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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

More Light on English Religion

SOME weeks ago, we turned our attention in this column to contemporary statistics of religion in England, using as our basis the luminous (and voluminous!) pages of Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers in their recent investigation of *English Life and Leisure*. Since then, another English sociologist has turned his attention to the same important theme. In a series of articles appearing in our Sunday contemporary, *The People*, Mr. Geoffrey Gorer is, at present, writing upon various aspects of the current English scene. Under the perhaps deliberately startling title "The English are no longer a nation of practising Christians," Mr. Gorer presented his conclusions upon contemporary English religion in the issue of September 16 last. We may add that Mr. Geoffrey Gorer is a social historian and anthropologist of considerable standing and the author of works on Africa and other backward areas. Having spent some years investigating the primitive African races, he now turns his attention to the English people, many of whom, at least according to his findings, appear to live in a mental atmosphere not notably different from that of "Darkest Africa." The fortune-tellers of the Sunday press (including *The People* in which his report appears) occupying fundamentally the same social role as their professional colleagues, the witch-doctors of the Congo, casting their spells beneath the African moon.

In general, Mr. Gorer's figures, as, also, his general conclusions confirm those of Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers in *English Life and Leisure*. The statistical discrepancies are only incidental. According to Mr. Gorer, one English man out of every four and one woman out of every five neither professes any religious belief at all nor describes himself or herself as, in any sense, attached to any kind of religious denomination. As for the nominally religious remainder, "the Gorer report" (as *The People* terms it) declares:—

"For, taking all sects together, only six out of a hundred are fervent churchgoers attending more than one religious service a week; a further nine go to church once very Sunday, and about the same number go fairly often—but not quite every week."

That is, in round figures, rather less than 20 per cent. attend *any* place of religious worship at all; a substantial percentage of which do not attend regularly. This gives us an approximately similar figure to the 13 per cent. of regular churchgoers arrived at by Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers.

In his estimate of the varying incidence of distribution amongst the different Christian denominations, Mr. Gorer's analysis confirms in general the picture drawn by his sociological predecessors. The general overall scene in contemporary English Christianity indicates Anglicanism as bearing the brunt of the current disintegration of Christian belief; with Nonconformity also in a state of decline; and with Roman Catholicism still putting up a

stiff resistance. According to our author, the position of what is still ironically called "The Church of England" is—in his own words—"frankly appalling, just one in ten is a regular Churchgoer. Four times that number never enter a Church at all for purposes of worship," and this is still our "national" Church, half of whose members never darken its doors from one year's end to the other!

The current decay of what we may term personal religion keeps pace with its corporate disintegration. Our author is explicit on this point. He tells us:—

"Taking all the denominations together, a mere one in ten says prayers more than once a day, and only three in ten daily. One man out of five and one woman out of twenty never say any prayers at all; and the remaining two-fifths only pray very seldom in peril or grief."

Thus, it is not only that a large part of the English nation has parted company with Christianity altogether, even *inside* the nominal membership of the Churches a dry-rot continues. Here again, we are told that it is amongst Roman Catholics and some small sects such as "Jehovah's Witnesses," that one finds, to-day, the largest number of practising Christians.

The "dry rot" depicted above extends also to both doctrine and the observance of religious holy days. This applies, again, both to complete sceptics and to nominal Christians: we learn that, "only half of all English men and women state definitely that they believe in a future life. Of the remainder, a fifth do not believe in any after-life and the remainder are uncertain." We are expressly told that "the belief in Hell has almost completely disappeared." (Amongst Roman Catholics? If so, then that Church too, so long cemented by Hell Fire, must also be on the way out!)

One observation of Mr. Gorer will be of particular interest to the "Lord's Day Observance Society."

"Those people and societies seeking to prevent—usually with success—any relaxation of the laws maintaining Sunday as exclusively a day of worship are in a small minority." This, at least, is not "news" to the readers of *The Freethinker*!

However, perhaps the most important as well as most interesting section of Mr. Gorer's analysis of contemporary English religion is contained in his remarks about the startling growth of current non-Christian superstitions, a field unaccountably neglected by Messrs. Rowntree and Lavers. For, unfortunately, not all those who reject or neglect Christianity can be termed rationalists or, still less, freethinkers. If Christianity is dying, pre-Christian pagan cults are still far from dead. One in six Englishmen believes in ghosts, and one in fourteen has actually seen one! Whilst one in every eight believes in some form of reincarnation, either in this world or in another planet—where, presumably, the *Interplanetary Society* will find them if and when it succeeds in its present ambitious design of exploring the solar system. In the present writer's experience most theosophists and kindred be-

lievers in reincarnation are well-to-do old women—of both sexes—who think that they are far too important ever to vanish completely from the Universe. Hence they must continue their suburban existence in some other sphere: from Kensington to the planet Mars!

The overall picture that nine out of ten people read their horoscopes; one in seven have their fortune told which emerges from Mr. Gorer's sociological survey is, one of the end of an epoch, of religious disintegration and of concurrent cultural decay. It is a picture familiar to the readers of Gibbon, Cumont, and Burckhardt, where these great historians paint with a master's brush the decline of the ancient pagan culture of the Roman Empire into a welter of competing superstitions. Christianity eventually succeeded that world. What will succeed ours? Whoever could answer that question could tell us a great deal about the future evolution of Humanity in general.

F. A. RIDLEY.

OPEN LETTER TO FRED HOYLE

DEAR MR. HOYLE.—My excuse for having the effrontery to attempt a few comments on your book "The Nature of the Universe" is that I, like you, have been fascinated by the study of astronomy for many years.

In discussing the origin of the lunar craters, and the possibility of their having been caused by bombardment from meteorites, I was gratified you pointed out in the notes at the end of your book that it is no argument against the bombardment theory that many missiles must have struck the lunar surface at oblique angles, because in any case the crater would be circular. I agree this is so. How, then, were the elliptical and polygonal areas on the moon formed on the bombardment theory? In dismissing an alternative theory that the lunar craters might have been volcanic in origin, you make the rather strange remark . . . "Besides, volcanic activity on the moon is quite negligible *at the present time* . . ." (Italics mine). But how about the *remote past* when the craters were formed?

There have been so many theories put forward to account for the origin of the solar system that I was particularly interested to read what you had to say on this problem. Alas! I was disappointed to find your theory suffers from the same weakness that do most others, namely, ignoring the origin of comets, which are as much members of the solar system as are the planets. As it has always proved an almost insuperable difficulty to explain the origin of comets, especially as their orbits are inclined at all angles, and (unlike the planets) the cometary paths round the sun are both direct and retrograde. So one finds most theorists just ignore these bodies, like you do, Mr. Hoyle. No theory of the origin of the solar system which ignores comets can be considered satisfactory. But you write as though all was decided—"It was out of such a holocaust that the earth and planets were born"—and "this is the sort of thing that happened to the parent of our planets;" and "it happened in this way" (slightly reminiscent of Matthew's "It was on this wise . . ."). But what about the parent of the *comets*, Mr. Hoyle?

In telling us that Lyttleton took up the problem of the origin of the solar system about fifteen years ago, you do not mention that his theory never received general acceptance because he altered it so considerably, and introduced too many speculative assumptions. One must also note that Lyttleton himself endorsed the views of

cosmogonists by pointing out that no exactness can be attained in this problem. The truth is that there is no generally accepted theory as to the "parent" of our earth, planets, satellites, and comets.

You say that certain discrepancies between theory and observation of the chemical composition of the material composing the sun and stars has resulted in the adoption of the larger percentage of over 90 of hydrogen instead of the formerly accepted 35 per cent. But as some eminent physicists still cling to the lower value, would it not be more correct to say that at present the question is merely under consideration, although the higher value will most probably be accepted?

A few words on this "continuous creation" idea. My brain is so made that I find your statement on p. 105 that "the created material doesn't come from anywhere, but simply appears" is simply incomprehensible. You say it "is queer," I say it is incomprehensible. We seem to be back at the beginning of Genesis! Neither, to my brain, does "continuous" creation seem less incomprehensible than "instantaneous," although you admit the latter to be "very much queerer." You point out that although "hydrogen is being steadily converted into helium and the other elements throughout the universe, and this conversion is a one-way process," yet the universe consists almost entirely of hydrogen. Well, Mr. Hoyle, in my ignorance I make bold to ask: "Are you *absolutely certain* that out in the depths of space the reverse process does not go on? Is there any *à priori* reason why there may not be an eternal rejuvenescence? Is it possible that the second law of dynamics has not a universal application? Is it not a fact that there are hidden forces unsuspected in the depths of space—forces which may prove the increase of entropy wrong?"

I remember Jeans telling us that the centres of the nebulae may be "singular points" at which matter is poured into our universe from some other and entirely extraneous spatial dimension so that, to a denizen of our universe, they appear as points at which matter is being continually created. Now this, to me, is at least more mentally satisfying than the notion that the created matter comes from nowhere. And if we could show that rejuvenescence was not absolutely ruled out, then we have done what you say cannot be done—"dodged the creation issue."

You blame the materialists for taking the universe "for granted." If you mean by this, "accepting as a fact," the obvious rejoinder is that as the universe IS a fact, what else can the materialists do but take it for granted? You go on to say that there is "a great deal more about the universe that I should like to know." So would the materialists or anyone else with a healthy curiosity. But when you ask: "Why is the universe as it is and not something else?" it seems to me that such a question could be put *whatever* the universe was. Really, Mr. Hoyle?—Yours sincerely,

RUBY TA'BOIS, F.R.A.S.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS—A REJOINDER

I WAS very pleased to see the commentary by Mr. Bayard Simmons on my recent "Brief Encounter" with Mr. Geoffrey Dudley, a champion of psycho-analysis. Mr. Simmons refers to my expressed satisfaction at having gained from Mr. Dudley the admission that psycho-analysis is founded on the postulate of an immaterial entity, and to the fact that I regard such an admission as no small triumph. To avoid any misunderstanding I

should like here to state that, though I regard this admission as a triumph, I do not regard it as a personal triumph, due to any superior polemical acumen, but as a triumph for that materialistic philosophy of Life and Mind which I feel to be true. Mr. Simmons states that he, too, feels that I have made my point, and that he would be the last to begrudge me my expressed satisfaction. "But," say he, "as the dust of battle settles" he cannot refrain from asking, "So What?" I hope that what follows will provide the answer.

I think there would be very little difference of opinion between Mr. Bayard Simmons and myself if we were both agreed as to the meaning of the word *Entity*. Mr. Simmons tells us that, on looking up the word in Murray's *New English Dictionary*, he encountered this significant note: "The original sense was abstract, but, in accordance with the usual tendency with such words, it early acquired a concrete sense." But I fail to see the significance of the original sense in the present connection. Many words change their meaning with the passage of time. The word "knave" originally meant "boy" but we could not on this account declare every rogue we met to be a boy!

The thing to decide is the sense in which the word *Entity* is used and understood to-day. I refer Mr. Simmons to his own authority, *The New English Dictionary*, which tells us quite plainly that the word early acquired a "concrete" sense, and it is in this sense that the word is in general use to-day. The matter will appear in a clearer light if for "entity" we substitute the corresponding native word "being." "Entity" is "being" and "an entity" is "a being." I cite the authority of Fowler (in *Modern English Usage*): "The first or abstract sense is comparatively rare; *entity* is better than *nonentity* means the same as *it is better to be than not to be*. In the second or concrete sense, *an entity* differs only so far from *a being* that the latter as used by others than philosophers has come to exclude, while *entity* includes any non-sentient or impersonal but actually existing thing." If the "mind" is a distinct entity, as Mr. Dudley asserts, then at least it must be a *thing*, a noun and not a verb. But, unlike all other *things*, which have a material existence, it is claimed that this *thing* has an immaterial existence, a conception which, to me at least, appears to be a contradiction in terms. How did such a conception arise?

In the early stages of the dualistic belief in body and soul the latter was considered to be as substantial as the body to which it belonged. In those days the *soul* was a *thing* indeed. When primitive man dreamt that he had been to a distant place and was assured on waking that he had never moved he could only conclude that he had two individualities, one of which could leave the other and come back again. When he saw his reflection in the water, imitating his movements and facial expressions, he believed he was looking upon his other self—his soul. When he observed his shadow following him wherever he went he again saw his soul in a less substantial form. The multiplication of such experiences led, in the course of time, to various modifications in the conception of the soul. It gradually became more and more attenuated until at length it was reduced to a shadowy, aeriform, or etherial duplicate of the body.

The ancient Greeks looked upon the breath as the soul, which animated the body during life, and departed with the final expiration at the time of death. On its departure the soul assumed the form of the body it had left

behind. Most of the early Fathers adopted the notion of the soul as refined matter. Under the influence of the Platonic philosophy this matter became more and more refined, and so different from the substance of the body, that eventually its original meaning came to be reversed. The material soul became an immaterial entity which, however, continued to influence the body in much the same way as it was supposed to have done in its more substantial form. It was not until the time of Descartes that its functions became limited to thought alone. It was at this time also that what had formerly been referred to as the "soul" became more generally known as "The Mind."

The old belief in an animating principle distinct from the body is with us still, and in its present form is far more illogical than when it was originally held by primitive man. It is this belief that Mr. Dudley has admitted to be the very foundation-stone of all psycho-analytical teaching. It is true that Mr. Simmons does not subscribe to this belief, but he seeks to lend it his support by giving to the word "entity" its obsolete meaning, and using the word "mind" in a sense which runs counter to all psycho-analytical teaching. To the psycho-analyst the "mind" is not a "force;" it is a *thing*—a noun and not a verb.

The only sense in which I can consistently use the word "mind" is in that given it by Aristotle, in his *De Anima*, over 2,000 years ago. Aristotle regarded "life" as a *general* form of organic activity, and "mind" as one of the *special* forms of that activity developed in the later evolutionary stages. He considered both life and mind to be nothing other than *functions* of the material organism, distinguished as "vital" and "mental" respectively, the one relating to the vegetative processes of the body, the other to those of thought and feeling. Consequently, Mr. Simmons and I are standing on different ground when he refers to the mind as an "entity," a *concept*, which co-exists with the brain and is produced by the brain, as though brain and mind could exist apart instead of being, as they are, but two aspects of one reality. Again, in his reference to the "Shove-Ha'penny Board," he speaks of "force" making use of the substance of the brain. This seems to imply that "force" is an entity, in its modern sense, that roams about seeking an instrument for its manifestation.

The electrician to which Mr. Simmons refers may not know what electricity is. But he knows that it is there, and can very easily convince others that it is there. Moreover, he knows how to control it with scientific precision. Can we say the same of the psycho-analyst with his mere postulate of an immaterial entity which he calls "The Mind?" If we are to encourage the psycho-analysts on such pragmatistical grounds as Mr. Simmons suggests then I see no reason whatever why similar encouragement should not be given to Christian Science, the touching of relics, and the laying-on of hands, each of which can point to successes quite as remarkable as any that have been brought about by the hocus-pocus of psycho-analysis.

FRANK KENYON.

[This controversy must now cease—EDITOR.]

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY. By F. A. Ridley.
Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST. By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

ACID DROPS

After the Sugar Robinson v. Turpin sensation comes a bold challenge from Australia. According to the Bible, sparrows enjoy the ever protecting care of God, but the Brisbane Pest Destruction Board has raised the price from 2d. to 3d. for each dead sparrow. Now that is a direct and provocative challenge to Providence, and if the Bible is true there can only be one result; but although gambling is not in our line we would not mind a little flutter on the men with guns.

"You want the best seats? We have them." Apparently this familiar slogan of the tourist trade also holds good in Heaven. For we learn from a correspondent in the Press that a priest was recently arrested in Bessarabia for selling "seats in Heaven" to credulous peasants who, in some cases, sold their best cow to make sure of a good seat. "The priest," we learn, "kept a 'map of heaven' on his desk, showing numbered seats like those in a theatre plan. Places next to God cost double the usual fee."

Most of our older readers will, we are sure, remember the ineffable Dr. A. F. Winnington-Ingram, formerly Bishop of London. We recently came across the following pleasant anecdote concerning his now defunct lordship: like St. Paul, Dr. Ingram set out to be "all things to all men." On one occasion, he was pontificating at a London church noted for its extremely ritualistic character. To fall in with the prevailing atmosphere, the Bishop arrived duly attired in resplendent scarlet vestments. The local vicar, however, was not impressed, "your lordship," he remarked sharply, "had better go to the vestry and put on the proper vestments for a Bishop, only Cardinals are entitled to wear red."

General Elections appear to be the rule just now. One has just been held in what is, probably, Europe's smallest state, the tiny but independent republic of St. Marino in Northern Italy. In this Liliputian state the anti-clerical Communist bloc won 31 seats against 29 of the Catholic Conservative bloc. Is this a pointer to the eventual result of the next General Election in neighbouring Italy? If so, the inmates of the Vatican had better begin to pack their bags and to look for "alternative accommodation."

We hope that politically minded secularists will make their prospective M.P.'s—of all parties—realise that there is a strong and growing body of opinion in this country which objects to the grossly undemocratic position of privilege that all Governments show to what is, after all, a minority of religious believers. Politicians are solely concerned with votes and are completely cynical about where they will be after death, always provided that they will be on the Government Benches after the General Election.

We are always pleased to learn from someone not an Atheist what Atheism does. In a recent number of the *Inquirer*, we are blandly told, just as if it were true, that one of the results of "the Atheism that mistakes the systems of religion for religion itself" is "that men are destroyed in their manhood." It is true that we have never been able to disassociate religion from systems of religion for they all appear to be based on nonsense, some a little more than others. But we confess we have never come across an Atheist whose manhood is destroyed because of this. And

we are quite sure the writer himself has not either. Could he give us some names? —

The "Inquirer" goes on to particularise. It appears that such an Atheist "is expected to act blindly without knowledge of what he is doing. . . . The censor tells him what to think and how he is to think it." There is a lot more of similar balderdash, and it seems incredible that the writer really believes such unmitigated nonsense. However, he does tell us what is the *practical* use of religion. And the answer is: "That there is a God"! Good God!

In an article recently published in the *Daily Graphic* entitled, "They seek for truth," the Bishop of Bristol, the Right Rev. F. A. Cockin—it may be remembered that he once gave a series of broadcasts between a Christian and an unbeliever taking care to write both sides himself—claims that he has found hundreds of men and women attending colleges in Bristol and Oxford ready to hear "a straight presentation of the Christian faith." They wanted to *know* whether God, Jesus Christ, prayer, and eternal life "really make sense?" Not only that—but "does this Christian faith work?" The Bishop does *not* give an answer. All he says is that these young people "are immensely worth trying to help." And we can hardly believe that such a distinguished infidel slayer has failed as miserably as that.

Many of us marvel at the way in which our parsons and priests know exactly what God has planned. Writing in the *Birmingham Gazette*, for example, the Rev. Dr. Edwards has discovered that man at last is beginning to see he can't do without God, that our materialistic scientific age is exploiting man's technical ability "in the service of death." The "horror" of the atomic bomb is all due to trying to do without God. Once we go to him for guidance, once we learn our dependence on him and realise redemption is God's act—then all will be well. "God has planned it so." In the old days it used to be the fires of Hell which frightened man. Now it is the threat of the atom bomb unless we all grovel to God. The way parsons can get away with this kind of twaddle is astonishing. And some of them are really intelligent men!

A correspondent of the *Evening Standard* delivers himself of the following weighty reflection: "If the middle ages had waited till everyone was comfortably housed before building 'to the glory of God' we should have no cathedrals at all." So up with cathedrals and let the slums remain—also "to the glory of God."

She was the best pupil in her class at Sunday School, 12 years of age, with hair neatly done up in pigtails. At Ascot Juvenile Court she was accused of stealing £9 and put on probation. Quite a promising Christian when she is older!

"Almighty God is our leader," said Dr. Mossadeg, addressing a crowd of Persians on the oil dispute. Under the auspices of religion, it should have been glorious news but it made Dr. Mossadeg stagger and appear to be fainting. He was revived by a glass of mundane cold water, and then he shed tears with sobs of emotion. We sympathise with Dr. Mossadeg in his distress, to him the outlook must appear black, but had he been a Freethinker, the suggestion of God as their leader would have left him with a broad grin and a clear mind for examining ways and means for a satisfactory settlement of the oil question.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

- C. R. ENGLISH.—Regret we cannot indulge in personalities.
W. E. NICHOLSON.—*The Freethinker* has always been open to "unpopular" opinions.
MARY BEASLEY.—We are sorry we cannot publish very long articles. Why not try one, with a good idea, a column in length?
E. EBURY.—Your article will duly appear.
THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 19s. 2d.; half-year, 9s. 7d.; three months, 4s. 11d.
Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.
Will correspondents 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.
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.
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).

SUGAR PLUMS

During the last few weeks the Editor has received several letters protesting against an article which appeared recently in the columns of this journal. We must point out to our readers that, in giving free expression to unpopular minority opinions, we are carrying on the honourable tradition which *The Freethinker* was founded in order to establish and which it has retained unbroken during its seventy years' existence. Naturally, nothing would be easier or, perhaps, more profitable than to publish only temporarily popular majority opinions. No doubt if we did so, we might attain the circulation of the "yellow" Press—as, also, its intellectual level. But, in so doing, this journal would cease to deserve its name or be the unique journal that it has been since its foundation. The present editor proposes to carry on to the best of his ability the great tradition bequeathed to him by his distinguished predecessors. We would remind our readers that only Freedom permits the appearance of Truth and that only Time can prove it.

The ever-resourceful North London Branch has once more proved itself capable of surmounting all obstacles. Last Sunday (16th) rain forced us all to take refuge in a passage at the rear of Highbury Tube Station. Finding ourselves in company with the protagonists of Catholic Truth and a ready made audience, a debate on the existence of God was promptly arranged between Mr. Ebury and a charming, talented young lady speaker from the Catholic Truth Society. The first debate came to a successful conclusion, but alas, the stentorian voice of Mr. Calverley awakened the station official and a second debate was brought to a summary close.

From 1952 to 1954 inclusive, Manchester clergy will stage a vast campaign in all parishes of Manchester to

The Freethinker Fund

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To find space for the numerous articles awaiting publication we shall acknowledge all contributions by post instead of printing lists.

is now open

re-establish a Christian purpose in peoples' lives and draw them into the fellowship of the Church. We suggest the campaign opens with the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society as the first objective, although we feel fairly certain that the campaign warriors will leave the Manchester Branch N.S.S. severely alone.

The Bradford Branch N.S.S. with Mr. J. T. Brighton, M.B.E. as the speaker should have a good send-off for its indoor session in the Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, to-day (October 7). "Mediums and Mistakes," the subject of Mr. Brighton's lecture should bring the local spiritualists in force and others interested in wit, humour, and good sense. Admission is free and the lecture begins at 6-45 p.m.

On Sunday evening, October 14, the Manchester Branch N.S.S. will open its indoor season with a lecture in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the speaker and the subject, "What is Civilisation?" provides a very wide scope for thought, questions, and discussion. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. and admission is free. The Manchester Branch has served local Free-thought long, faithfully and well and in return it asks those who are in sympathy with its work to give their support and encouragement during the winter.

The Nottingham Branch N.S.S. has shown what can be done by prompt and energetic action. The Branch took the local initiative in exposing transactions for the sale of sites for building churches in Nottingham. A resolution before the City Council to refund £2,000, out of £2,420 paid by the Roman Catholic Church for a site two years ago, was turned down on the ground that the Council had no power to refund any part of the purchase money. Congratulations to the Nottingham Branch N.S.S. for their help, and for the lesson to Freethinkers in other parts of the country.

APOLOGY

The Editor tenders, herewith, his sincere apologies to the South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. for an unfortunate error in last week's lecture notices. It was there inadvertently stated that the lecture by Mr. J. Wedgwood upon September 30 under the auspices of this branch, was in Brockwell Park and, as such, was included in the list of outdoor meetings. The lecture in question was actually an indoor lecture held at the London and Brighton Hotel, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E. All future meetings held during the winter months by the South London and Lewisham Branch will be held at the above address, beginning on Sunday, October 14 at 7-30 p.m., when Mr. George Jackson, a member of the Communist Party, will speak on *Communism and Freedom*.

WHERE IS THAT GOD?

RECENTLY *Reynolds News* published a series of questions regarding the Jews. Granted that the "silly season" for most newspapers is now all the year round, the article displayed an attitude to the Jews that reminds me of Hitler and one can only wonder at the mentality of the person responsible for this rubbish.

However, the statement was again made that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ and since all the Christians throughout the world believe in this legend and it is accepted as Historical, the article is a challenge to all Freethinkers.

Brought up in the State Church, I left it at the age of seventeen convinced, through reading Blatchford's *God and my Neighbour*, that the God idea itself was a myth and later readings (and opposition ones, too) simply confirm this view.

Whatever may be the opinions of people with regard to the origin of the myth of God and gods, there should be no disputing of the fact that it is a myth. Granted that people felt the want of some "mental crutch" in the struggle for life, that nature in the raw was merciless to the weak, that the natural elements such as volcanoes, lightning, fire and earthquake, to say nothing of the ravagings of disease and the terror of floods were frightening, yet these things belong to the childhood of the human race.

Just as children are interested in "Sinbad the Sailor" and other fairy stories with their impossibilities but later shed these childish fancies, so humanity has outgrown the primitive ideas of a fantastic human being without "body, parts or passions" but simply a Mind, whose particular task it was to create and run the Universe and also to look after the wants and desires of all those who were foolish enough to believe in such imbecility.

The fact that the majority of people accept the religion of the country in which they are born is no excuse for those organised bodies whose duty it is to force these ideas on us without regard to their truth. The fact of so many religions is no proof of the religious idea being correct. On the other hand all may be wrong and the minority, who do not believe in a God, are most likely to be right.

Quite a number of people who ought to know better try to evade the problem of "God" or "No God" by printing the name Providence, or Presence, with a capital letter, just as if this implied that although they are not certain about the Almighty (another capital) there is some Influence in the universe which must receive recognition. In a conversation with a Christian some time ago he even had the cheek to refer to Electricity as a Force which was a manifestation of the Supernatural, which I countered by pointing out that it would be rather absurd to compose a prayer addressed to an Ohm, Volt or Watt. It will be seen that although this person was hazy about his God (he was a Dissenter) he still clung to the idea and sought every subterfuge in order to clothe it in some material manifestation.

From the stately services in our Cathedrals right down to the Salvation Army and the cranks waiting for table rapping all appear to be convinced they are in touch with some Power and as long as this exists they will be the easy prey of the politicians who must cheer to hear them sing, "O God, our help in ages past," etc.

Simple as it may appear, therefore, the statement that the Jews were responsible for the death of the Christian God (or His Son since the Christians believe in the Trinity—three in one and one in three) two thousand years ago is fraught with danger. The Hitler model has not been forgotten, nor have other Nazi ideas for that matter and

here again we see Religion lined up continuously with reaction.

In any case, and taking the Christian myth at its face value, the Son had to be born under exceptional circumstances perhaps too vulgar to be referred to in polite society and it was part of the "Divine Plan" that Judas should act the quisling. The "saving" of the peoples of the world who believed has been the business of the Churches since, which has also involved the damnation of those who do not believe this tommyrot, and to carry on the age-long struggle we have no alternative but to point out continuously that the idea of a god is absurd and to that extent break, at one single stroke, the hypnotism of all those whose beliefs, of whatever religion, are based on this idea.

As the French savant said once upon a time, "I have no need for that hypothesis."

T. D. SMITH.

"THE MAN IN THE MOON?"

AT school, we were taught that the word LUNATIC, meaning a mad or foolish person, is derived from the Latin word LUNA, the Moon. These and similar words are frequently used as evidences to support "divine truths" of the holy Gospel, especially the origin and creation of the Heavenly Bodies, according to "Genesis," and supported by some modern astronomers, as scientific facts. These items and the recent article in *The Freethinker*, "The Greatest of All Astronomers," by Ruby Ta'Bois, remind me of lectures during training to qualify for the Schoolmaster's Certificate, under the Board of Education.

Students were taught that modern astronomy supports the creation of Sun, Moon and Stars by God Almighty, and when the query was offered about all the Universe being made in six days, Canon Reynolds replied: "Ah! but those biblical days were not like our days, but long-whiles."

We could not argue with the Canon during lectures, but in the common room the creation story was smashed when a reminder was given of the "Commandments": "For in Six Days the Lord created the Heavens and the Earth, and rested on the seventh day, which is our Sabbath of twenty-four hours."

Then came the teaching, during Natural Science lectures, that Life, as we know it, is possible in Heaven, to support the scriptural doctrine "life everlasting," because it is known and proved by certain astronomical data that conditions for life, such as air and water, exist on the planet Mars, a wonderful discovery in 1882 by the eminent Italian astronomer, Schiaparelli, Director of the Milan Observatory, who discovered and gave to science the extraordinary knowledge of "CANALS," thousands of miles long, flowing over the surface of MARS!

Now, these "Schiaparelli Canals," are lunacy, moonshine; for they are not "proved," and Sir Robert Ball, D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S., Professor of Astronomy, Cambridge University, with his confreres, states the "CANALS" are mere shadowy streaks, totally unlike canals known in geography. Therefore, no canals, no water, no atmosphere, no life, no Martians.

Now, here is the scientist-astronomer, Gavril Tikhov, with his new creation, "Astro-biology," published by the Academy of Scientists, Kazakhstan, asserting that vegetable and animal life exist on the planets Venus and Mars. The Professor makes an ideal pair for his mythological biology by connecting Venus with Mars.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

CORRESPONDENCE

IRRELIGIOUS ETHICS

SIR,—Some months ago the editor of *The Freethinker* raised the question "Should Ethics supplant Religion?" The review of Robert Lewis Taylor's "*W. C. Fields', His Follies and Fortunes*," raises another similar question, "Should Secularism supplant Ethics?" We are told with glee how Fields, not receiving his fee when he asked for it, stole the property of some 30 innocent people, sold it, and so received just four times his agreed fee.

A religious officer who betrays his religion is admittedly a sad sight, but a secular ethicist who finds robbery funny is a sadder.—Yours, etc.,

ROBERT H. CORRICK.

ACID DROPS

SIR,—I am in complete agreement with Mr. J. Effel. "Acid Drops" is one of the most valuable features of *The Freethinker*. Not only should it be retained, but it should be extended.—Yours, etc.,

EDWIN BURGESS.

CRITICISM

SIR,—All your readers must have been pleased to learn of the marked falling off in attendance at all places of religious worship in England referred to in your review of Mr. Rowntree's new book on September 9.

In country districts like this we have every type of cranky religious sect imaginable—all run locally or in some nearby town on a profitable commercial footing.

It reminds me of Buckfast Abbey, so much visited by tourists to Dartmoor. The R.C. Church subsidise all charabanc owners for miles around to go that way and stay 45 minutes and still make a handsome profit, mainly from Protestant sightseers!—Yours, etc.,

R. G. ABBOTT.

RACIALISM

SIR,—I wonder if Japanese Rationalists ever read *The Freethinker*. If so, they will be rather shaken to find themselves described as "Yellow Dwarfs," as in the little poem by B. Simmons. No doubt the Japanese were responsible for foul atrocities, but so were all the other powers engaged in the last war. Indeed, atrocities seem inseparable from war, which is itself the biggest atrocity of all. We are all in glass houses and should refrain from throwing stones.

Racialism of all sorts, however great the provocation, seems to me to be contrary to the spirit of freethought.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR W. ULOTH.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

SIR,—I was interested to read in Dorothy V. Smith's account of her trip to Berlin that religious instruction in schools there is not allowed. This at least is something, and if it results in the secularising of the individual mind in that part of the world, there is still some hope for peace after all.

Our correspondent also adds that the emphasis there is on peace and instances the banning of war songs, war films and war toys. While I don't doubt that these things are true, I cannot quite see their purpose. With 300,000 troops taking part in manœuvres in East Germany at the present time, and with all the tanks and lorries rolling past while squadrons of Soviet jets fight mock battles overhead, it is not easily seen how a peace-minded atmosphere will be established by the mere banning of toy soldiers when so many real ones are everywhere to be seen. To ask one to picture the banning of war toys, films and songs as making a serious contribution to peace under these circumstances is like supposing that a millionaire could be reduced to a pauper by merely subtracting 3d. from his banking account.—Yours, etc.,

JACK GORDON.

A BLIND SPOT

SIR,—Mr. Thos. Owen has a blind spot which (it may console him) he shares with Samuel Butler (the second). He doesn't like Dickens.

Of course, as he affirms, there are boozers and snivellers in Dickens—as many, in proportion, as there were in actuality, in Dickens' day. Mrs. Gamp could be either or both, but she remains sheer joy to me.

Again, many of Dickens' pious snivellers are still recognisable to-day.

Of course, some of his "good" people were far too good to be true; but then, it is probable that Dickens wrote for success as much as any of his contemporaries, and gave his "public" as much of what it wanted, as he considered good for it.

I assume that Mr. Owen has read most of the works before demolishing Dickens; but I would suggest he re-read them, together with Chesterton's introductions. G. K. wrote entertaining, sound sense about Dickens, improved by the omission of King Charles' Head.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

LA FRANCE, FILLE AINEE DE L'EGLISE

Poor France! Oh, what a falling-off is here!
Once more her scholars know that cleric bane—
Religion come to bind; for once again
The priest will enter, with hell-fire and fear,
And at her mighty Revolution sneer.
Was Waldeck-Rousseau's struggle quite in vain?
Do none of Combes' teachings yet remain?
Dies Gallic thought, so logical and clear?

This weakness comes from want, and from the West,
But it will pass, unless the patient die;
Her sons and daughters stand in need of rest;
—Later, refreshed, they will cast off the lie
That France is elder daughter of the Church,
Nor let the priest her children's mind besmirch.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

OBITUARY

The death of Mr. A. C. Rosetti, a member of the N.S.S. Executive, has just been reported. An Obituary notice will appear in the next issue. The cremation will take place on Thursday morning, October 4 at 10-20, at the South London Crematorium, Rowan Road, Streatham Vale, London, S.W.16.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m.: J. SHARPLES.
Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m., Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m. Speakers: C. MCCALL, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLING.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY and W. G. FRASER.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, October 6, 6 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.
West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Mr. C. E. WOOD.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: J. T. BRIGHTON, M.B.E. (Vice-President, N.S.S.), "Mediums and Mistakes."
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 9, 7 p.m.: W. A. PURFURST, "Why I am a Buddhist."
Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. J. CORINA, "Peace or War—a Free-thought Viewpoint."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 7, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "The New Orthodoxy."
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "Culture of the Abdomen" (illustrated).

HENRY HETHERINGTON. By A. G. Barker. A Pioneer in the Freethought and Working-class Struggle of a Hundred Years Ago. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST. An Examination of British Christianity. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

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

HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH EDUCATED

LIBERALISM is, to-day, in the air. We have a liberal government (and almost a Liberal Government, though that is by the way.)

The aim of the Liberal is to make people happy. The old-fashioned type thought they could this by setting them free; the modern (Labour or pseudo-socialist) type feels it could be done by giving them a little more money.

Both miss the point that unhappiness is the result not of exterior circumstance but of health. The man who is happy is the man who is well whatever his income and however many his chains.

The most important part of health is mental health—you cannot be bodily well if you are mentally ill, and if you are mentally whole your physical well-being will take care of itself.

Freud opened a door on the problems of mental health and it is a great pity that he himself and his followers were so anxious to slam it to again. With a result that almost the whole of the half-educated world now believes that mental sickness consists of being frightened about sex before you were old enough to know what sex was. And that the whole thing is completely unconscious and irremediable except in the case of those who can manage psychiatric treatment.

This is far from the truth. Mental ill-health springs from mental conflict. It may be sexual conflict but it may be of any kind; living in a civilised society is productive of every conceivable kind of conflict.

It would be nice if the whole thing went on in a diabolically subtle and mysterious department of mind known as the unconscious, because then we shouldn't have to do anything about it; we could pay our guineas to the specialists, the psycho-analysts, who would clear the whole thing up for us in an orderly fashion and we should all be well and the world would be happy.

In actual practice this does not happen. The conflict goes on inside us and the contesting sides are well matched. If one side was well ahead there would be little to worry about, but in actual practice we are constantly pulled hither and thither by opposing forces that almost balance. The result is conflict and unhappiness, or if no decision is possible, madness.

The point I wish to make is that anything that tends to increase our mental conflict is a bad thing. And that the man who tries to resolve those conflicts is a human benefactor; more so than the politician, however humane his intentions.

Now the big fault with the Catholic Church is not its folly, its greed or its wickedness, but its efficiency. Most Churches are greedy and anti-social and most teach drivel. But the Protestant Churches teach folly only to fools. Their teaching means nothing to the intellectual who goes his way unheeding or mildly amused.

The Church of Rome does things differently. It is more relentless than the dissenting creeds and it starts its savage work earlier, before the individual has time to put on his sceptical armour.

The unhappiest men in the world, perhaps, are the Catholic intellectual—and I am speaking here not from theory but from actual experience.

It has been my sorry experience to know several Catholics of more than average intellectual ability. Some have developed a protective cynicism and insincerity, but the majority have simply tried to assimilate the primitive tribal beliefs that their religion has forced upon them and

have paid the price by becoming frustrated, repressed or degenerate. None of them is leading the life to which their mental ability entitles them; each of them is an advertisement for the folly, wickedness and cruelty of the Roman Catholic Church.

All the other Churches are less efficient than the Roman Catholic; nevertheless their effect upon such human minds as are affected by them is similar.

Now we have seen that the aim of all those that are well-disposed towards their fellows should be to increase the total of human happiness. How better could this be achieved than by removing the conflicts caused by infantile religions!

"I. de L."

THEATRE

"Intimate Relations" by Jean Cocteau. Strand Theatre. THIS play was first shown in Paris in 1939, and after the war there was a successful revival that lasted about three years. It was during this time that I saw it in France, under its original title "Les Parents Terribles."

The play is said to have caused a great deal of controversy in France where it has even been described as shocking. The French may accept the sexually naughty plays as normal and healthy, which they are, but anything dealing with the possessiveness of a mother is unhealthy, and this is hardly made more acceptable by the son falling in love with a girl to whom his father is—unknown to him—a sugar-daddy.

The main interest of the play is centred round the character of the mother, Yvonne, who is egoistic in extreme and whose world is centred round herself and her son. She is only interested in his undivided love for her, and on the slightest suspicion that his love is wandering elsewhere she attempts to commit suicide. Consequently, when her son falls for Madeleine she does the best she can to break up the contact, but the affection between these two young people is strong enough to survive.

The remarkable thing about the play is that it has been written as a comedy, or in a comedy vein. In the French production the play seemed to waver from grave to gay, so that at times we were aware of pure tragedy, which was too soon replaced by comedy. This form of alternating sentiments did not appear nearly so effective to me as the English production under Judith Furse's direction. She seems to have aimed at a consistent and steady line of comedy which seems more successful than the French style of production. Where this production does seem to be wrong is in the too gloomy setting. We know that Yvonne liked dark rooms, but in this case it was overdone to the point of possessing walls of Victorian gloominess.

Fay Compton's performance as Yvonne is as masterly as any she has given us. She makes this rather impossible woman appear quite alive. Other highly creditable performances were given by Ballard Berkeley as the husband, Cicely Paget-Bowman as Yvonne's sister, and Robin Lloyd as her son. But Sarah Lawson, though very charming and capable in the right part, did not seem to fit at all happily in the part of the girl Madeleine. In fact, ideal for such a part would have been Brenda Hogan who is, as I write, playing in a comedy, "Love is my Reason," at the New Lindsey Theatre Club.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.