

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 19

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

ONE of the most ancient and orthodox of the historic dogmas of Christianity is the Dogma of Eternal Punishment in Hell. All the more important Churches have subscribed to this "Article of Faith." Nor, in this particular field, at least, is much difference to be found between Catholic and Protestant divines. That the torments of Hell are everlasting, that no return tickets are issued on the "underground" that leads to the infernal regions; that Hell is very hot and a most uncomfortable place to live in; upon these elementary facts such various authorities on subterranean geography as St. Thomas, Calvin, the Reverends John Wesley and Charles Spurgeon; not to mention the Reverends Billy Sunday and Billy Graham; all agree.

In recent times, when the process of civilising Christianity in the modern world has made some headway, Hell is one of the doctrines which has felt the draught; so much so, in fact, that its climate has now become appreciably milder, and its once-dreaded fires have become the merest flicker. Most "modern Churchmen" explain away the traditional Hell. Even in that orthodox but opportunist institution, the Church of England, belief in Hell is no longer obligatory upon clerics in Holy Orders. This was decided nearly a century ago by the Privy Council in the *cause célèbre* of the Reverend Mr. Gorham, when the obligation to believe in Hell was "dismissed with costs." Since then, Satan's Anglican followers are all volunteers!

However, this breath of liberalism has scarcely affected the traditional dogma in either the Church of Rome or in the more "fundamentalist" Protestant Churches. Here the infernal fires still burn as brightly as in their mediæval hey-day. Whilst the Demon and his assistants still work overtime tormenting the souls of their terrestrial visitors who had the misfortune to perish in "mortal sin," as far as our information goes, no "Christian Socialist" has, so far, proposed that the *bona fide* trade union principle of a "living wage" should be extended to the demons in Hell? But, at least if we are to judge from the way in which they put their backs—not to mention their horns, hoofs, and forked tails—into the task of making eternity unpleasant for their involuntary guests, they would certainly appear to deserve one!

On a general survey of hellish theology there seems no doubt at all that on this low matter of Hell our "Fundamentalists"—whether Catholic or Protestant—have a better case than their "modernist" critics who claim to practise Christianity without believing in a literal Hell. Certainly the belief was held by most if not all of the new Testament writers, and Jesus is repeatedly made to threaten his unbelieving audiences with the fires of Hell. A similar belief in a literal Hell is found in the *Apocalypse*, perhaps the oldest of our extant Christian Scriptures. Whilst all the Early Church Fathers seem to have accepted the Devil and Hell as integral parts of Christian belief. The only partial exceptions were a few theological free-lances, of

whom the most famous was Origen (3rd century), who advanced the daring view that Hell might not be eternal, and that even the Devil might eventually be saved.

The Christian Church, however, needed Satan far too much ever to contemplate a time in which it could dispense with his services. So Origen was condemned posthumously along with his heretical theory. Eternal punishment, and a personal devil to see that it is properly inflicted, now represent "articles of faith" in all those Churches which pride themselves upon adhering to traditional orthodoxy.

We are vividly reminded of the above facts by an informative booklet which has just been published in

New York by our American contemporary, *The Truth-Seeker*, which was founded in 1873, and claims to be the oldest Freethought paper in the world. The current booklet, *Hell—A Christian Doctrine*,* is issued under the names of the three associate editors of *The Truth-Seeker*, Messrs. Woolsey Teller, Marshall J. Gauvin, and Herbert Cutner. Of these, Mr. Teller represented America at the Brussels Congress last August and is the author of *The Atheism of Astronomy*, and *Essays of an Atheist*. Mr. Gauvin is well known in American Freethought circles as a lecturer and debater. Mr. Cutner needs no introduction to the readers of *The Freethinker*: he has been a contributor to *The Truth-Seeker* for some years past, and his well-known book, *Jesus, God, Man, or Myth*, was published by *The Truth-Seeker Company Inc.*, in the U.S.A.

As our authors declare: "Christians want Hell. In this pamphlet we give it to them in all its blazing glory." This procedure is carried out, first, by the introductory essays of the three co-editors and, secondly, by an impressive catena of quotations which embrace every aspect of subterranean geography and its infernal adjuncts. This formidable array of quotations embraces, seriatim, Catholic, Protestant, and Freethought writers on this murky subject. We use the term "murky" advisedly, since one of the few details upon which all our experts on the infernal are agreed upon is this double-barrelled proposition: the "fire" of Hell has heat—any amount of it!—but no light; and it always torments, but it never consumes its victims. Also, unlike purgatory, it lasts for ever: the road to Hell is a one-way traffic!

We have, incidentally, actually seen a return ticket from Hell, but, unfortunately, only from a place named Hell, in Norway! Our orthodoxy remains untarnished.

The quotations in the learned citations before us range widely in space and time. Both the Church of Rome and the fundamentalist Protestant sects are fully represented—so, too, are the Freethinking critics of Hell, with, as might be expected from an American publication, the redoubtable Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll well to the fore. Amongst the Catholic "experts" on Hell we note St. Thomas; the

* *The Truth-Seeker Company, Inc.*, 38, Park Row, New York 8, N.Y., U.S.A.; 50 cents.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

God's Concentration Camp

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

"Angelic Doctor" himself, Fr. Pinamonti, S.J.; and, of course, the inimitable Fr. Furniss, who would certainly have been locked up in an asylum for criminal lunatics had he had the misfortune to live in a civilised land. Among the Protestants are the great Calvin, Dr. Spurgeon, who, so to speak, specialised in hell-fire; and our contemporary "spellbinder," the American Billy Graham, who was over here recently.

We note some omissions with regret. Fr. Rickaby's famous pamphlet, *Hell* (Catholic Truth Society), with its valuable infernal bibliography, is absent; and in fairness to Holy Church we think that the learned authors might have quoted that eminent Jesuit, the learned Petavius (Denys Petau), who went on record with the classical theological deduction that one "can no more torment an immaterial spirit with fire, than one can paint a smell!" Also, we venture to remind Messrs. Teller, Gauvin and Cutner, that whilst it is certainly a dogma of Rome that Hell exists, it is *not* a dogma that anyone has ever been there, except, perhaps, Judas Iscariot; no doubt a quibble,

but theology consists of quibbles and unless we are much mistaken we shall hear a good deal more of this one as and when the critical attack gets too hot even for Hell.

We must also add, that the value of this admirable booklet would have been still further increased by some facts on the *social* basis of hell-fire. Ideas, even infernal ones, do not spring from a vacuum, but from the concrete conditions of *this* earth, the only world that we are even likely to know. Historically Hell has flourished chiefly during the break-up of successive cultures. Both the great epics of Hell, Dante's *Inferno*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, were written in such stormy eras—Milton's Satan, for example, is an infernal "Cromwell." Hell and its terrors, as Mr. Aldous Huxley has shown us in his recent *Ape and Essence*, could easily recur in a post-atomic war age given over to Devil-worship.

We congratulate *The Truth-Seeker* on this admirable pamphlet. We hope both that it will shortly appear on this side of the Atlantic and that it will have the wide circulation that it deserves.

Up-to-Date Freethought

By C. G. L. DU CANN

FREETHOUGHT is dateless. And yet, like all other ways of life, freethought has to be up to date. The question is whether most freethinking speakers and writers do keep their outlook sufficiently up to date to appeal to modern minds.

The attack of Victorian times is out of date. To tell the more educated Christian that the Bible, or much of it, is fiction cuts no ice. He tells himself that. He does not any longer regard it as facts, but maintains its validity as poetry, symbolism and instruction.

Or if you say the Churches are corrupt and the clergy venal, many Christians will acquiesce. They distinguish between Churchianity and Christianity, as indeed they well may.

Even to declare that the Jesus of the Gospels is a myth—once the extreme of horrifying atheism—does not disturb that type of Christian who regards his Lord as an artistic creation (as much a part of the reader as Hamlet). He relies neither on an historical Jesus nor literary Bibles, but on his individual mystical experience, to validate his religious belief.

There is no arguing with, or against, mysticism. It does not exist on the reasoning plane. When Blake holds "Infinity in the palm of his hand" or Vaughan, the Silurist, sees eternity the other night "like a great ring of pure and endless light" you do not argue with the poet. You "deliver yourself up to your eyes and ears," like Lord Chesterfield at the opera. You cease to exist in the world of reason and are plunged into a world of visions and dreams. It is the same with St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross.

But dogma is quite different. Dogma is vulnerable to argument. Such a once tenaciously-held dogma as the "Resurrection of the Body," boldly proclaimed in the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian creeds, is dying a slow death from the impact of modern physiology. The personal "Life Everlasting" is doubted and undesired unless it means absorption in another and a greater Life in which all lives cohere.

New modern standards of value have made us distrust immortality; we no longer, unlike our forbears, desire "immortal life," and do not fear eternal extinction. As to our bodies, most of us are uneasily conscious that we are not beautiful Greek gods and goddesses, and the idea

of being tied to them "for ever" is repugnant aesthetically and hygienically.

If you want to see one gulf between modern feeling and medieval, consider the phrase in the Anglican litany: "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us." But when a man dies suddenly to-day, all his friends openly rejoice. No longer do they say, as of old, in deep dismay: "He had no time to repent or to make his peace with his Maker." Rather do they say: "When I go, I hope it is like that. He was lucky."

This is a revolution indeed in thought and feeling. It represents the modern emancipation from the fear of "God and the Judge" so present to Victorian minds.

The mass of people still "believe" and "have faith." Still they go to church for corporate prayer and singing, if less often and less numerously. Still they "hope to be saved," hoping, despite much that they have heard, that God is, in Omar's phrase, "a good fellow" and all will be well in the end, in spite of their wrong thoughts, words and deeds in this earthly life.

Here is the point where modern science comes to the aid of free-thinking. Modern psychology shows much religion to be mere wishful thinking—founded on the invincible self-importance of humanity. No progress can avail to change the inexorable laws of Nature. Though every man, woman and child in the British Dominions should pray, "God save the Queen," it will avail exactly nothing when the moment for the Queen's death arrives as it will.

No man or woman can think themselves of such tremendous importance in the eyes of Deity when they once know the human copulation which gave them birth was the survival of one living spermatozoa out of 300,000,000,000 or so others. Also that contemporary with themselves on the earth are some 2,500,000,000 other human beings. Also that the earth has been populated, and will go on being populated, for millions of years. And that the earth is a mere speck amongst millions of worlds in the universe.

(Concluded on page 148)

"The Freethinker" Fund

Previously acknowledged, £70 5s.; A. Hancock, 1s. (22nd donation); Mr. J. Humphrey (Glasgow), £1; Anon. (in memory of John Seibert), 10s. Total £71 16s.

Broadcasting and Religion

THE crowded court room at Caxton Hall on Tuesday, April 28, must have delighted the organisers of the meeting held to protest against the one-sided policy of the B.B.C. to give every possible facility to the Churches to broadcast religion, and as little as possible, if any at all, to those who oppose it on the grounds of history, science, and reason. The speakers included seven M.P.s, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, representing the R.P.A., and Mr. F. A. Ridley, the N.S.S. It was truly a mixed bag, for Mr. M. Philips Price spoke for the Unitarians, and Mr. R. W. Sorensen for the liberal Christians. Mr. J. Reeves, M.P., Chairman of the R.P.A., was in the chair, and opened the proceedings by pointing out that the meeting had the sympathy of various minority bodies who ought to be represented on the B.B.C. and given equal opportunities to broadcast their views as much as the established Churches. Although the B.B.C. had assured a deputation headed by Bertrand Russell in 1946 they would increase "controversial broadcasting," nothing, or very little, had been done, and a public protest was absolutely necessary.

Lord Chorley was the first speaker, and he began by pointing out how many important issues had been broadcast by the B.B.C., but all religious questions were in the hands of our most powerful religious sect. It was the duty of the B.B.C. as a national institution to support all minorities—for example, the Quakers, who had done such splendid work in the social field. Actually, owing to the rejection of orthodox Christianity by so many people, it was becoming itself "a minority." The B.B.C. appears to recognise "revealed" religion only and that every man has this religion in him. Lord Chorley wanted the Governors of the B.B.C. to think again.

Mr. M. Philips Price, M.P., was there to represent the Unitarians, whom he called a Christian community, though they do not hold the doctrines of the Church of England or believe in the Thirty-Nine Articles. Unitarians had also suffered for their convictions and, at one time, they were not permitted to build a church within five miles of a town. So they were entirely with the meeting. Our forefathers fought for religious freedom, but the wireless was promptly annexed by the orthodox. Yet it was difficult to believe in the tenets of the Church, and many people were leaving it. Mr. Price eloquently pleaded for the same rights from time to time as the orthodox received, and hoped it would be granted in due course.

The next speaker was Mr. R. W. Sorensen, M.P., who wanted fairer treatment from the B.B.C. for all questions that affect man. Some of man's "spiritual" issues have come from infidels, and in the House of Commons there is no discrimination. All that mattered was to serve the community and to remove all fetters. He believed man was born in chains and was struggling to get free. Robert Owen, Tom Paine, and Charles Bradlaugh all helped to free man, and he would like to see a monument to Bradlaugh in Westminster Abbey. God worked through the mind of all—infidel or believer. Heresies had a right to be heard but the present policy of the B.B.C. would have barred Darwin, and he (Mr. Sorensen) was against all forms of autocracy and wanted more freedom everywhere for the thinking man.

Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, M.P., came next, and said it was difficult to add much to what had been said. Controversy was vital to a democracy—even if one side was quite wrong. Let us hear it all, for we have a right to hear controversial views in spite of the fact that the B.B.C. appears to allow controversy only if it is "respectable." It

is disgraceful that the honest new idea is not allowed to be heard because of vested interests. But don't blame the B.B.C. "panjams" altogether, they want an easy time, they don't want any pressure put on them, and we ought to see that they get that pressure through the postbag and through meetings. A State monopoly allowed no competition in ideas just as a State publishing concern could prevent the spread of new ideas in books. Mr. Crossman wanted all restraints to free discussion to be taken off.

Mr. F. A. Ridley said that his Society, the National Secular Society, founded by Charles Bradlaugh, fully supported the meeting. They believed in a secular society, and freedom on the air. They wanted 100 per cent. the same rights as religious bodies, though it should be pointed out that, as far as belief in religion is concerned, in his survey Rowntree found that only about 15 per cent. of the people went to church while about 85 per cent. opposed Christianity or were quite indifferent. Yet the B.B.C. was run for this 15 per cent. In free and open discussion, Christianity would have every opportunity to prove its case. We are all aerially minded now, but the B.B.C. is opposed to democracy, and we demand a change.

The next speaker was Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, and he gave the meeting interesting figures and statistics. The B.B.C. received its Charter in 1927, but before that, in 1922, they were not afraid to allow the then Secretary of the R.P.A., Charles Gorham, to put the case for Rationalism. In the Charter was the provision not to broadcast political or religious controversy. All the same, some discussions were allowed—for example, the debate between Bertrand Russell and Fr. Coplestone. The figures Mr. Bonner quoted from *Towards the Conversion of England* proved how religion had declined in the country—twice the number of women, for instance, go to church than men, while our young people didn't want religion at all. In Paris, Freethinkers were allowed to broadcast, and we should do our utmost to convince the B.B.C. that we, in the minority movements, are a force to be reckoned with.

An eloquent demand for fair play came from the next speaker, Mr. Peter Freeman, M.P. He was a humble heretic, and heresy was no fresh line of activity for him. Man was searching for truth all the time, and it was for the B.B.C. to recognise that right. We must not be afraid to offend "susceptibilities," and the B.B.C. should provide every facility for full discussion. After all, religion was transitory, and few people believed it as in the past centuries. Mr. Freeman wanted to see complete freedom on the air for all bodies in their search for truth.

The last speaker was Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., well known for his many "heresies" in many fields of thought. For him it was to heretics like Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells we owed so much in life. They influenced mankind in spite of their Agnosticism; and Mr. Brockway insisted that B.B.C. religion was all too drab and formal. There was nothing to inspire us in it—nothing creative. He wanted us to begin our campaign against the B.B.C.'s policy at once by writing and protesting.

Mr. Reeves finally thanked all the speakers and put the resolution to the meeting as follows:—

"That this Meeting urges the B.B.C. to implement fully and as speedily as possible the terms of the pronouncement made by the Governors in 1947 and to establish an Advisory Committee for religious minority views and the views of unbelievers."

This was unanimously passed and the meeting closed with great enthusiasm.

H. C.

This Believing World

Hats off to Mrs. Enid Watson! She was not afraid to tell Labour women at their Conference the other day that Marriage Guidance Councils were "ridden by parsons." The "councillors generally consist of a parson, a lawyer, a middle-class woman who is happily married, and anybody who has wealth and leisure." And it was obvious that these people could rarely "enter into the conditions of the poor." So the pam-jams of the M.G.C. invited her to come along to their Headquarters and either apologise or make good her "misrepresentations." It was the attack on the parsons which left them sore.

But Mrs. Weston did not apologise. On the contrary, she strongly complained that there was "too much religion in this organisation." How right she is! The parsons, even if their intentions are of the best, are bound down by what their celibate God said—if he said anything at all. And what can any bachelor Deity know of marriage, with its daily problems of cash, children, and daily chores? Besides, Jesus—if he ever existed—lived in Judea nearly 2,000 years ago, and what he said then about marriage is 2,000 years out of date.

The people to bar on the M.G.C. are parsons and psychologists—according to Mrs. Watson, and we heartily agree with her. Leave religion out altogether should be the one strict rule. For the rest, an understanding social worker or doctor might help; but mostly it rests with the couple concerned. And the problems are very difficult.

Anybody who wonders what happens when the "Sacrament" is accidentally eaten should read "When a Mouse eats the Sacrament, the Greatest Hoax in History," by Dr. J. B. Powell, who is (of course) a Protestant. But Dr. Powell and his fellow Protestants all believe in the other "hoaxes," the Virgin Birth, the Aerial Flight Jesus had with a live Devil, the Water turned into Wine, and so on. Besides, Protestants swallow the greatest of all hoaxes—the Existence of God. Anyone swallowing God Almighty should not object to the "Sacrament"!

It is interesting to note that the National Union of Protestants are afraid that the "Protestant Coronation Oath" might be changed, and they are screaming "Hands Off"! It would be too awful if their brothers in Christ, the Roman Catholics, managed to get that saucy bit in the Oath, where our Sovereign has to declare his or her Protestantism, to be altered at the behest of the Pope. So the N.U.O.P. are soliciting "financial support" which simply means more cash to keep Romanism out of our Protestant Coronation. Of the two evils, we naturally much prefer Protestantism to Romanism, but what a splendid thing it would be for everybody concerned if religion as a whole were kicked out, and a purely Secular Coronation took place leaving God in Heaven and the two Archbishops respectively in Canterbury and York. No such luck, however.

Do you want to help to get much more religion on the radio than we have inflicted on us now? If you do then send a cheque (the bigger the better) to some people who call themselves "The Hour of Revival," a team of expert revivalists, functioning in Eastbourne. Remember any cheque you send will be regarded as "a personal investment in winning souls" for Christ Jesus. Just think of what that means—for, of course, if you don't get the souls roped in, they will frizzle for ever in Hell. Please, please remember that ten million souls listen in to the Radio—and send that cheque.

Up-to-Date Freethought

(Concluded from page 147)

Such scientific facts as these reduce "the inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" to his real unimportance in the scheme of things. One person's importance in the universe is no more than the importance of a blade of grass or a grain of sand on the seashore. It comes as a salutary shock to religious egoism to reflect on these things.

Most religious people believe their souls (which are really themselves) to be of fundamental and unique importance. They think the human race the most marvellous of all created beings. Though why human apes and parrots and human asses should be thought better than ordinary apes, parrots and asses is hard for the unprejudiced to see. They believe that the earth is the centre of the universe, and that the rest is insignificant. Once these rocks on which their illusions are firmly built are removed, they are apt to change their notions rapidly.

Old-fashioned free-thinking concentrated on historical attack, but modern free-thinking should try a scientific approach. Modern people who care about historical facts or theories are few. On the other hand, everyone has a smattering of science and is prepared to accept its conclusions too.

Of course, if you get religious people to believe in God as God instead of as a mere Big Bogey Man, they quickly drop their conventional religious observances. For it is impossible to realise what Omniscience means and then to imagine it being flattered by praises or persuaded by prayers or delighted by corporate singing and infernal music. Omniscience must know better than that—as many human beings very far from omniscience do!

Unfortunately it is very difficult—almost, indeed, impossible—to get religious people to believe in their God. They profess belief. But the mere idea of Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence is beyond their mental capacities, and they take refuge in a drawing-room edition of Jesus the man, or an old master's Virgin Mary with an old gentlemanly bearded Father God, resembling Michelangelo's statue of the seated Moses, in the background. No free-thinker believes less in their professed God than the religious do.

For if they did, could they imagine him being placated or pleased by a hastily-gabbed Latin Mass, or by the Anglican Matins or Evensong? Still less by those appallingly phrased and insufferably patronising prayers.

Paradoxically enough, if only the freethinkers could convert the churches to their professed religion, it might end religion as we know it. Nearly all religion in the modern world is nothing but superstition kept alive only by retreat from its professed creeds.

The facts of astronomy, biology and psychology provide excellent ammunition against out-of-date superstition. Even modern warfare makes the "Dies Irae" no longer terrible:—

"Day of wrath! O day of mourning,
See fulfilled the prophet's warning,
Heaven and Earth in ashes burning."

We have endured all that from bombs in the last world and we are eagerly looking forward to the next world conflagration with Lord Vansittart as the prophet, the atom bomb, and the guided aerial missile which the Chief of Bomber Command has been telling England that "we need"—though I almost think I personally might manage without such needs—we can disregard the Christian other-world's Judgment Day.

On scientific and topical lines such as these, freethought may easily keep up to date and even in advance of contemporary religious lack of thought.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. 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 Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning. 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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. W. 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. (Marble Arch). — Every Sunday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday, May 10, 8-30 p.m.: Debate, Messrs. O'Neil and the Rev. R. Trenvian, "Did the Jesus of the Gospels Exist?"

INDOOR

Bristol Rationalist Group (Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell St.).—Wednesday, May 13, 7-30 p.m.: A Lecture, "It Stands to Reason."
League Against Capital Punishment (St. Pancras Town Hall).—Wednesday, May 13, 7-15 p.m.: Speakers, Victor Yates, M.P., Canon Carpenter (Westminster), Miss J. Henderson (Barrister), F. A. Ridley (President, N.S.S.) and others.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: S. K. Ratcliffe, "The Idea of Progress."

NOTES AND NEWS

The Secretary of the N.S.S. asks us to remind members wishing him to book accommodation at The Bell Hotel for the Whitsun Conference, that they should send him details forthwith.

The past week has witnessed two events of considerable interest to Freethinkers and to all those interested in the maintenance and expansion of human freedom.

On Tuesday, April 28, as reported elsewhere in this issue a very successful meeting was held at Caxton Hall, London. This took the form of a joint protest meeting against the current religious policy of the B.B.C. The meeting was jointly supported by the R.P.A., the N.S.S., and the Ethical Union. The chair was taken by Mr. Joseph Reeves, M.P. (R.P.A.), and Lord Chorley (Ethical Union), Leader of the Labour Party in the House of Lords, and six M.P.s were on the platform. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner represented the R.P.A., and Mr. F. A. Ridley represented the N.S.S. After a series of unusually fine speeches a resolution condemning the present attitude of the B.B.C. was unanimously passed by a crowded and enthusiastic audience. It is much to be hoped that this very successful meeting will be the

first of a series. Even the pundits of "Broadcasting House" are not impervious to popular disapproval. It is one of the advantages attached to Democracy!

Last Sunday, May 3, again on the joint initiative of a number of Freethought bodies, a meeting took place at Northampton of an equally interesting but totally different nature to that held at Caxton Hall the previous Tuesday. Several bus-loads of enthusiasts from London, Leicester, Coventry and Nottingham converged on the Statue of Charles Bradlaugh in the centre of Northampton, the city which the great iconoclast represented so long and so worthily in and out of Parliament. The Mayor, Councillor Adams, himself the grandson of Bradlaugh's election agent, along with the local M.P. and members of the Town Council and a large crowd, received the visitors before the statue, and a brief but impressive ceremony ensued. Mr. C. B. Bonner, himself the grandson of Bradlaugh, Mr. F. A. Ridley, and Mr. G. A. Kirk, laid wreaths on the statue, respectively, on behalf of the R.P.A., N.S.S., and Leicester Secular Society. All made short speeches. The N.S.S. wreath contained this inscription:—

"A Tribute of admiration and affection from the members of the Society that he founded and of which he was the first President. His valiant fight for Liberty and Progress inspires the Society still as it seeks to spread the Ideas and Ideals to which he so effectively devoted his voice, his pen and his life."

The Mayor then entertained the guests of the city to tea. A number of speeches followed, reminiscent of Bradlaugh, by the Mayor himself, the M.P., Mr. R. Paget, Mr. C. B. Bonner, and several others. Of particular interest was a speech by a 92-year-old former supporter of Bradlaugh, which vividly restored the stormy atmosphere of those now far-off days. A fuller report will appear in our next week's issue.

Congratulations to the Fyzabad (Trinidad) Branch, N.S.S. Recent reports received at Head Office indicate a remarkable increase in membership drawn from the most divergent walks of life. We are expecting great things from our West Indian comrades. Forward, Fyzabad!

Happiness

Where may happiness lie,
In the silent contemplation of the moon
Or in riotous festivity,
Adventure wild unlawful
Or quiet solitude?
Yet all these things when done
Leave aching heart, that by the
Soft caress of woman cannot be healed.
That yearning cavity of such depth that
Should my senses feel delight,
They must be starved and hang
Suspended in an empty well,
Crying in their agony,
Sweating in their captivity.

Passion or wisdom eternal question,
Succumb to one and be a
Monstrous hound of Hell
Or to the other, and then become
A frosty frozen pool of sterile
Contemplation.
Be still and hear the voice of reason cry
Above the passion of the tempestuous night.
"Become a man. Partake of both."

C. B. NYQUIST.

Robert Taylor

The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844) By H. CUTNER

(Continued from page 139)

THESE sermons actually increased his popularity; for in spite of his "infidelity" he managed to "induce more persons to come and receive the holy sacrament . . . than any of his predecessors could boast of." That an "Atheist" was preaching at Yardley soon got about, only to be countered by the fact of his bringing so many new converts to the sacrament; though, as it happened, there were some people who saw through his tactics and who became, in consequence, his bitter enemies. Crowds even from Birmingham came to hear—and see—him, "the curious, the sceptical, the wonder-loving and the spiteful, to hear the kind of sermon which would be likely to be preached by a man of whom such strange things were said. Nobody was disappointed. The frightful looks of those who can never laugh at anything only hindered the laughter of better disposed hearers from becoming obstreperous."

To make matters worse—or better from the Freethought point of view—Taylor delivered a sermon on "Jonah in the whale's belly" in which he allowed all his irony and cutting satire to dwell upon the theme "in its grossest literality," as he says. He made the story appear to be the most unmitigated nonsense, and could not be surprised if the scandal it caused barred him for ever from a Christian pulpit. Dr. Fell was furious, not because Taylor no longer believed in the Christian religion—he himself seems to have had very little more belief—but because his curate was such a fool to let his flock know it. It was not a matter of conscience at all, declared the Rev. Dr. Fell. It was a bargain, or a contract, which Taylor had made to be a curate at Yardley, and his conscience had nothing to do with it. Taylor moralises:—

"CONSCIENCE! Good God! He thought the following the dictates of conscience to be the most glorious of all virtues. He found it more ruinous than the whole seven unpardonable sins. To follow the dictates of conscience is a luxury to be served up only at the table of immortality, to the appetite of gods. No king on earth can afford to keep a conscience. Conscience! it is the desperation of the soul, compared to whose fatality the lover's fury and the drunkard's thirst are prudences and discretions. Its gratifications are more costly than the favours of the Corinthian Thais. 'Tis the authentic fire which Jove is greedy of, and he whose heart has luxuriated in its warmth must expect to smart for it, like Prometheus upon Caucasus, till the vultures eat his liver out."

The "infidel" curate was given short shrift in Birmingham in his endeavour to earn a living. He was completely ostracised with the exception of one friend who strongly advised him to get out of England for good and all. Even his own relatives, who always wanted to cut him off altogether, thought the suggestion of getting him out of England a good one—they were so anxious to get rid of the awful disgrace of having an "infidel" member of the family—and they promised if he got out, and stayed out, they would let him have an allowance of one pound a week.

He thus was persuaded to go to the Isle of Man, where his "conscience" would be little likely to be known; and so, just after Christmas in 1820, he set out, very despondent and broken-hearted, to earn a decent living, if possible, in new surroundings. The passage was a rough one, and the ship nearly foundered; but he managed to land at Douglas and set to work to prepare a course of philological lectures by which he could earn enough to keep going. He soon found, when he came to deliver them, that his small audiences were very much in the same position as himself, far too poor to pay to hear academic

lectures on the science of language. But they did attract the notice of the Bishop of Man, who invited the lecturer to see him. As soon as he found that Taylor was still a Deist he did his utmost to bring the erring clergyman back to the Faith. He also explained that he had a great deal of power in the little island; no infidel was wanted there. The Bishop had even the power "to imprison him for life without being accountable to anyone."

Two other things happened which finally set the seal to his woes. The first was some letters that he wrote for the local paper on *Suicide*; they seemed to have had such an effect on two girl readers that they hanged themselves. The second was that Taylor's Christian brothers stopped his allowance after a few weeks (the money they had already given was faithfully returned to them later). These things made his stay in Douglas impossible, and he returned to England, landing at Whitehaven on March 13, 1821.

Almost penniless—he had to pay heavily for transporting his books—he found that a school six miles away wanted an assistant. The head was a clergyman who received Taylor with unctuous hypocrisy—and did nothing for him. His misery was such that he almost contemplated suicide; but his common sense prevailed, and he wrote to his brother Edward and to his old master, Mr. Partridge. But, for Robert Taylor, those days in Whitehaven stand out as perhaps the most miserable of his life—and that in spite of the years of imprisonment he was yet to undergo.

Edward Taylor was far too much of a Christian to help his brother; but Mr. Partridge immediately sent him a ten-pound note; and a generous-hearted sea captain "offered him his passage to Dublin for the pleasure of his company." Again he had a rough crossing and was very ill, but received from the rough seamen aboard nothing but kindness and help. In Dublin, also, he found the utmost sympathy from his landlady and her husband who, curiously enough, were "without religion" and for that reason were ready to help the penniless ex-parson. He found also much kindness from other people, notably a Mr. Thomas Daly, who kept a large day school and who made him an honoured guest at his own home.

It was not long before Robert Taylor managed to obtain what looked like a permanent post in a school kept by a Mr. Jones at Rathfarnham; and from there he started to preach again at the local parish church, with very great success. Once again he attracted large congregations and, in particular, became, we are told in the *Memoir* prefixed to the original edition of the *Devil's Pulpit*, "the favourite of all the respectable families of the neighbourhood." Unfortunately this haven of peace did not last long, for Archbishop Magee, of Dublin, "discovered the refugee, thundered forth his anathemas and no one connected with the Church dared to give shelter to the excommunicated offender." In this one instance not blame the religious authorities altogether. Taylor was a heretic, and he had no right to preach in an orthodox pulpit and expect to get away with it. The result was unexpected. He was again thrown on his own resources, returned to Dublin, and commenced to write some Deistic tracts under the general title of *The Clerical Review*. They owed something to the kind of religious criticism fostered by the famous Conyers Middleton, though even here

(Continued on page 152)

The Survival of Jewry

By "AKIBA"

EXCEPT for one outstanding work by A. Leon—a Belgian Trotskyist who was done to death in a Nazi concentration camp—on the "Jewish Question"—no serious attempt has been made to find a materialist explanation for the survival of the Jewish people.

Of course, the term "people" has been used deliberately, because for the moment we are not dogmatically stating in advance the nature of this community.

It is indisputable that Judaism in the early part of this era and even before it, was a missionary religion. That is, centuries before the rise of Christianity Judaism had already evolved out of its tribal chrysalis. The Prophets, the Book of Proverbs, and the Book of Ecclesiastes, and above all, that greatest of books, the Book of Job, had purged Judaism of many of its tribal and racial forms. It is a fact that in the first part of the first century Jews were scattered all over Egypt, North Africa, Italy, Greece, and even Spain. It is equally indisputable that Judaism was already a religion with world-wide pretensions. To-day there is scattered but ample evidence of the missionary zeal of Judaism. There are, in Ethiopia, black Jews who know nothing of the Second Temple. There are Chinese Jews, converted centuries ago but who have now almost lost their identity in Chinese society at large. There are Indian Jews both of light skin and brown skin.

All this points to considerable missionary activity. Whilst it is true that the Jews are a comparatively "pure" race, it cannot be doubted that this is due to accident rather than deliberate design. It is highly likely that literally millions of Jews have been absorbed into other religious and racial communities without leaving any traces during the last two thousand years. The fact that only the more racially pure Jews survived the persecutions of Christianity and Islam is not surprising, therefore.

It must never be forgotten that with Constantine's accession Judaism was no longer allowed to continue its missionary work. More than that, all means, fair or foul, were used to win the converted Jews to Christianity.

The interesting, as yet unsolved, problem is this. How has Jewry—a by no means racially pure community—survived three different societies—slave society, feudalism and capitalism? To many materialists this seems an insurmountable problem. Many and varied explanations are given which do not ring true because they are artificial and unhistorical.

It seems that as each of these societies declined, they began to decompose from within. The relatively harmonious relations between races and religions that existed when the society was in the ascendant came to an end as the society, through its own internal contradictions and its external commitments, began to assert themselves.

Quite naturally, racial and religious minorities are the first to suffer. Eventually, they are, as it were, expelled from the society, or literally expelled from the territories over which this form of society holds sway.

But this is the salvation of the minority, for it is forced to transplant itself to a new ascendant society or establish together with others similarly persecuted, a brand new society altogether (as in America).

When, for instance, the faithful Jews were expelled by King Ferdinand and Isabella in 1492, they found refuge in Turkey, where they were welcomed with open arms. Many Spanish and Portuguese Jews also escaped later on to Holland, which was in the throes of becoming a nation and throwing off the hated yoke of Spanish Catholic tyranny.

Germany in 1933 is another example. The Jews were squeezed out of German society just at the point that the totalitarian Nazi regime "solved" the unemployment problem with terrorism, concentration camps—and an arms race.

The Jews were forced to take refuge in the relatively more advanced—or relatively less totalitarian societies.

It is this process which explains at least, in part, the survival of Jewry.

The persecution of Jews in any country is always the surest evidence of the decline and degeneration of society.

Just as the Huguenots were expelled from feudal France only later to take part in British, Dutch and German history, so, too, the Jews have lived to see the downfall of their countless enemies.

This, in brief, is a materialistic solution to the enigma of Jewish survival: Who will be the bold man to begin research on it?

Review

"In Perfect Shape All Your Life," by Arthur Abplanalp. (7s. 6d. net, Health for All Publishing Co., 17/18, Henrietta Street, W.C. 2.)

MR. ABPLANALP is a very well-known Swiss health expert and his system has been known on the Continent for many years. It was, in fact, evolved more than forty years ago.

The book is a well-reasoned and, it would seem, a rational and logical treatise on retaining or acquiring health and activity at all stages from childhood to old age.

The claims for his system may appear rather all-embracing and ambitious, but I have investigated them thoroughly and have come to the conclusion that if one takes up the system earnestly, they are not exaggerated. The great point to realise is that the system must be intelligently studied, and the pupil must conscientiously and consistently follow the instructions in order to benefit fully. Mr. Abplanalp does not prescribe pills or nostrums in bottles, but your co-operation is essential. And this it seems to me is as it should be. My positive view is that Mr. Abplanalp shows us the way.

It is some weeks since I first began to examine this system—and I have gained some extremely important and useful knowledge; the author's exposition is very enlightening and supported by numerous quotations from well-known authorities.

From what I have learned from the book, I feel that I can now avoid effort in wasteful and unnecessary directions.

It has surprised me considerably that I have been compelled to change life-long views on several matters of importance to health; e.g., note particularly Ch. XVII "Exercise and Breathing" and the paragraph on "Healthy, Natural Perspiration" pp. 74, 75.

"Good shape" is the theme of this book.

I am very glad to have this book and system of exercises, and have great hopes and even confidence in the result in my own case, always provided that I can supply the determination to practise consistently.

A very important point is that the exercises, increased gradually, are designed to give the least possible strain to the heart; the space required for the exercises is small; the apparatus is simple and unlikely to go out of order.

Besides the teaching, the book is full of many details of interest and has recommendations from a host of people, and it is well-written. It should appeal to all men and women who are run down or enfeebled from whatever causes.

R.G.W.A.

Correspondence

RELIGION ON THE AIR

SIR.—Concerning your comments on "Freethought faces the New Year" (*The Freethinker*, January 4, 1953), do you not think the wonderful modern invention—wireless—has been used to further the primitive interests and theories of the Christian Church? Wireless is controlled by Christian partisans. In Australia religious propaganda is engaged in over the air for long periods each week. Probably the rising generation has been influenced by what it has so heard, because it has not been allowed to hear expressed by the radio any views contrary to those advanced by representatives of the Church.

Television has not been established in Australia, but it was interesting to note that Cardinal Spellman, of New York, indicated his approval of that invention early this month. No doubt you could elaborate on the use of wireless and television by the Church.

Enclosed are a couple of paragraphs for *The Freethinker*.—Yours, etc.,

H. D.

DIALECTICS

SIR.—Would Mr. J. Graham or Mr. E. Crouch, or both, be good enough to tell me—as a "mechanist" Materialist—what sources of knowledge, open to Dialectical Materialists, are not open to me?—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

IMPORTED RELIGION

SIR.—For the past few weeks I have made a point of listening to the religious programmes broadcast over Radio Luxembourg (208 metres). They are mainly recorded American programmes, ranging from the comic to the sinister.

To me, they rather sound like the small-time religious maniacs that one can find around Orators' Corner, Hyde Park, only these groups have, of course, American accents, vocal quartets, and electronic organs. One example is the "Healing Waters" programme, sponsored by a Mr. Oral Roberts, of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Mr. Roberts tells his radio audience that he is a faith healer and claims thousands of testimonials, and before God spoke to him suffered from "pulmonary tuberculosis in both lungs . . ." God told him he was cured and bade him inaugurate his healing ministry.

(Mr. Roberts did not say, but I couldn't help wondering whether he took God's word that he was cured, or was X-rayed just in case.)

Even the B.B.C., with its strong religious bias, would not, I feel sure, tolerate the broadcasting of such nonsense as this over its services.

However, Mr. Oral Roberts can keep his faith in the Lord. As for me, mine is still in such material things as streptomycin, collapse therapy, surgery, etc.—Yours, etc.,

PETER J. LEWIS.

EVAN ROBERTS

SIR.—I wonder could anyone of your readers inform me whether the late Evan Roberts, the greatest Welsh prophet since the eighteenth century, ever recanted from his anti-preacher attitude before he died.

I am a bit curious, as there is a movement on foot here to erect a monument to his memory at Moriah Loughor, and rather than wait another quarter of a century, someone had better take the matter up now within living memory, or, as Mr. Cutner says, God alone knows where this make-belief will end.

I am enclosing a copy of his pronouncement so that you may judge for yourself.—Yours, etc.,

NAD SNAVE.

A TESTIMONIAL

SIR.—You may be interested in the following: In hospital the other day, while I was waiting to go into the operating theatre, the anaesthetist remarked to me: "Mr. N., oh! you're the chap who has the courage to call himself a Freethinker. A great many more of us think the same way, but haven't the courage to say so."

Is it because he has much more to lose than I have, in my humble position, and not because he has so much less courage?—Yours, etc.,

N.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF HUNGER

SIR.—Mr. H. Cutner's article on "The Geography of Hunger" is, to say the least of it, very misleading in every way, as anyone will see who cares to read the passage he refers to on p. 260. He only gives part of the sentences, and then rambles on about neo-Malthusianism. In the second instance Mr. Cutner says of de Castro: "His own remedy for the present shortage of food is very simple. It is the use of force. Everybody—note the word—must be made to produce food. Here are his own words: "The road to survival (lies) . . . in the effort to make everybody on the face of the earth productive" (p. 260). "Everybody must straightaway go on the land. Every scrap of land in the world must be cultivated and people must be made to go wherever required—by force."

A more gross and glaring misrepresentation of what a writer had said I cannot imagine. It simply is not true. This is the sentence,

viz.: "The road to world survival, therefore, does not lie in the neo-Malthusian prescriptions to eliminate surplus people, nor in control, but in the effort to make everybody on the face of the earth productive." Not a word of everybody having to go on the land where they are sent by force. Moreover, I notice Mr. Cutner has nothing to say about the neo-Malthusianism of William Vogt which is mentioned over and over again on p. 260. Yet it does seem such a pity that so eminent a Freethinker as Mr. Cutner should be guilty of such unworthy tactics.—Yours, etc.,

A. W. I. McHATTE.

MAU MAU RELIGION

SIR.—Readers of Mr. Ridley's article, "The Twilight of Africa's Gods," may be interested in the following quotation:—

"I believe in God the Father, Lord of Nature, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and I believe in Gikuyu and Mumbie who inherited the rule of this country. They were deceived and robbed of their lands and pieces of earth. They were dispersed, ruled and made as new pieces of earth. Their fearless children have risen and are awaiting the truth at the right hand of God. They are praying for the Father Lord of Nature and protector of age groups, for the eviction of those who robbed us of our land, whether dead, or not yet born. I believe in the clean ceremonies of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the leadership of Kenyatta and Mbiyu, and pointing out the agitation by Africans and in justice, also the everlastingness of the Gikuyu tribe. God bless us. Amen."

This creed, taken from a suppressed African pamphlet, appears in "Report on Kenya" by Mr. Kingsley Martin ("The Statesman and Nation," December 6, 1952) and illustrates the influence of Christian "civilisation" upon the native Africans.—Yours, etc.,

C. McCALL.

PARLIAMENT REPUBLIC?

SIR.—One of the practical objects of the National Secular Society is the Abolition of all Hereditary Distinctions and Privileges. It would be foolish to try and set up a "British People's Federal Republic" when we have a democratically elected House of Commons who can alter the Constitution when they are so minor and without bloodshed. I hope the N.S.S. will consider ways and means of educating the public in Secularism, and not pursue chimeras of the nature suggested by Messrs. Perrin and Hanger. Do they want to abolish Parliament?—Yours, etc.,

ALFRED D. CORRIE.

STALIN

SIR.—Stalin and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. It has been curious to notice the many assertions in the obituary notices of Mr. Stalin, alleging that he played little or no part in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. These statements are hardly in accord with the fact that the important telegram of November 22, 1917, removing the Russian Commander-in-Chief from his post and refusing to obey orders was signed jointly by Lenin and Stalin. The full terms of the telegram are set out on page 415, Vol. 2 of the "Illustrated History of the Russian Revolution." I only mention this point in the interests of historical accuracy, as this order was certainly the most critical of those days.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

Robert Taylor (Continued from page 150)

Taylor still leaned more to the Christian religion than to plain, forthright Deism. *The Clerical Review* created a little sensation and brought him into contact with a number of well-known Dublin people who included Lord Dillon. They decided to form a "public association for the inculcation of morals," calling it "The Society for Universal Benevolence."

(To be continued)

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VOL. 72

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