source of permanent inspiration to us, their successors. They represent a beacon wherewith to lighten our footsteps; but it would be a sad day in the annals of Freethought if we ever came to regard them as our boundary.

F. A. RIDLEY.

FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT

1. Space and Time

EVER since Einstein shattered the established edifice of Newtonian thought, new ideas about space and time have fertilised more than one field of scientific investigation. On the other hand, mystics are now dipping into theories of space and time, and extracting fantasies of considerable popular appeal. As for writers of popular science fiction, it is difficult to imagine where they would turn for fresh material, if the space-time continuum was not available for imaginary escapes from physical reality.

Freethought, as I understand it, is thought unrestricted by religious doctrines. But to think, you must have something to think about. Freethought without information is nothing but a repetition of the word "no."

We can, of course, be informed about many things, and nobody can be informed about everything. What to choose, then? I suggest that just as a theologian has to be informed in the first place on the myths and tenets of religious doctrine, so a freethinker must be informed above all on the fundamental concepts of scientific theory. For scientific theory, considered historically, spells the end of religious doctrine.

This brings us back to ideas about space and time, on which all scientific theory is based. If you will forgive an author for "plugging" his own book, I have dealt with these ideas in my *Energy and Matter*, where you can judge them more truly than in these few paragraphs.

Newton, avowedly with an eye on the needs of theology, advanced the hypothesis that space and time are absolutely separate and distinct from everything else, and are not directly accessible to human measurement. Modern physics has discarded this hypothesis. Relativity physics presents space and time as a joint numerical structure, the space-time continuum, belonging to the gravitational field. Wherever gravity exists, there is space-time.

Quantum mechanics, the other main branch of theoretical physics, is not based on this concept, and makes no such simple generalisation about space and time. Physicists, therefore, do not speak with a single voice on this subject.

On one major point, however, physicists are more or less united, namely in asserting that space and time consist of measurements. This is natural, since physicists, generally speaking, are concerned solely with their own measurements, and how they can use them. Wider thinking, however, poses the question, measurements of *what*?

Spatio-temporal relations, we are told, consist of measurements made with measuring rods and clocks. We ask, then, what do you measure with a standard rod, and what do you measure with a standard clock? The slick and illogical reply is that you measure space and time with measuring rods and clocks. A nice little circle of evasion! Space and time are measurements—of space and time! A

mere tautology that should be recognised quite plainly for the evasion it is.

Cutting all argument, let me say that space, as Descartes recognised, is the quantitative aspect of matter's extension. Matter is extended in two universal and interpenetrating states—the *corporal state*, represented by electrons, protons, neutrons and other particles, and the *incorporal state*, represented by gravitational, electric, magnetic and other fields. This concept of matter extended in two interpenetrating states is my own particular contribution to theoretical physics. With this concept, space is seen to be the quantitative aspect of matter's extension. When you use a measuring rod, you measure extension and obtain a spatial quantity. Space—physical space—is simply quantity of extension.

And time? Time, as was well known to early Greek thinkers, is the quantitative aspect of motion. Matter has various forms of motion—mechanical, electromagnetic, and so on. When you use a clock, you measure motion and obtain a temporal quantity. Time—physical time—is simply quantity of motion.

And space-time? It is the joint quantity you get when you measure extension and motion, and combine your measurements. Extension and motion are two universal and dialectically united qualities of matter. Space-time is the quantitative aspect of extension and motion, in conjunction with one another.

Too bold a statement? Too dry? Then let me suggest you begin to work out any fundamental problem you may be interested in, using this statement as a starting point. Before long, you will probably find yourself in interesting territory.

In our thoughts, especially in dreams, an extraordinary shuffling of spatio-temporal relations takes place. The human brain is an instrument capable of condensing past, present and future spatial relations into a fantastically rapid and flexible mental cinematograph, the performance of which is marvellous, and the possibilities scarcely explored.

Comparison of the mind with a cinematograph reminds me of the extraordinary effect of running a film backwards, so that time is reversed in the film's representation of reality. Next time you see that trick on the screen, just note precisely how the effect is achieved. You will see that from beginning to end of the reverse run of the film, every direction of motion is reversed. It is this general reversal of all the *directions* of motion which constitutes the time reversal effect on the screen. The whole effect is a fascinating demonstration that time is the quantitative aspect of motion. Reverse motion, and you reverse time.

Do not forget, though, that motion reversed relative to one reference body may not be reversed relative to some other reference body. The reverse swing of a pendulum would not look like a reversal of motion to someone not sharing the motion of the earth.

Furthermore, you have to take energy changes into account when considering the reversibility of physical processes. Thermodynamics rules out the possibility of an absolutely reversible process.

The moral of all this? If you like, the moral is that you can't move backwards. The operative word is *move*. You can, of course, *think* backwards—and forwards. But that is another story.

R. L. WORRALL.

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CATHOLIC PRACTICE OR PRIEST WORSHIP

I

IF there is anything demonstrated within the fold of the Roman Catholic Church, it is the fact of priest worship. In this Religious-Political Organisation, priestcraft still remains the dominant force. Consequently, priest worship is rampant among the more ignorant members of the laity, who, needless to say, outnumber the rest by an incalculable amount. It is this factor which makes the Roman Church so strong in the more backward countries, such as Ireland, Spain and America, *not excluding* the United States. In the handbook of the Church entitled "Catholic Practice" we are told *inter alia*:—

"Catholics should look upon their Rector as their common father," and "love, respect and obey him as such."

"The laity are to reverence their common father," we are told, "as they would the immortal soul over the perishable body."

"When meeting him Catholics are to discontinue their occupation until he has bidden them continue. If seated they are to stand until told to sit down. They are to remove their hats to him in the streets and women are to bow to him, wherever they meet. Men must offer their seats to the Priest in public conveyances or assemblies. Catholics are not to be offended if the Priest chooses to ignore their presence or their greeting, as he may be engaged in communion with God. Catholics are not under any circumstances to endeavour to borrow money from the Priest, as this action causes him embarrassment, and experience has proved that few who borrow money from the clergy ever return it; and Catholics should remember that Priests have very little money as they are always giving it away."

"Catholics are always to remember to be thankful to the Priest and to thank him by word and deed for every attention and call he may show or make. Catholics are not to be content with merely giving the Priest money, they must also offer their services to him and share with him all those goods with which God has blessed them."

"Catholics are always to recognise the Priest as the direct representative of God. They are not to notice his faults and failings, nor to speak of them, but are to do their utmost to conceal them as much as they possibly can. Catholics are to remember that whilst great reverence is due to the Priest, even more is to be shown to a Bishop. Catholics should always kneel and receive a blessing when meeting a Bishop, at the same time kissing his ring."

"Catholics are bound under pain of sin to contribute to the support of their Pastor and/or his assistants. All members of the parish if they have an income of their own, whether they are married or single, whether they have families or not, whether they live with their families, board or live by themselves must all contribute such dues as are fixed by their Pastor."

The New Testament writer expressed a truism when he distinguished the sheep from the goats. Indeed, it is obvious that the sheep in the Catholic fold were born to be fleeced, they clearly are so mutton-headed.

"PETER'S FINGER."

Millions of holiday-makers upon Bank Holiday were washed out by torrential rain. We can only suppose that some Christians had been praying particularly hard for rain. If the Lord sent it on the wrong date, why, that was just too bad! They should have specified the precise day upon which they wanted it.

GIBBON ON RELIGION

SIR,—There is little in your leading article of August 5 with which I am in full agreement, and your quotation from Gibbon is incorrect. Your arguments based on it are, therefore, unfair and inaccurate. Gibbon was not stating a principle but describing the period 98 to 180 A.D. He states: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were (not are) all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And this toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord." His ensuing paragraphs make this abundantly clear, for as Professor Ramsay says: "The ordinary pagan did not care two straws whether his neighbour worshipped twenty gods or twenty-one."

I hope the modern tendency of ill-considered debunking will not induce young readers to neglect such incomparable sources of delight and instruction as the writings of Gibbon and Voltaire.

I would like to refute more of your article, but as space is limited I will content myself with the following observation, viz., that as all supernatural explanations of existence are false, to a materialist it necessarily follows "that all religions are equally false."—Yours, LEN EBURY.

[Our correspondent raises the question of the accuracy of the present writer's reference to Gibbon in the issue of August 5, 1951. Mr. W. J. Jessup, of Hampstead, repeats what is substantially the same argument as Mr. Ebury. I regret that, by a slip of the pen, I put Gibbon's reference in the present instead of in the past tense. I cannot, however, agree that this lapsus plumæ makes any real difference to my subsequent argument. Gibbon's famous phrase summarised the essential approach to religion in general by the whole Voltairean school to which the historian belonged: the idea underlying it permeates the entire work of Voltaire.

Even if, with Messrs. Ebury and Jessup, we confine the historian's dictum to the field of Roman history, it remains equally false. Roman "magistrates" did not regard all religions as "equally useful." Under the Roman Republic many cults were banned, notably those of Dionysius, Cybele and Isis. Under the Empire, Tiberius banned the Carthaginian cult of Moloch and punished its rites with death. Claudius, Nero and Domitian banned Druidism with severe penalties in Britain. Diocletian, Probus and Galerius, all banned Manicheism and, long before the Inquisition, explicitly proscribed death by fire for its adherents; numerous edicts by many emperors condemned the "Chaldæans" (adherents of oriental solar cults) to severe penalties. All the above emperors and cults were pagan.

As for all religions in the Roman Empire being "equally true" for the people, Celsus, in his famous anti-Christian polemic, "The True Word," written probably under Gibbon's hero, Marcus Aurelius, expressly declares that a universal religion like Christianity claimed to be, would always be impossible because the mutual hostility between the rival cults was too great ever to be overcome!

As regards Gibbon and Voltaire, they were great pioneers in their day, but we would remind our critics that people claiming to be Rationalists ought not to forget that such a thing as evolution exists. Much water has flowed under the Tiber bridges since Gibbon wrote, and no one, to-day, who is at all proficient in the relevant subjects, would quote either Gibbon as the last word in Roman history, or would accept without qualification Voltaire's theory of the origin of religion. Naturally, this in no way denies their outstanding merit as pioneers in their respective fields.

Mr. Ebury's final paragraph is merely a tissue of absurdities. It is obviously ridiculous to assert, as one must do if one takes his contention literally, that a brilliant critical scholar like, say, Dr. Barnes, is neither more nor less superstitious than a Polynesian cannibal who is a fetish worshipper because, though he goes a long way with Rationalism, he continues to style himself a Christian Theist. In any case, it is obvious that, on Mr. Ebury's own logic, all religions cannot be *equally* false: for example, a creed which accepts the real existence of the material universe cannot be, from the standpoint of materialism, as false as a religion, and there are such, which denies it.—F.A.R.]

ERRATUM

We very much regret that an omission occurred in Mr. J. M. G. Buller's article, "Science and Catholicism" in our issue of August 12. Quoting Professor Seward of Cambridge, Mr. Buller wrote: "We know that calcareous algae formed reefs of limestone" in the Ordovician Seas. By an unfortunate oversight, the word "algae" was omitted. We sincerely apologise to Mr. Buller for the omission.—EDITOR.

ACID DROPS

It was not to be expected that *Picture Post* would be allowed to broadcast that there was no evidence that anybody called Jesus Christ ever lived. In barged the Rev. J. Walsh, S.J., of the Bellarmine Society, to point out that the non-Christian evidence of his existence came from Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny, as well as the Babylonian Talmud—and naturally, Mr. Walsh knows perfectly well that few readers of *Picture Post* will take the trouble to find out for themselves what this “evidence” is worth.

Briefly, the two passages in Josephus are unmitigated forgeries, as most Christian writers now admit; the passage in Tacitus simply mentions that the Christians of his day merely worshipped “Christ,” just as the Egyptians worshipped Osiris, and therefore is no “evidence” whatever; and as the date of the Babylon Talmud is about A.D. 600 it is not of the slightest “evidence”—except to all-believing Christians like Fr. Walsh, and a number of very reverent Rationalists. The only logical conclusion about “Christ” is that he was a God—just like Apollo or Jupiter; and Gods do not exist.

A wave of pessimism seems to hit some of our Bishops now and then, for here we have the *Guardian* reporting that the Bishop of Sheffield, in a Visitation in his diocese, saying that he does not think that there will be a large revival of the Christian Faith until “men and women of average intelligence” can say that they “see the Kingdom of God and its King before they are able to worship.” It would be most interesting to know if the Bishop himself or any Bishop has ever seen the Kingdom of God and its King? But there, can even a Bishop stop giving vent to imbecilities sometimes?

Same old trouble even in South Africa! There appears to be a constant row there as to what language is used in schools—English or Afrikaans—and this controls the child's religious education. “Christian-National” doctrines are taught in an Afrikaans school, and outside the Afrikaans Churches “Christian-National” simply means Hitler's National Socialism which, being a kind of “paganism” mixed up with Hitler's Catholicism, is condemned by both the Bishop of Johannesburg and the R.C. Archbishop of Pretoria. We expect that even God Almighty must be more than confused at the type of religion now taught the unlucky children attending Afrikaans schools.

Our noble Lords are certainly advancing. Lord Luke of Pakenham told an Anglican and Old Catholic Youth Conference recently the glorious news that, “unless Christendom was united, the world would succumb to an anti-Christian way of life.” It could be put in another way—if Christians did not hang together they would hang separately. What the Conference wanted was “one Church, one faith”—at which any Roman Catholic is ready to laugh his head off.

In trying to explain the attitude of Science towards Religion, and in an effort to boost up Religion for the readers of *Time and Tide*, the Rt. Hon. Richard Law, M.P., is obliged to admit that “Evolution, natural selection, have been powerful solvents of faith.” But—there is always a “but”—“Evolution does not explain life.” Mr. Law might have added—neither does Religion, only that would never do. “Evolution,” he adds, “does not explain how the process of life started.” Of course, here Religion has the whip-hand, for in Genesis it is all

very clearly explained. “God did it” and if you still do not understand “the process of life” you must be put down as a fool.

Mr. Law also tells us that while “Science cannot prove the existence of God, intuition knows that He exists.” Now, is not that very clever of Mr. Law? And please remember you cannot shake his “intuition” because he “cannot describe God.” After all, the physicist cannot “describe” what electrons or neutrons look like, so God *must* exist. Mr. Law says so, and as he says he “can only see God in a glass darkly” the existence of God is completely demonstrated, and the poor Atheist is beaten to a frazzle. We think Mr. Law is coming in for a few shocks when his intelligence on this subject has to be assessed.

Our anti-Catholic friends, the National Union of Protestants, has issued a pamphlet, *Black Friday*, in which the cause of a good many of our troubles are clearly traced to their source. This source is the visit of Princess Elizabeth and her husband to the Pope last April. Among the calamities God has showered on us for this dreadful event are the loss of the “Affray,” the Persian dispute and, no doubt, the continuation of the Korean War. Perhaps also the fact that we have to put up with our individual pet aversions in Parliament.

In addition, God has kept out of Office Mr. Churchill because he visited the Vatican, “retired” Gen. MacArthur because he got a photo from the Pope, and killed off Mr. Bevin because he drank cocktails on Sunday. Even that stout-hearted defender of Christianity, Mr. Beverley Nichols, gets it in the neck because he writes for Sunday newspapers. Altogether, a delightful example of true Christianity is *Black Friday!*

Mr. Richard Stokes, the Lord Privy Seal, who has recently visited Persia on behalf of the British Government, is an eminent and devout Roman Catholic. However, we note that he scrupulously refrained from flying to the Persian capital, Teheran, upon Friday, the Muslim sabbath, for fear of arousing Persian hostility and thus endangering the financial negotiations which he was conducting with the Persian Government. “Money talks all languages” and overcomes even religious bigotry. What would the old crusaders have thought about all this fraternising with the accursed infidel?

Jehovah's Witnesses have recently been celebrating an international conference at Wembley. Many thousands of “witnesses” were present, and one of the highlights of the conference was the mass baptism of 2,000 converts by total immersion in a neighbouring pool. Quite like early Christianity when John the Baptist baptised Our Lord in a similar fashion. Indeed, it seems probable that, were Jesus and John to return to-day, they might find the primitive customs of the “witnesses” more to their liking than the more respectable and partially civilised churches. And the same goes for the old gentleman, Jehovah, himself!

In a recent announcement of a late Victorian play, “The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,” we were rather startled to hear the sleek voice of the announcer declare that the rigid social code of the period in question was dominated by the supreme prohibition, “Thou shalt not be found out.” He said it! But has not this injunction always represented the last and greatest commandment throughout nineteen centuries of Christian humbug and hypocrisy, and been, in actual practice, more important than the remaining ten commandments put together?

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. H. PARKE.—Thanks for your interesting book. As you know, we are non-political, but its subject matter is within our scope. A review will appear in due course.

J. HUMPHREY.—Your contribution will appear.

J. M. G. BULLER.—Thanks for letter. Erratum acknowledged elsewhere in this issue. Sincerest apologies.

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.

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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 PLUM

Many London readers will remember Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe who, thirty odd years ago, was a prominent member of the North London Branch of the N.S.S. Since his retirement from business, one of his "hobbies" has been poetry and, in a well-printed and produced little pamphlet, *Rhyme and Reason*, will be found some delightful examples of his work. Mr. Ratcliffe writes most interestingly and his poems are full of ideas excellently expressed, cheerful, and optimistic. Copies can be had from the author at Ormside, 13 Madeira Road, Clevedon, Somerset, for 1s.

PRIESTS, POUNDS, AND PUBLIC

ONE of my first suspicions concerning the character value of religion was aroused by realising that the gods, like so many humans, were perpetually hard up for ready cash. The suspicions grew with the knowledge that unlike their gods the major religions were fabulously rich in land, property, investments, and bank balances. Further emphasis was added by the information of god's pecuniary difficulties always reaching us second hand via the priesthood, rather an embarrassing situation for omnipotence and omniscience.

The gods manage to tot up a respectable annual score of storms, shipwrecks, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions without any call for financial help, but when it comes to solving the social and international problems obstructing the welfare and happiness of the people a shortage of funds bar the way. In seventy years the National Secular Society, with very slender financial resources, has played a bigger part in social progress than the gods could show in the span of a thousand years.

Poverty seems to be a family tradition with the gods. In this country, but for the use of public funds for church building, God would be suffering an acute housing shortage. Derelict churches, blitzed during the war, greet the eye everywhere, making a silent and pathetic appeal for charity as the only hope for restoring them as a business asset. An Act of 1818, under George III initiated the use of

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public money for the building of churches in England and £1,000,000 was allocated for that purpose. In 1824 £589,406 in addition was granted, with further sums granted at different times. Added to that the duty chargeable on materials used for church building was remitted, thus adding, by an indirect course, the burden upon the ordinary taxpayer.

The levying of compulsory local church rates was another juicy financial plum drawn from the people regardless of their religious or non-religious beliefs. A growing opposition to the ecclesiastic preying upon the people's pockets in no way deterred the church until the opposition grew too strong to be ignored. Human nature at bottom is quite sound and good, and its expression can be relied upon. It is because of that that all the rascalities past, present, and future, have to be disguised and presented as something morally sound, something to which the better side of human nature will respond and give its support. In war each side is fighting for a noble cause, against the villainy of the other side. Land grabbing abroad is represented as being for the benefit of the dispossessed, the teaching of rejected religious beliefs to school-children as undoubted truth is done under the pretence of developing moral character, and so on. The increasing opposition to ecclesiastical abuses led to a parliamentary inquiry eventually resulting in the formation of the Ecclesiastical Commission. The struggle for the abolition of compulsory church rates went on for nearly forty years. Rochdale and Manchester took the matter in hand for themselves and refused to pay the rate, and in 1868, under Gladstone a bill was passed which laid it down that "no suit shall be instituted or proceeding taken in any Ecclesiastical or other court, or before any justice or magistrate, to enforce or compel the payment of any church rate made in any parish or place in England or Wales." The bill abolished compulsory church rates, voluntary church rates were left permissible.

The clergy never lose sight of the concrete fact that God contributes nothing to the financial side of their business. Their only hope for cash supplies is the people. A people with no need for a God are a people with no need for churches and clergy, so that with God as their only asset the churches could not exist. With that clearly in mind it will be seen that the declining interest in the churches contains a real threat to church finance. Fortunately for the churches they have a number of friends on public bodies, and those who are not friends are usually dumb when church interests are under discussion. Recently the London County Council made a grant from its funds to equip a room in one of its welfare homes as a Roman Catholic chapel. The Executive of The National Secular Society took the matter up and the L.C.C. justified the grant under The National Assistance Act of 1948. The Windsor Divisional Education Executive proposes, if necessary to use public funds to transport school-children to a United Church Exhibition in September. The Execu-

tive of The National Secular Society passed a resolution of protest. The Windsor Divisional Education Executive replied they consider the church exhibition is of educational value and public funds will be used if necessary to transport the children. According to a report in the *Daily Express*, the church wardens of St. Paul's, Clapham Junction, London, have discovered that the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act of 1919, gives the Church Council the power to levy and collect a voluntary church rate. The vicar said "few churches take advantage of this power." The report goes on to say that notes demanding 2d. in the £ on rateable values were being sent to 1,000 business men. From the rate it is hoped to use £100 for a new organ and £50 to repair the boiler. The demand ranges from a few shillings from a small shop to £20 from the cinema, but so far 11s. 4d. has been received. It is only one step from a voluntary rate to a compulsory one, there is nothing half-way, besides, how does one demand a rate that is voluntary? If it is demanded it is not voluntary, and if it is voluntary it is not to be demanded, except in the case of the orderly sergeant who approached a group of soldiers demanding: "I want two volunteers, you and you." That 1,000 business men manage to subscribe 11s. 4d. between them is hardly good evidence for a revival of religion in England. But the examples quoted should come as a stern warning to all citizens as to what is happening, and will no doubt extend unless a careful watch is kept on all the agents of religion, lay as well as clerical, up and down the country, with a prompt exposure made of every case in which public funds are to be allocated for religious purposes; Free-thinkers should consider it a duty to be in the vanguard of that movement.

R. H. ROSETTI.

FACTS FOR FREETHINKERS

"Jehovah's Witnesses"

HISTORY

The "International Bible Students' Association," commonly known as "Jehovah's Witnesses," was founded in 1872 when, "a few Christian persons met together in a little house in Pennsylvania to consider the scriptures relative to the coming of Christ and His Kingdom." In 1884, a corporation was formed termed "The Zion's Watch Tower Society." In 1909, when the headquarters were moved to Brooklyn, New York, the corporation title was changed to that of "The People's Pulpit Association." To-day, the parent body in the United States is incorporated in New York and Pennsylvania as "The Watch Tower, Bible and Tract Society." Since 1893, regular conventions have been held yearly, one of the major features of which has always been the mass-baptism of converts by total immersion. At the most recent of these International Conventions, which was held at Wembley, Middlesex, at the beginning of this month, 2,000 converts were so baptised. Since 1914, the official title of its international missionary organisation is "International Bible Students' Association," which was first used in England in 1914. The title "Jehovah's Witnesses" is now also officially recognised by the organisation, but its actual origin is unknown. The name was officially adopted at an international convention in Columbus, Ohio, in 1931.

ANTECEDENTS

"Jehovah's Witnesses" represent the third distinctive American religion, its two predecessors being "The Church of Latter-Day-Saints"—commonly called "Mormons"—founded by Joseph Smith in 1830, the headquarters of

which, since July, 1848, have been in Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., and "Christian Science," founded by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy in 1866, the "Mother Church" of which is at Boston and regulates 3,000 branches of the organisation all over the world. Like its two American predecessors, "Jehovah's Witnesses" claim to be Christian in origin and inspiration and to be witnessing in an apostate world to the second coming of Jehovah and to the resulting divine theocracy.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATION

The sect was founded by "Pastor" Charles Russell, a former Congregationalist, who was its first president. Russell died on October 31, 1916, and was succeeded by the better-known "Judge" Joseph Rutherford, who remained the virtual dictator of the international movement down to his death on January 8, 1942, at the age of 72. Both Russell and Rutherford displayed tremendous activity as evangelists. It is claimed by the "Witnesses" that in an average year (1932), 22,213,639 copies of "Judge" Rutherford's published works were sold. Since the death of Rutherford, the organisation is undemocratic and rather mysterious. The supreme authority appears to be vested in a Board of twelve directors, whose headquarters are at New York. The official periodical of the "Witnesses" is "The Watch-Tower." Its circulation is unknown, as no figures—or, apparently, accounts!—are ever published, but it is said to be very great, and the organisation is said to be very rich, though its individual members are drawn mainly from the poorer and less educated classes. Since the death of its "second founder," Joseph Franklin Rutherford, no outstanding personality seems to have emerged from the movement, and no exact figures of membership are available.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

The organisation claims not only that it is Christian but, also, that it alone has preserved the original Christian Revelation intact. Official Christianity it regards as completely corrupt. One of the favourite slogans of the sect is: "Religion is a racket." This applies particularly to Roman Catholicism, which the "Witnesses" regard with a quite peculiar hatred. The central tenet of the sect is the speedy return in glory of "Jehovah God" and of Jesus Christ, as foretold in the Apocalypse. They do not accept either the Trinity, Hell, or most of the other official Christian dogmas. The "second coming" will be followed by the physical "Reign of the Saints" (identified with the "Witnesses"!) upon earth for the millenium mentioned in "Revelation."

In present-day society the "Witnesses" are uncompromising pacifists, and stubbornly refuse all forms of military service. For which reason many were executed in Hitler Germany, and imprisoned or lynched in U.S.A. and in other belligerent lands. The present disturbed state of the world is regarded as the preceding stage to the end of the world, when Jehovah will establish His Divine Theocracy, which the "Witnesses" regard as the ideal form of society. At one time they attempted to foretell the exact date of the end. Now, however, experience has taught caution. To-day, they content themselves with "Judge" Rutherford's famous slogan:—

"Millions now living will never die."

The extent of the world-wide activities of this most recent American religion is demonstrated by the fact that, prior to 1942, they claimed that over 395 million copies of their literature had been distributed.

F. A. R.

IS PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AN ILLUSION?

THE November, 1949, issue of *Psychology* featured a review of *Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion* (Pioneer Press, 5s.). Frank Kenyon has been kind enough to quote what we said in an article that appeared in the July 1 issue of *The Freethinker*.

His article very generously describes our review as "probably the most concise and unambiguous statement of the psycho-analytic position that has ever been written." This is because we referred to psycho-analysis as "a discipline whose protagonists regard adverse criticism as confirmation of their theories."

We went on to point out that the author's "scathing condemnation of Psycho-analysis and of the fundamental postulate of the psyche on which it is based is largely mis-directed against a science of which its founder, Sigmund Freud, has declared that the unbeliever is not qualified to criticise."

Earlier on in his article Frank Kenyon attempts to refute those who declare that the postulate of the psyche is not an indispensable part of psycho-analysis. He quotes a critic of a former work of his, *The Myth of the Mind*, as stating that the mind is in no way necessary to an explanation of "mental processes." Here we declare ourselves unhesitatingly on the side of the author whose work we have adversely criticised on another score.

We agree with Frank Kenyon that "the postulate of a distinct entity called the 'mind' or 'psyche' is the very foundation-stone of all psycho-analytical teaching."

Freud refers to the concept of the psyche as "a basic assumption" in psycho-analysis, although it is true that he regards mental processes as having their ultimate origin in bodily ones.

Our review of *Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion* continued: "Psycho-analysis cuts the ground from under the feet of its critics by asserting that their criticisms are determined by subjective motives of which they are unaware. Such criticisms are the outcome of the critics' resistances against their own unconscious, repressed wishes. As such they have no objective value and are to be looked upon as symptoms rather than contributions."

The above observations have prompted Frank Kenyon to ask: "If such criticisms are determined by subjective motives, by what motives are the theories of psycho-analysis determined?" This is a fair and just question that deserves an honest attempt to find an answer, and one cannot be other than grateful for the opportunity provided to suggest one.

The answer is that the theories of psycho-analysis are the result of the making conscious of previously repressed material in persons who have submitted themselves to analysis. In a sense, the theoretical structure of psycho-analysis is not the work of psycho-analysts but of their patients and of so-called "normal" people who have also been analysed.

The theories that Frank Kenyon attacks have been forced upon the psycho-analyst during the process of analysis, and, however objectionable they were, he could not shut his eyes to them without seriously jeopardising his scientific integrity and impartiality. The psycho-analyst is thus in better case than his opponent, for his theories are based on unconscious material that has been made conscious, whereas the arguments of his hostile critics are rationalisations of material that in him is still unconscious.

Frank Kenyon challenges psycho-analysis on the grounds that it seeks to invalidate rational thought. This is not entirely true; it merely calls attention to a possibility that cannot be discounted in those who have not been

converted to psycho-analysis by becoming aware of their own resistances. This is the possibility that their rational thinking is influenced by emotional factors of which they are unaware. "Freud," says Erich Fromm in *Psycho-Analysis and Religion* (Gollancz, 1951, p. 14), "showed that reason is the most valuable and the most specifically human power of man and yet is subject to the distorting effect of passions, and that only the understanding of man's passions can free his reason to function properly. He demonstrated the power as well as the weaknesses of human reason and made 'the truth shall make you free' the guiding principle of a new therapy."

The author of *Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion* deplors the fact that psycho-analysis equates what he calls "normal" human conduct with that of the child, the savage and the neurotic. In the first place, one must dispose of the view that there is such a thing as a "normal" human being. So-called normal people differ only in degree from those who are recognised as abnormal. Moreover, since Freud first carried out his investigations many so-called normal people have been submitted to analysis. The results of these analyses fully confirm the view that the difference between normality and abnormality is one of degree, not of kind. We are therefore fully justified in equating the alleged normal with the neurotic.

This is in fact a point at which psycho-analysis enjoys a great superiority over other systems of psychology. It has devised concepts which, by emphasising the psychic phenomena common to the child and the adult, to the primitive savage and the civilised savage, to what has been called the "normopath" and the neurotic, have extended the over-all picture of mental life and functioning, and consequently have to a very great extent enlarged our conception of the mind and intensified the value of psychology.

The article to which we are here replying then goes on to speak of "the present-day deterioration in social and international conditions." This is a state of affairs that cannot be laid at the door of psycho-analysis. In the interests of scientific truth psycho-analysis merely exposes what it finds in man. If man is rotten, that is the fault of man, not of psycho-analysis. If, as Frank Kenyon puts it, "the most normal among us hate our fathers, have incestuous desires towards our mothers, and wish our brothers and sisters to die," let him blame not psycho-

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S., Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street (off New Street).—Sunday, August 26, 7 p.m.: TOM MILLINGTON, "Doctors and Parsons."

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.: F. A. RIDLEY.

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

Also Lectures at Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m.; Alexandra Park Gates, Wednesday, 8 p.m.; St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site, Sunday, 8 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY and W. G. FRASER.

Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): J. M. ALEXANDER, W. G. FRASER and J. CALVERLEY. Friday Evening, August 24, 8 p.m. (South Hill Park): J. M. ALEXANDER and F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, August 25, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

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

South London and Lewisham Branch (Brockwell Park).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

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

analysis, but the men and women from the murky depths of whose minds these disclosures have emerged.

Frank Kenyon further berates psycho-analysis on the score of its terminology. This for him is "high-sounding and ambiguous." If psycho-analytical terminology is "high-sounding," then so is the everyday speech from which it has in part been drawn. Words like resistance, complex, repressed, censor, etc., were current in ordinary speech before psycho-analysis took them over and employed them in a special sense which it is careful to define in every case in order to avoid ambiguity.

The careful and unambiguous definitions which psycho-analytical terminology receives have made it possible for the editors of *Freud: Dictionary of Psycho-Analysis* (Philosophical Library, 1950) to compile from the writings of the founder of psycho-analysis a complete glossary of all the basic terminology precisely defined and explained.

The use of Greek and Latin words to express the simplest ideas which Frank Kenyon condemns, is a charge with some substance. It is true that psycho-analysis uses such words. For example, its topography and dynamics of the mind are almost exclusively Latin. e.g., ego, super-ego, id, libido, etc. But this usage can be justified on the grounds that it is common practice in science, the universal language of which was Latin at one time. Even Mr. Kenyon is not averse to a latinised vocabulary when it serves its purpose, as the following quotation from *Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion* will show:—

"A sensation is a physiological impression having a conscious accompaniment at the time of its occurrence. The physiological impression leaves a physiological trace, the subsequent stimulation of which again gives rise to a conscious accompaniment similar to that of the original impression" (p. 98).

A good deal of opposition with which psycho-analysis meets is due to the fact that it has committed the unpardonable sin of disturbing people's comfortable illusions. For example, it showed that dreams were highly meaningful, whereas people had been led to think that they were of no real consequence. It traced religion to its infantile roots, deriving the adult's need for a Heavenly Father from the child's attitude towards his earthly father. It widened the concept of sexuality so as to include the pre-genital and extra-genital activities. Freud writes: "A great part of the opposition to my theories is explained by the fact that the sexuality from which I deduce psycho-neurotic symptoms is thought of as coincident with the normal sexual instinct" (*Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex I.*) "Sexual life comprises the function of obtaining pleasure from zones of the body—a function which is subsequently brought into the service of that of reproduction" (*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, ch. III). "It is necessary to distinguish sharply between the concepts of 'sexual' and 'genital.' The former is the wider concept and includes many activities that have nothing to do with the genitals" (*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, ch. III).

Moreover, the psycho-analytic theory of sex antedated the onset of sexuality from puberty to the beginning of life. It shook the belief that sexuality is foreign to the young child. Up to 1900, people believed that sexuality made its appearance only at puberty, whereas Freud demonstrated that its most important phase occurs before the age of five. The myth of the innocence of childhood has been exploded.

Finally, we quote Samuel J. Beck, who refers to " . . . Freud, with his painstaking research into recesses of the human psyche, where prior to him so few had even dared to look. What his influence on psychology will be has as yet not even begun to be measured. He turned the lights full on our emotional life and on the role it plays in the whole personality pattern. The consequence to the sciences concerned with human nature, both systematic and psycho-therapeutic, was that he started psychology on the way toward studying the whole individual."

GEOFFREY A. DUDLEY, B.A.

THEATRE

"HIS HOUSE IN ORDER" by Arthur W. Pinero (New Theatre).

ONE point of interest in reviving a play that is about half a century old, is that we who are not so young as we were can look back and take stock of the advancements made and—in some cases—the retrogressions.

The play would be more convincing if the character of Filmer Jesson were better drawn, but even in the capable hands of Sebastian Shaw he does not come to life. For how could any man loving his wife allow her to be humiliated by his first wife's family and allowing them to run his household. But Nina, his wife, is a spirited person and inwardly rebels against the lordly and contemptful attitude of the Ridgeleys, who can never forget that she was formerly the governess for Filmer's son by his first wife.

Matters reach a head when Filmer is about to open a park to perpetuate his first wife's memory, at which Nina is expected to be present appropriately and somberly dressed in grey. But she openly protests and seizes her opportunity to show her contempt of the Ridgeleys' behaviour towards her by appearing in dazzling pink, and resolved not to join them. So the party sets off and Nina is left with the boy who produces a handbag that had once belonged to his mother and which he was unable to open. Nina opens it and (how contrived this is!) finds letters from an army major that prove that Filmer is not the father of his first wife's child.

Filmer might never have learned about the letters had he not expressed to his brother, Hilary, his dissatisfaction with Nina and her shortcomings. Hilary, who knows he has pledged Nina to silence cannot stand this and shows him the letters. For the first time Filmer becomes almost human, decides to give Nina first place in his household, and makes known his intentions to the Ridgeleys. This is Nina's great and unexpected victory, and so the curtain comes down and leaves us all happy at the thought that these hypocritical, conventional, and tradition-loving bunch of weeds had received a just rebuff.

There is some notable acting by Wynne Clark as a very matriarchal Lady Ridgeley and George Merritt as Sir Daniel Ridgeley. But I would select Mary Kerridge's performance as number one for the light and shade she gives to her part, helping us to feel so vividly the suppressed feelings that were hers. Following close behind her is Brian Oulton as Pryce Ridgeley, who is the weed of tradition and so fond of Playing Cricket provided the game fits in with the Ridgeleys' pattern of life.

There is a long gap between those days and these, for we would have to go far indeed to find a Ridgeley family to-day. That some still exist I have no doubts.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.