

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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AMONGST modern English churchmen the most famous, at least as far as the educated world is concerned, is, we would say, John Henry Newman (1801-90), successively, leader of the High Church party within the Anglican Church and, later on, Cardinal of the Church of Rome; in public estimation, probably its most famous prelate, certainly so in the Anglo-Saxon world. In the course of his long life of almost ninety years, J. H. Newman touched, if not life, at least literature, at many points, and appealed in quite different ways to quite different people: to the general public, Newman is the author of *Lead, Kindly Light*, and, perhaps still, of the *Apologia pro vita sua*, his stinging reply to Kingsley. To the theologian and philosopher, it is by his *Development of Christian Doctrine* and his *Grammar of Assent*, that the great Cardinal is still remembered. To the lover of literature, it is the musical cadence of Newman's elegant prose that falls pleasantly on the ear. There is no other modern churchman of whom such a varied range can be predicated. As Church and university, Newman's learning was, no doubt, second-hand. As a theologian and metaphysician, he was less powerful and original than Dean Mansel or Bishop Butler. No one, to-day, reads his novels and historical works, nor even his poetry, except for his most famous hymn and, perhaps, his *Dream of Gerontius*. As a stylist, a "lord of language," a master of English prose, Newman perhaps ranks with Ruskin and Burke as a master of ornate eloquence. But it would be difficult to justify his extraordinary popular reputation by anything which he actually did. Theology, after all, is not a *bona fide* branch of knowledge. Much of what we may perhaps term the Newman legend is due, no doubt, to the Cardinal's elusive and enigmatic personality, "as elusive as a shade," as one of his biographers puts it. For in the purlieus of the stolid industrial world of Queen Victoria, Newman seemed strangely out of place; a truly singular product of the complacent bourgeois atmosphere of Holborn in which he was born and reared. It was not only his detractor, Kingsley, but, one feels, practically his whole generation who, as Mr. Lytton Strachey phrased it, were as incapable of understanding Newman's subtle mentality as a British cavalry subaltern in Benares would be when confronted with the Brahmin students of the Vedanta. In an England which traditionally dislikes people who change their beliefs, and in which the solid Protestant majority still regarded the Pope as antichrist, how Newman acquired and, still more, kept his unique personal standing, must always be something of a mystery. Was it that, despite its own assertions, the Victorian age was, at bottom, not materialistic nor utilitarian, but really cherished in its inmost heart a love of mystery and romance? So, at least, Disraeli always asserted, and the fact that two such out-and-out misfits in an industrial

age as the Tory statesman and the Roman cardinal could achieve the highest fame and reputation in the classic era of Liberalism and of Free Trade itself, proves that this supposition had more to be said in its favour than a mere survey of the more superficial aspects of the Victorian age would suggest.

Newman, however, was not only an unusual man but, also, belonged to an unusual family. This peculiar genealogical background, and his no less peculiar personal relationship with it, is adequately and interestingly presented in a book published last year by the Irish writer, Sean O'Faolain. In *Newman's Way* (Longman, Green &

Co., London and New York) Mr. O'Faolain describes both the Cardinal's public and private life prior to 1845, when he "cut the painter" that bound him to the conventional Protestant society of his day, by taking the then audacious step of joining the alien "Italian Mission," the Church of Rome. On Newman's public life there is, in any case, little to say outside of Oxford and religion. Both these aspects have been very fully treated by such official biographers as Wilfrid Ward, and there is little to add to this much written-up biography. On Newman's theology, Mr. O'Faolain has nothing original to add, whilst his *obiter dicta* against the opponents of Christianity are, to put it mildly, even less effective than were Newman's own! As his Irish biographer remarks truly enough, Newman's interests were narrow: in an age of unexampled social, economic and scientific progress, the Cardinal failed to manifest the slightest interest in the great social and scientific movements of his day and century. Newman's primary interests, as he tells us himself, were always in God and in his own soul. Science could tell him nothing about either and, indeed, might end by casting doubt on the existence of both! Why, accordingly, should be cultivate them?

On the subject of Newman's family and personal background, a much more neglected field, Mr. O'Faolain gives us much interesting information, some of it new to the present writer. The Newman family appears to have been a collection of oddities. Their father, John Newman, was a Holborn merchant whose main predilection seems to have been going bankrupt; not, to be sure, a very difficult thing to do for a city merchant in the feverish speculation which characterised the early industrial era. (The father of Newman's own future colleague in the College of Cardinals, Manning, also "went broke." Neither of their eminent offspring appear to have "lost caste" by their parents' defalcations; at this period, both the Church and the universities still despised trade as an occupation unworthy of that godlike and exclusive being, "an English gentleman.")

The Cardinal's two brothers were both oddities, "characters," out of tune with conventional social life, but men of exceptional intellect. Francis William Newman

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Newmans

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

(1805-97), after a cranky apprenticeship among some of the queerest of the queer sects of the Victorian religious underworld, ended up, at the ripe old age of 92, as something of a celebrity. As a writer he was almost as copious as his celebrated elder brother. His published works fill several pages in the catalogue of the British Museum Library and include the oddest of subjects. However, F. W. Newman finally became a professor in the then heretical London University, the translator of Homer, and the author of a controversial work, defending a Deistic point of view, entitled *Phases of Faith*, which made quite a sensation in the "advanced" circles of the day, ran through several editions, and may, perhaps, be still remembered by our older readers.

Even odder, and, perhaps, more interesting, though unknown to fame, was Newman's other brother, born the year after the Cardinal, Charles Newman (1802-84). Charles was still more unconventional both in his intellectual outlook and in his personal habits. Charles Newman was, indeed, a misfit of the misfits in the prim and conventional middle-class atmosphere of 19th century England. Intellectually, he was an atheist and a socialist, then "Siamese Twins" in their abnormality. His personal life diverged not less completely from accepted Victorian standards. At one stage of his unstable career he was found living in squalor and out of matrimony with a woman who pawned his clothes for the cheap products of the gin-shops of the era. Rescued from these dire straits by his family, and furnished with cautious references by his famous brother, Charles Newman held almost as many temporary jobs as did his younger contemporary, that other misfit of Victorian England, "Baron Corvo," whose incredible life has been retold for us in Mr. A. J. A. Symonds' inimitable book, *The Quest for Corvo*. Mr. O'Faolain is not a Symonds, but he gives us some intriguing details. For example, the brother of the most famous churchman of the age lost one of his teaching posts by being expelled for *biting* a pupil—in self-defence,

we are happy to add. No less shocking, Charles was a Republican who used to refer to Queen Victoria as "Mrs. Guelph."

Despite his eccentricities, Charles Newman possessed his share of the Newman intellect. He was, we learn, a brilliant talker and a man of great mental power. Like his more famous brothers, he, too, wrote. (It ran in the family; his sister, Harriet Mozley, also achieved in her day some small reputation as a writer of children's stories.) Some of Charles Newman's essays were published by our *Pioneer Press*, with a Foreword by that fine scholar, J. M. Wheeler, then sub-editor, under G. W. Foote, of *The Freethinker*. Charles Newman spent the last years of his life at the remote Welsh seaside resort of Tenby, apparently supported by his long-suffering elder brother. However, when the Cardinal visited him at Tenby in 1882, Charles Newman, by then an absolute recluse, refused to see him. Despite which unfraternal conduct, the Cardinal paid his funeral expenses in 1884, and even redeemed, at his own cost, his brother's indiscreet correspondence. It was infinitely to his credit, though the inscription which he selected for his wayward brother's tomb, "Lord, of Thy eternal mercy, despise not this, the work of Thy hands," was surely marked by a touch of the famous Newman irony?

Cardinal Newman was, if not one of the greatest, at least one of the most famous men of his century. His fame, like his career, is, however, so closely bound up with the Christian religion that it is virtually impossible to separate them. When, and only when, Christianity has followed earlier religious cults into oblivion, will it be possible to assess Newman objectively, that is, scientifically. It will be a fascinating task; we envy both the future biographer and his readers, and, though we fear that we shall not live to read it, we hope that *The Freethinker* of that day will make a special point of publishing a review worthy of the fascinating theme.

Coronation Day

[The following article was written by G. W. Foote in 1902, after the Coronation of Edward VII. This article by the Founder of "The Freethinker" has a topical interest to-day.—EDITOR.]

CORONATION Day has come and gone at last. It was fixed for the end of June, but "Providence" played the deuce with the arrangements. Splendid weather was turned on, and the King knocked over. It was a nasty sarcasm on the part of that said "Providence," and a postponement was inevitable. Fortunately the King was taken in hand by a strong detachment of the best doctors in the nation. Everything that skill and care could do was done for him; everything that money could command was available. It is not miraculous, therefore, that His Majesty pulled through the worst of the trouble with more than usual celerity; nor is it quite astonishing that his convalescence has been remarkably rapid, for a magnificent yacht in the Solent is certainly an ideal hospital. Science has saved the King. But it would never do for him to say so. He has to play his part as head of the Church as well as head of the State. Accordingly, in his message "To My People" he gives Science the go-by. Not so much as an allusion is made to the doctors or the nurses. They will get their rewards, of course; but they must not be thanked publicly. Thanks have to be rendered elsewhere. The clergy must be recognised. They got up prayers for the King's recovery, and they expect to receive all the credit. They are so exacting

in these matters that the King was obliged to humour them. "The prayers of my people for my recovery," he says, "were heard, and I now offer up my deepest gratitude to Divine Providence." Perhaps the King half believes this. He can hardly be such a fool as to believe it altogether. It is a discreet mixture; a big sop to the clergy, and a little blague on his own account.

We have asked this question before, and we ask it again. Why should God save the King more than any other man in this nation? Monarchs are no longer indispensable. Queen Victoria's loss was "irreparable," but it was found that the earth still turned on its axis. After the lapse of a year and a-half she is almost forgotten. King Edward's death would equally have left no unfillable void. The Prince of Wales would have mounted the throne, and the loyalists would have worshipped a new God. For loyalty is really a form of religion. When the Prince of Wales becomes King we can see a deity created under our very eyes. He is sanctified by "the divinity that doth hedge a king." He becomes a totally new being in the twinkling of an eye. Before, he could even be chaffed; now, to speak lightly of him is a species of blasphemy. This is all nonsense, however, to the eye of reason. Kings are but men. How ever high your seat, as old Montaigne says, you actually sit on your own posteriors. Nor, we repeat, are kings in any way indispensable. One king disappears—and another takes his place—"The King is dead—Long live the King."

And what difference is there, from the point of view of the Infinite, between the greatest king and the meanest of his subjects? A dead lord, as Gray said, ranks with commoners; and a dead king ranks with the mob of "the illustrious obscure." Unless, indeed, he is something more than a king. But how few monarchs have been able to claim the title of great men. Most of them are small enough—except in their own estimation, or in the flattery of their parasites. It was this truth that made Byron exclaim, in reference to "God save the King" in connection with George III, that it was "a great economy in God to save the like." Poor men, working men, breadwinners of families, die every day, and many of them prematurely. They have no troop of doctors round their sick beds, no crowd of nurses to attend to all their wants. They have to fight death alone, and they succumb. Why does not God save them? Why save the father of princes and princesses, and not the father whose death leaves his children to penury or destitution?

Whatever be the reason of the King's recovery, he has recovered, and gone through his Coronation. The Archbishop of Canterbury, has dabbed His Majesty's bald head, his breast, and the palms of his hands with holy oil, and thus "consecrated" him in the name of the Lord. He is now a full-blown sovereign, King in the sight of God, as well as in the sight of men. The one thing wanting is added. Edward VII was King *de facto*, already, but the Church has made him King by the grace of God. He is now both crowned and anointed—and much good may it do him!

The men and women who "assisted" at the Coronation in Westminster Abbey were not the British nation. Neither did they represent the British nation. Most of them were drones or parasites. Some of them had attained to their positions by hard work, of a kind, but these were a very small minority. As for the idle crowd outside, one need not speak of it with the slightest respect. There is more loyalism—perhaps we should say royalism—to-day than ever. There is also more rowdiness. Forty years ago it was not common to hear lads swearing in the streets; it is common enough now; and these lads doff their hats with grotesque reverence at the sound of "the King!" Various "odes" have appeared in the more "respectable" papers. Mr. John Davidson even has joined in the melancholy chorus. But the popular Coronation poet-laureate is the author of a tippy song which has been shouted on the music-hall stages, and shouted still more lustily in the public thoroughfares:—

Drinking whisky, wine, and sherry,
We'll all be merry
On Coronation Day.

The sentiment and poetry of these lines are worthy of the occasion; the humbug at one end is matched by the vulgarity at the other; and one is tempted to say that to be King over such a mob is not an honour for which any man should thank God too vigorously.

Humbug and vulgarity! These are the chief characteristics of present-day loyalism. There is not a note of sincerity in it. Journalists who should know better, and do know better, are swept along by the popular flood. The *Daily News*, the organ of the Nonconformist Conscience, put on one of its best homiletic scribes to write on "The King's Thanksgiving." There were many blunders in his article, but nothing quite so bad as the reference to that great and noble Emperor whose very name is music to the students of humanity. "The burden of Marcus Aurelius," the writer said, "was not so heavy as the burden of the ruler who presides over the destinies of the British Empire." What a prostitution of scholarship on the altar of political superstition! Marcus Aurelius was not a sham ruler, but a

real one; the actual burden of empire rested upon his shoulders. He governed in fact, not in theory; he wielded power and bore responsibility; and in all serious fighting he went through the campaign at the head of its army, sharing its hardships no less than its dangers. Such a man needed no hocus-pocus of anointing to make him a true Emperor. The finest head and the noblest heart in the Roman Empire, resting on the bare ground of the tented field, wrapped in a cloak whose only distinction was that its colour was the imperial purple, and thinking out some point in moral philosophy before falling off into a sleep well earned by the day-long cares of a mighty rulership, ought not to be mentioned in the same breath with a commonplace "constitutional" monarch, who is not the helm, but the gilded figure-head, of the ship of State. Christendom has never produced such rulers as the great Pagan Emperors. The throne shed no lustre on them: they shed lustre on the throne. They were eminent and conspicuous not only by station, but by intellect, and character, and public service. And now, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, and all the pretended uplifting influence of Christianity upon the Western world, we have nothing but "Edward, R and I." to set beside Marcus Aurelius! It is really *too* absurd. We drop our pen in amazement at human folly.

Fundamentalism

I scorn the Great of every Age, I find 'em rather tiny,
To me, they wear a faint and feeble look;
Their fame is but a bubble, or a splash upon the briny—
I haven't found 'em mentioned in The Book.

O, Science has its wonders, it can light the life of Man,
And give each dawn a brightly Burgeoned look;
Can mollify the Good Old Rule; commute the Simple
Plan—
But I've still to find it—buried in The Book.

The Moderns have a word for it, it's patronised and
pensioned,
But we Believers stare with stony eye;
It's not included in The Word—and so, when CULTURE'S
mentioned
Some Great Men grab their guns—and so do I.

Oh, The Book's my good companion, in the meadow and
the mart,
It keeps me in the very highest feather;
And I know each word it holds, although I haven't learned
the art—
Of putting one or two of 'em together.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

Was it the Beer Speaking?

Preaching to youth in Westminster Abbey on the Sunday after the Coronation the Archbishop of Canterbury told the story of two men in a "pub" standing before a picture of the Queen.

One said to the other: "Don't you wish there was another war?"
"God help us, why?" said the other.
The first man said: "Wouldn't you like a chance to Fight for Her?"

Why there are Four Gospels

"For than these four gospels there can be neither more nor less.
"Because only four quarters of the Earth exist, and only the four winds of Heaven, and because the Church ministers to the entire earth, it, also, must possess four principal columns."—
IRENAEUS, *Against the Heresies*, book 3, ch. ii, section 8, translated by F.A.R.

This Believing World

For some reason or other, Dr. Donald Soper is considered a triumphant "infidel slayer." It should prove most interesting to learn the names of the infidels he has exterminated. As far as we know, they are found in very sparse numbers round his "soap-box" on Tower Hill and elsewhere, and are in no sense whatever representative of modern Freethought. It is one thing to deal with "hecklers" round a soap-box, and quite a different thing to reply to, let us say, *Supernatural Religion*, or even the *Age of Reason*.

What great Freethought work has Dr. Soper replied to? We cannot remember a single one. But he now has a great chance for he has been elected as the President of the Methodist Church. He is the subject of a striking eulogy in the *Daily Herald* and Dr. Soper there tells us how he wants everybody to go to Church. Why? Alas, with shame we notice—not because Christ Jesus died for us and we have to be saved, but because "by cutting themselves off from the Church, people are cutting themselves off from a social neighbourliness which is essential to a civilised community."

Alas and alack! Dr. Soper does not even mention Christ Jesus in the interview in the *Daily Herald*. There is not a word about damning all who disbelieve in the Son of God. Hell has disappeared; so have miracles and relics and Christian theology. Christianity does us a social service—like a popular mixed club. Perhaps it is the infidels who have brought Dr. Soper into this state of mind. Perhaps it is they after all who have converted *him*—and not vice-versa!

Canon M. Stockwood has made an astonishing discovery—that women in general outnumber men in church. He says that in his own district in Bristol the proportion is three to two but if that is so, the men there must be very religious. Ten to one would be about right for the country. He thinks in any case "the Church is not without blame" and that it could do "with a mighty kick in the pants." But isn't the Canon himself part of the Church? And what good would a kick in *his* pants do?

The only thing that will shake him and similar clerics is the recognition that Christianity is not *true*. He and his friends talk of faith, plenty of faith, but very rarely ask: Is the Virgin Birth true? Are any miracles true? Are Hell and its Devils true? "True" Christianity, that is, the religion Christ Jesus "taught," is just nonsense—and that is why the Church gets fewer and fewer men. And when a woman gets to know the truth about "true" Christianity, she, too, gives it up.

Following in the wake of our Forces, four big London stores have appointed a chaplain—the Rev. R. E. H. Bowdler (who inherits, by the way, a famous name, and one which has added a word to our language and to the gaiety of nations). Mr. Bowdler will use all his 31-year-old experience in advising customers—privately, of course—on all moral and economical problems as well as on religious difficulties. For this, he hopes to be provided with a small office in each store, no doubt a sort of "confessional," in which the ladies—who are our big stores' principal customers—will be able to pour out their most heartfelt sorrows. Or, perhaps they will ask Mr. Bowdler's advice only on questions of price in fashion and taste. One never knows. But how beautiful are the consolations of religion!

Theatre

The Two Bouquets, at the Piccadilly Theatre, is a musical play by Eleanor and Herbert Farjeon.

Occasionally we reach back into the past to remind ourselves that The Good Old Days were not so bad as some modernists would have us believe, so here is a play written round the Victorian era in the days when ladies hid their figures by means of bustles and gentlemen concealed their faces behind flowing moustachios; when fathers were often tyrants and mothers were for ever talking scandal and doing their best to avoid it.

The plot is simple but charming, and revolves round a naughty brother who receives—on behalf of his two sisters—bouquets from their shy suitors, each containing a personal message signed but not addressed. The brother mixes the two bouquets with results that you may well imagine but more satisfactorily witness when you see the play.

Eleanor Farjeon has selected and orchestrated suitable music, which is gay and tuneful. The singers are led by Derek Oldham, whose stage personality is most pleasing and who is an excellent actor as well as singer. Hugh Paddick possesses a good voice, indulges in mischievous capers, and has a stage manner that should take him far into comedy. Daphne Anderson gave a fine rendering of a not very refined actress and Sara Gregory has a charm of her own.

Under Willard Stoker's direction this makes happy and satisfactory entertainment.

After the show we may do well to wonder what we have to offer to-day that will be sought by posterity and give an equal amount of pleasure.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

N.S.S. Executive Committee, 9th July

Present: Mr. Ridley (in the Chair), Mrs. Venton, Ebury, Griffiths, Gibbins, Taylor, Hornbrook, Tiley, Cleaver, Corstorphine and the Secretary.

Twenty-three new members were accepted for the Parent, West London, Manchester and North London branches. The Secretary reported that the late Mr. James Pablo, of Blackpool, had left the Society a legacy of £200 and this had now been received and banked.

Mr. J. Clayton's report of meetings held in various parts of Lancashire was accepted, also a report of meetings of the Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers and of the Secular Education League, both of which the President and Secretary had attended. It was decided to support further joint meetings on "Broadcasting and Religion" and to request N.S.S. speakers to press the need for the secular solution as the only practical way out of difficulties created by sectarian claims in the educational field.

Approval of moves towards co-operation with the League Against Cruel Sports and the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, for the further of common objectives, was given. It was agreed that the Secretary should represent the N.S.S. at the Summer Conference of the R.P.A. at Sheffield University, and that Mr. Taylor should attend the Autumn Conference of the Ethical Unions at High Leigh, Hoddesdon.

A letter from the Home Office noted representations contained in the Conference Resolution calling for the Fixed Easter Act, 1928, to be put into operation.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary

Adut

A device we've perfected, to end all life's fears,
You fit the thing on in the earliest years;
A specific which makes each believer feel proud—
It keeps the knees bent and the thickest head bowed.
A. E. C.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

C. E. RATCLIFFE.—There is no reason why a Freethinker should not be a Positivist—if he is attracted to what Comte called the Religion of Humanity which he modelled on the Catholic Church. Positivism is like Catholicism without theology, and no doubt appeals to people who must have a religion "of sorts."

CHARLES JONES (Merthyr Tydfil).—It is impossible for us to acknowledge individually all the very numerous contributions that we receive. Your contribution will either be published or returned.

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

Lectures by **J. CLAYTON**: Friday, July 24, 7-45 p.m., Clitheroe; Saturday, July 25, 6 p.m., Great Harwood; Sunday, July 26, 7 p.m., Blackburn Market; Tuesday, July 28, 7-45 p.m., Cornholme.

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**. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at **Platt Fields, COLIN MCCALL**.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, July 26, noon: **L. EBURY**.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: **Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, EBURY, TAYLOR, and RIDLEY**.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, July 26, 7 p.m.: **G. A. KIRK** (Leicester), "Secularism."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, July 24, 7-15 p.m.: **Dr. AZIZ KHATTAB**, "Modern Egypt."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead, two mins. Wanstead Station).—Thursday, July 23, 8 p.m.: Open meeting.

NOTES AND NEWS

A correspondent has kindly forwarded to us a circular sent out by our old enemy, the "Christian Evidence Society," whose secretary, the Reverend Mr. Harfitt, is a well-known advocate of Christianity and "infidel slayer" in our public parks and open-air speaking forums in London. The burden of the current appeal is not, as one might have rashly concluded, for more "evidence," but for that more sordid commodity, cash. Without finance, the work of spreading and defending the Gospel cannot, it seems, be carried on. Gospel Truth, it can't! Without mammon—and plenty of it!—God is impotent. Now, surely, is the time for Our Lord to work a really useful miracle and to provide His servants with some ready cash. "With God all things are possible," and even if it is impossible for the "Christian Evidence Society" to provide any "evidence" for Christianity, it ought to be

possible for the Almighty to pay His servants' wages every Friday? So, instead of sending out circulars, we recommend prayer to our Christian friends. "Ask, and ye shall receive."

With the death of Mr. Hilaire Belloc, the Roman Catholic Church in Britain loses one of its most talented, famous and, we fear that we must add, fanatical champions. Practically every intrigue committed by, or under the auspices of Holy Church, from the Dreyfus case onward, found a vigorous defender in Mr. Belloc, who crossed swords with more courage than success, with such redoubtable anti-Catholic critics as Professor J. B. Bury and Mr. H. G. Wells. So zealous was Belloc in defence of the Faith that he was, on occasions, "plus royaliste que le roi," more Papal than the Pope; for example, in repudiating evolution just when the Church, to maintain its hold over the educated public, is cautiously beginning to accept it. As an historian—and he wrote a great deal on this subject—Belloc was the best-known champion of the Catholic view of English history, which regards English history since, and because of, the Reformation, as one ghastly aberration; but, apart from his general view, even Catholic scholars have complained that his pages swarm with inaccuracies.

As a critic of modern totalitarian tendencies and of the present party system, Belloc was more effective. *The Servile State* is, making allowances for its Catholic premises, a massive indictment of the modern slave states; whilst in his humorous novels, *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election* and *Pongo and the Bull*, the author effectively satirised the modern party machine and its often despicable products. As a poet, Belloc was of considerable stature, besides being a brilliant essayist. Whilst his *Path to Rome* is a masterpiece of its kind, one must regret that he took the "path to Rome" in so many other respects besides the geographical one. A belated medievalist, Belloc was a great and various personality. Where, to-day, can we find the like of the famous quartet, Wells-Shaw-Chesterton-Belloc? All lovers of English literature must regret the fatal accident that terminated this spectacular literary genius. We fear, however, that, had he, and we, lived in the Middle Ages, Mr. Belloc would have showed no compunction in committing *The Freethinker* and, probably, its editor and staff as well, to the fire in an *auto-da-fé*!

For some time past, our pacifist contemporary, *Peace News*, has been publishing a series of articles on the point of view of the Churches towards the pacifist movement. We are now pleased to announce that *Peace News*, last week, published an article by Mr. Victor Morris, General Secretary of the N.S.S., indicating the point of view of the N.S.S. with regard both to peace and to the pacifist movement. Mr. Morris pointed out in his article that, ever since the foundation of the N.S.S. in 1866, the fight for peace has figured on its agenda and amongst its "Immediate Aims and Objects." We are particularly glad of the insertion of Mr. Morris's article in our contemporary, since religious influence has always loomed large in the organised pacifist movement in this country, and it is quite time that the numerous British Freethinkers who are sympathetically inclined to pacifism should receive public recognition. Whilst we have no wish to impugn the sincerity of Christian pacifists, we must point out that Christianity can hardly, on any view of its history, be called a pacifist religion. Was not its God, Jehovah, "The Lord of Hosts"?

Robert Taylor

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

(Continued from page 227)

AS for many of the evidences for Christianity brought forward by Christians, Taylor examines them in the fullest detail, together with an account of the Apostles, the Apostolic Fathers, the Fathers of the second, third, and fourth centuries, as well as many of the heretics of the period. Certainly Christianity cannot be fully understood, nor the imposture proven without some knowledge of the times when the religion was being formed, gathering converts, and building churches. What Taylor thinks of the testimony brought forward by the Church historians can be seen in the following passage:—

The historians of the first three centuries of Christianity have taken so great a licence in this way (inventing incidents and names, etc.), as that no one alleged fact standing on their testimony can be said to have even a probable degree of evidence. The most candid and learned even of Christian inquirers have admitted that antiquity is most deficient just exactly where it is most important; that there is absolutely nothing known of the church history in those times on which a rational man can place any reliance; and that the epoch when Christian truth first dawned upon the world is appropriately designated as the *Age of Fable*.

Taylor, as has been intimated already, believed there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, and he gives many pages describing the early heretics—some of whom denied his divinity, or his crucifixion, or his resurrection, or even his actual existence. He deals also very fully with the supposed testimony of Josephus relative to Jesus, and that of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny. Very few Christians dare refer to Josephus these days as a Jew who wrote about Jesus; the passages in his works are so obviously forgeries that even Dr. Lardner, who spent many years of his life collecting all the testimony to the existence of Jesus he could discover, was obliged to reject Josephus. Taylor gives the substance of the arguments against him.

As for Tacitus, Taylor considered—and he was, perhaps, the first writer who did—that the celebrated passage about the Christians in Rome “a forgery or interpolation upon the text of Tacitus . . . from a consideration solely of the facts of the case.” These facts are clearly stated so that the reader could judge for himself—for it must be said that almost all authorities believed the text to be genuine, and they included Gibbon himself. On the other hand, almost all the Freethinkers these days who have had occasion to deal with Tacitus agree with Taylor; and the reader who is curious on the subject should read W. B. Smith's *Ecce Deus*, Drews's *Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus*, and the works of John M. Robertson and Hochart. Here again it must be admitted that Taylor was not merely a pioneer, but a leader on the question. It required real courage to go counter to the opinions of, as he called them, “the wisest and best men in the world.”

So again with the celebrated letter of Pliny to the emperor Trajan, Taylor gives his reasons, and deals with the counter arguments, for dismissing it as worthless as proof for the real existence of Jesus. The reader must judge this for himself as well as the case for or against Suetonius.

After examining a number of other writers whose testimony has been adduced to prove the existence of Christianity at an early date, and therefore the existence of its “founder,” Taylor insists that there is no “historical evidence which might justify a rational man to himself, in believing the Christian religion to be of God.” And he adds:—

We inquired for the moral effects which the prevalence of this religion through so many ages and countries in the world

has produced on men's minds, and we find more horrors, crimes and miseries, occasioned by this religion and its bad influence on the human heart, more sanguinary wars among nations, more bitter feuds and implacable heart-burnings among families, more desolation of moral principle, more of everything that is evil and wicked, than the prevalence of any vice, or of all vices put together, could have caused.

It is an indictment which is as true to-day as it was when Taylor wrote; but to write it then brought upon him the bitterest hatred and obloquy, of which the *Answer* of the Rev. J. Pye Smith is but one precious example.

The *Diegesis* is well worth reading to-day, and it presents in a handy form an examination of the evidence for the Christian religion which would have to be searched for in many other volumes. It has also many other valuable features in the way of chronological tables, with lists of Roman emperors, Apostolic Fathers, etc. That it may want rectifying in a few details in the light of present knowledge can be admitted, though the present writer, as far as he has tested the *Diegesis* can only express his astonishment that its author, handicapped as he was by having to write in prison, has been so uniformly accurate.

A few years after the publication of the *Diegesis*, a young Unitarian writer, Charles C. Hennell—he was not then thirty—“reluctantly undertook a judicial investigation,” says Robertson in his *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, of the problems involved in the origins of Christianity, and came to the conclusion that “the whole supernatural element in the records must be abandoned on critical grounds.” Robertson thought very highly of Hennell's work, which was entitled *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* (1838), and which had many points of similarity with the epoch-making *Leben Jesu* of Strauss. Strauss indeed even wrote a flattering preface to the German translation of Hennell's book.

But to his sister, Sara, Hennell wrote the following criticism of the *Diegesis* quoted by Robertson:—

I have nearly finished reading Robert Taylor's *Diegesis* or *Discovery of the Origin*, etc., of Christianity, which Charles [Bray] has sent me. It is not fair to call it uncandid, because there is no pretence at candour at all in it: honest, but reckless, witty, abusive, take-hold-of-anything special pleading. He gets the laugh on his side till you cry. Yet there is an immense deal of learning in it, and some valuable hints. It does not fall in much with mine, except about the making out, and this is his grand discovery, that the Theopute, Essenes of Egypt, had our gospel-story as part of their ancient writings before the supposed time of Christ. The rests on a comparison of a passage of Eusebius with one of Philo, which does not appear to me to prove it.

But I must look a good deal into it, and say something about it in the next edition; also something about the India-Christna, and how far it is probable that the evangelists have applied to Jesus the pagan fictions of Adonis, Bacchus, etc., or some corrupted versions of them. Like Dupin, Taylor tries to make this out to the extent (of arguing) that no such real person ever existed; but . . . both of them seem to have studied chiefly the books of pagan mythology, and to have almost neglected Josephus and the Old Testament, which have been part of my chief studies. This makes their books of quite a different character from mine. I am persuaded I am nearest the truth—but they suggest a good deal that I could add.

Robertson considers this a “not unfair” account of the *Diegesis*; perhaps so. But it is not unfair to add also that the *Diegesis* deals far more with Christian writers and their documents than it does with “the books of Jewish mythology.” Hennell believed in the usual kind of Jesus, which nearly all who had given up the God-Jesus believe in—the more or less good, kind, benevolent, loving, quite sinless, of course, and he claims to have studied

(Continued on next page)

Establishment and Parish in the Modern State

By J. R. HOWES

THE existence of a national church is in itself an anachronism in the modern democratic state based on complete religious toleration. It is even more of an anachronism when only 13 per cent. of our population are regular churchgoers. Under such circumstances the Christian religion itself is but a sect, and the church "by law established" is but a section of a sect—not even taking first place at that.

The proposal that this national church be disestablished, and become what it rightly is, just one sect among many, seems logically irrefutable. And if disestablished why not disendowed also? To whom does its revenue and property belong? Are they not national rather than sectarian revenues and properties? Were they not largely the product of such legal impositions as tithes and bounties?

I do not see how this argument can be successfully met, and yet I have some reluctance to accept the obvious conclusion. Has not this church been useful in that its clergy constituted a learned class, with the additional virtues of not being a parasite class, and of being the means of bringing some cultural influence into the lives of the mass of ordinary workpeople? And can we not also agree that this is a valuable and necessary social function, and perhaps its only justification in the modern state?

Admitting this can we not also agree that, for the fulfilment of such a function, its sectarian creed is really a hindrance rather than a help. Already the church embraces schools of thought as various as Romanism and Deism. Can a church that accepts a Bishop Barnes and a "Red" Dean of Canterbury draw the line at a Bernard Shaw, a Bertrand Russell, or a Julian Huxley? Surely a church deserving of the name of national and accepting national endowment, can only be justified if wide enough to embrace all contemporary thought; and that includes naturalist humanism; or else vacate its national status. If the Church wishes to maintain its national status and fulfil the nationally useful function of bringing a cultured outlook to the masses of our people it must first free itself of all doctrinal sanctions. A national clergy cannot be justified by faith in the 39 Articles, but only as centres of culture and learning in every parish in the country. Their business is not to impose a doctrine but to stimulate the minds and consciences of their parishioners.

For this purpose it is necessary to have a good grounding in an up-to-date version of the Humanities. That is in logic, including statistics and semantics; psychology; anthropology, and comparative religion and mythology; social history and sociology, and some elementary science. The religious and political opinions of a national ministry ought not to enter into the issue of their competence. We want intelligence rather than conformity. No one should go straight into the ministry from school and college. There should be a period of industrial commercial or professional work before application. Applicants should be eligible between the ages of 30 and 50, and selection would be based on standard of attainment in the necessary course of studies—without any religious or political test. An applicant might be a Papist, a Buddhist, or a Communist; a scientist, a labourer, or a journalist. So long as he performed his duties, and had the requisite qualifications, that should be enough. Such qualifications ought to be obtainable quite free or at nominal fees at local

evening or week-end courses so that no strata of the population can be debarred from entering. Antecedents should not count. If a man needs any special training in public speaking or elocution it should be given him after acceptance and before appointment.

The basis of the church is the parish, and to-day the parish is being increasingly recognised by social thinkers as the necessary basis of the state. Under the name of the "neighbourhood unit" it is an essential feature of modern town planning science, and as the most intimate form of local government it is the school of responsible self-government.

The ministry should seek to enhance the value of the parish as a social unit in every way, politically, culturally, educationally, and as the unit of social welfare, both in urban areas where the parish has no political function as well as in rural areas. The minister as editor of the parish magazine should seek to make it truly a vehicle of the ideas of the whole of his parish.

The ministry should take over the duties of registrar of births, marriages and deaths and other vital statistics, in place of the present sacraments, which would be meaningless in a non-theological church.

The *parish church* for music and ideas; the *parish hall* for family entertainment, the local library, discussion group, etc.; the *parish school* for education and evening classes; and the *parish council* which ought to exist if it does not already, for local self-government; ought to be a means of integrating people's lives and interests and serve as a counterweight to the social disintegrating forces of party politics, sectarian beliefs, and industrial strife.

Church government should be democratic. Bishops would be the permanent secretaries of regional parish federations and the archbishops would similarly be the secretaries of the national federation.

The present incumbents need not be turned out of their living nor their practice or teaching altered, except by their own wish. The character of the church could be altered slowly and experimentally by the new type of clergy coming in their places as they become vacant.

However displeasing this doctrinal and devotional freedom may be to many honest and conscientious clergymen, I seriously suggest this as the only justifiable alternative to complete disestablishment and disendowment. Is the church going to be just another sectarian body, or is it going to provide the means of a genuine learned class in tune with the modern proletarian state?

Super Spiv

I lurk in the lanes, at the corners,

And—thank you!—I'm doing quite well;

Accosting the mutes and the mourners

With—"P-s-s-t! Return tickets from Hell?"

A. E. C.

Robert Taylor (Continued from page 238)

Josephus more than Taylor. Yet Taylor devotes four pages to Josephus, dealing with the essential point at issue—does he or does he not mention Jesus? Taylor shows quite clearly that the passage in the Jewish historian which mentions Jesus is a clumsy forgery, and there are few Christian writers who can refute him or have attempted to do so.

(To be continued)

Correspondence

THE CHURCHES AND THE RATES

SIR.—Surely Mr. Nicholson is not serious when he advocates that the Churches should not pay rates?

"It is a toss up," says he, "between the believer in the social value of rates and taxes, and the believer of salvation by faith."

However, any believer in any form of civilised society must admit that rates and taxes are a social necessity, whilst on the other hand, the Christian Church is, and always has been, used as a brake on social progress.

Personally, I firmly believe that the humble scavenger is of far, far greater value to human society than a bishop, and as a Freethinker I have, for the greater part of my life, contended that we should pay the clergy less and the scavengers more.

I am fully conscious of the fact that taxation in Britain to-day (and in general) is such that it must remind all Freethinkers of Gibbon's reference to "That glorious brief period that preceded the fall of the Roman Empire, when hordes of bureaucrats like deadly germs eat into the vitals of the state."

The present Sunday Press is a good guide to all people who can read between the lines as to our present position as a nation.

Anyone who reads (shall we say) Mr. Arthur Halliwell's exposure of the champagne-drinking, whoremongering, war-made parasites, who, unless we soon curb them, are hastening on the ruin of an Empire built up by the hard work and sacrifice of millions in the past.

Moral rearmament and bible-punched hypnotised victims of the American friend of the late Mr. Hitler have, for political ends, introduced a social security plan which they must know the present economic form of our society is unable to sustain and, consequently, it is, upon analysis, nothing more than a mass attempt at a suicide of the nation, for the number of bureaucrats employed to manipulate the system exceeds the total number of miners and agricultural workers combined, and income-tax is of such magnitude that thousands upon thousands of good citizens have been turned into petty criminals.

If Mr. Nicholson thinks along these lines then I am with him, but I certainly cannot agree that a social necessity like local rates, rationally fixed and applied for social development, should be paid by the public in general, whilst those in charge of these ugly zinc and brick atrocities called churches and chapels, now standing like monstrous monuments to the pig-headed stupidity of masses of mankind, should be freed from the responsibility of paying rates like any other business, is unfair and unjust to the rest of the community and is another instance of the legal robbery of the nation by an impudent minority.

No, no, Mr. Nicholson! Your defence of the purveyors of superstition and ignorance in contributing nothing towards social advancement is void of all reason.—Yours, etc.,

PAUL VARNEY.

P.S.—Re my reference to Mr. Halliwell's exposure. Of course, I recognise that he may be quite unconscious of the valuable data he is providing for students of social and political decadence.—P.V.

SPANISH CATHOLICISM

SIR.—As a Spanish Freethinker and an assiduous reader of Manhattan's books and of *The Freethinker*, I congratulate you for your very interesting article "Catholicism in Franco Spain."

The Finally affair is a decisive proof that at the "South of the Pyrenees . . . the Catholicism of the High Middle Ages, of Aquinas and of Torquemada, still flourishes vigorously. And as Linfield tells us: 'Wherever Catholicism waxes strong liberties wane' . . ." (Manhattan).

Wherever Catholicism is, there is no possibility for other credos. Spain is a decisive proof of this thesis. I thank you very much for this struggle against the Catholic tyranny in my loved Spain.

The Vatican's chains are ferrous, but the heroic Spanish people will break them. For this we need the assistance of Freethinkers all over the world, especially of English Freethinkers.—Yours, etc.,

"HISPANICUS."

MOUNT EVEREST

SIR.—The following two letters from Mr. Hillary's father and Mr. A. C. Barrington, taken from *Peace News* of June 26, will I feel sure, interest your readers.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

THE EXAMPLE OF EVEREST—BY HILLARY'S FATHER

Mr. P. A. Hillary, whose son, with Sherpa Tensing, conquered Mount Everest, issued the following statement from his New Zealand home:—

"A feature of the successful assault which has great significance is that sons of the East and the West working together have

reached the crest of this unconquered giant mountain peak to set the higher ideals and aspirations of mankind alight with a hope that had been somewhat weakened by world-wide events—the hope of co-operation between all peoples, with true comradeship and unselfishness again respected as marks of manhood and womanhood.

"Is there not a message to the world in this splendid achievement? Cannot world peace be striven for as gallantly, as selflessly and with such single-minded purpose? Cannot a great objective be made as clear to mankind as the towering Everest peak was to the climbers? And cannot all of humanity's spiritual, mental and physical strength be welded together in a team which will bring to a hurt and suffering world the peace and harmony which is man's natural inheritance?"

Our New Zealand Correspondent, A. C. Barrington comments:—

"It is not surprising that from this family Edmund's brother Rex was a conscientious objector during the war and spent three years behind the barbed wire of New Zealand's detention camps. The same spirit of determination and adventure is there. Let us accept the father's challenge and mobilise this spirit for peace."

ROMAN CATHOLIC INFALLIBILITY

SIR.—Your Catholic correspondent claims Papal Infallibility, *ex cathedra*, in Faith and Morals. I will not reply from a Rationalist's point of view, but from a Theological point of view.

It is untrue in Faith because:—

1. Christ gave his life knowingly and voluntarily to a cruel and barbaric death for the great Human Principle that Man should never kill his fellow Man—in war or out of it. His Catholic Administrators have never Proclaimed this. His Will and Law.

2. Christ never Proclaimed that Transubstantiation was a Theological Truth to be believed in Faith by his Followers. Nor did He Proclaim that the seed of Man was sacred. He did Proclaim that the body of Man should never be slain by the sword, and acted up to it.

It is untrue in Morals because:—

1. He Proclaimed that Human Love is above, and greater than, all virtue and all law, and that without it all virtue is worthless and profitless—even though you give all your goods to feed the Poor and your body to be burned: alive.

2. His Administrators have never Proclaimed this. They have cruelly, barbarically, and fiendishly tortured Women in the Past and do so psychologically in the Present. They have used their offspring as and for "work-slaves" and carried off fodder. They have glorified in War and blessed the carnal weapons thereof.

Hence Human Love is crucified: Human Nature perverted and reviled: Christ's Law of Human Love mocked, and what might have been an Abode of Human Love turned into a seething Den of Hatred.

I submit that he who does not follow his Leader is a Traitor to that Leader. And, in these matters, a Traitor to the whole Human Race!—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIES.

Obituary

MRS. MARIA BLAIR

At her home in Templepatrick, near Belfast, Mrs. Maria Blair, aged 76, died on Sunday, July 5, and was buried two days later, a secular service being conducted by Mr. John Lessels, a veteran Freethinker.

Deceased is survived by her husband, a grown-up family, grand children and great-grandchildren. Married for 57 years, the couple were lifetime Atheists and always militant in the expression of their views, and it is good to note that Christian neighbours had the greatest respect for the loyalty of the Blairs to their ideal.

In offering our condolences to Mr. Blair in his great loss, it is comforting to know that he is surrounded by sons and daughters who carry on the mother's tradition of militant Freethinking.

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