

# The Freethinker

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AUGUST the Fifteenth is the precise date in the ecclesiastical liturgy of the Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic Church which commemorates the Assumption into Heaven of the "Mother of God," the Blessed Virgin Mary. As such, it is celebrated both as an ecclesiastical Feast Day and as a secular Public Holiday throughout the Catholic world. Though this year, in France, the Great Event was commemorated in a somewhat unusual manner by a National Strike due, it seems, to the fact that French prices are, just at present, trying, apparently, to catch up with the Virgin Mary! The self-same date, the Fifteenth of August, is also the Birthday of Napoleon who, whilst by

no means the equal of the Virgin Mary in sanctity has, at least, this minor advantage: that as far as we know, no one has ever doubted his historical and actual existence. The physical assumption into Heaven of "The Mother of God" represents actually, the most recent Dogma of Catholic Christianity, solemnly and officially proclaimed by the Church, with the usual anathemas, "with bell, book and candle," pronounced against "doubting Thomases" and similar sceptics. The actual proclamation of the Dogma accompanied the "Holy Year" at Rome in 1950, and was made under the auspices of the present Pope, Pius the Twelfth (Eugenio Pacelli—1939-?), who proclaimed that, what had formerly been a "pious opinion" which the Faithful were free either to accept or to reject in accordance with their view of the evidence, was, henceforth, infallibly pronounced to be a sacrosanct Dogma binding for all future time upon all practising members of the Church of Rome.

One of the special features which, in particular, have distinguished the evolution of Catholicism since the Reformation, has been the greatly enhanced role ascribed to the Virgin Mary, "the Fourth person of the Trinity," as she has been sometimes described. (To a lesser extent, the same promotion in the Heavenly Hierarchy has been shared by her husband, St. Joseph, the still more nebulous "step-father of Our Lord.") In 1854, the then Pope, Pius the Ninth (1847-78), solemnly proclaimed the "Immaculate Conception" of the Virgin to be a Revealed Dogma, an "Article of Faith," henceforth binding on the Faithful. It may, however, be relevantly pointed out that, as and when compared with the earlier Dogma of the Virgin Birth itself, the Immaculate Conception is, actually, a comparatively trifling matter: all that it states is that, *before* her birth, at the moment of conception in her mother's womb, God miraculously removed the stain of "original sin" which she, in common with all human beings, as the Church teaches, had inherited from our first parents as a result of the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The object of the Immaculate Conception was to ensure that the offspring of the Virgin, the Divine Redeemer, should be born free of the taint of "original sin," which he would, otherwise, have inherited from his only human parent. In actual fact,

granting the initial premises of Catholic Theology, the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception appears to be a logical deduction, and it is, in fact, rather surprising that it did not become an "Article of Faith" at an earlier date than the 19th century. Incidentally, it does *not* state, or imply, as is sometimes assumed, that the Virgin Herself was born of another Virgin.

The "Assumption," however, is an entirely different, and a far more complicated matter. One can state, in fact, without any exaggeration of any kind, that, not only does it fly in the face of abstract logic but, equally, of any concrete evidence and of every concrete fact.

To note that, and how this is so, we have only to consider the actual propositions which are necessarily and inevitably assumed in and by this peculiar "Assumption."

The first, and most essential fact to be noted with regard to this latest Dogma propounded in the year 1950, in what it is now the fashion to term as "The Atomic Age," is that the "Assumption" of Mary into Heaven is represented as a *physical* fact, since it was her body, not her "soul," which was "assumed" into Heaven—wherever that may be?—in the first century of our Era. It is, consequently, impossible for the Church to fall back on the overworked term, "spiritual": for it was the *body*, we repeat, and not the soul of Mary which was "assumed" into "Heaven."

What does this imply to the Catholic believer? We submit that it can *only* imply what it actually says, and without any subterfuge of any kind. That is, that Mary "levitated," to use the spiritualistic expression for such alleged phenomena, through space in a physical manner, and with her physical body, until she finally "made port" in a *place* called Heaven.

Indeed, no other explanation of the "Assumption" is possible. For it is often forgotten that Catholic theology is largely materialistic: not only does it accept the objective reality of the external universe but, in fact, the philosophical Idealism of Berkeley and Hegel, which "denies" the reality of "matter" is under the ban of the Church as a pernicious heresy—since if "matter" is not "real," neither is Transubstantiation, the transformation of bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, real either, which is the pivotal dogma of the entire system of Catholic Theology. To the Catholic, as to the materialist philosopher, "matter" is objective and "real," and, wherever or however one goes, one will always find twelve inches to a foot and three feet to a yard.

Consequently, it is now a Dogma, an "Article of Faith," that the Virgin Mary travelled *bodily* across the visible illimitable Universe, with its billions of "light years" and its inconceivable, remote stellar galaxies, until she finally arrived at a *physical* Heaven since, obviously a physical body cannot come to rest anywhere except in an also physical state. Such is the Dogma of the Assumption, assuredly the most miraculous of all recorded miracles?

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### Destination, Heaven

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

To add insult to injury, and to increase the mental strain on unfortunate scientists who happen also to be Catholics, the same Pope who proclaimed the Dogma of the Assumption is, also, the first to admit publicly the conceptions held by modern astronomy of the size and age of the visible Universe. It is no longer, as Pius the Twelfth recently admitted in a speech to a congress of Catholic scientists in Rome, the Lilliputian Universe of Genesis, in which the "Ages of Faith" believed, which encircles us: it is the illimitable Universe detected and imagined by the modern telescope and by modern astronomical mathematics, that the Mother of God had to cross before she arrived in "Heaven." Jesus Christ, being also God, "without body, parts, or passions," presumably got rid of his body when he quitted this world; but his mother made the journey corporeally, for such is the Dogma of the Assumption. Mary was, in fact, the pioneer in Space-Travel!

Here, indeed, Theology may be—for once!—helpful to Science? For Space-Travel—Interplanetary Flight—is, to-day, very much "in the air"—or hopes to be shortly! Nor is the interest in aerial exploration confined purely to scientists: the theologians are also interested. A French

Catholic magazine recently devoted an entire number to the current problems inherent in inter-planetary flight, and the Vatican, as we remind our readers on another page, has actually made theological pronouncements on the sort of people whom our aerial explorers may hope to find in the other planets. Perhaps the Church, which is a far-sighted body, hopes eventually to find new worlds to conquer and an inter-planetary "Columbus" who may annexe Mars and Venus to the Catholic Church and to the spiritual Roman Empire?

Here, we respectfully suggest, is a use, and an eminently scientific use, for the Dogma of the Assumption. Proclaim the Virgin Mary, as the ecclesiastical pioneer, the Holy Patroness of Space-Travel: promise her the first church to be built outside this planet: pray that in her next appearance, whether at Fatima or elsewhere, she will reveal the scientific details of her long trek through Space. Press Theology, for the first time, into the service of Science! So that, every August 15, we shall celebrate the longest voyage throughout Space, the most daring pioneer-flight in History, the Assumption of the Mother of God, who flew across the Universe long before Galileo or Jules Verne!

## Christianity and Women

By LEON SPAIN

GIORDANO BRUNO is said to have sagely commented: "If the first button of a man's coat is wrongly buttoned all the rest will be crooked." Undoubtedly the renowned martyr of Freethought had in mind his intellectual contemporaries, or theological foes, who unquestioningly adopted the commentaries of the Church Fathers, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the accredited Bible of the day as the premises for their intellectual deductions and speculations, regardless of the sphere of thought. It needs little discernment to see that if the understanding is committed to faulty and untenable premises, the conclusions, no matter how logically deduced, will be awry.

And so with those, of the present day, who feel that the Christian Bible has the answers to the gamut of all the questions, from science to ethics to social issues. Regardless of the forward march of Secularism, many leading dignitaries of the various clergies are still seeking to reconcile the dead letters of their sacred books with modern social patterns.

In America, Presbyterians have again refused to ordain women as members of the clergy. It is the third time in less than twenty-five years that the men of the Presbyterian Church have made that decision. An official petition was sent to all the Presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church requesting their opinion as to the idea of ordaining women to the clergy, or ministry. A majority of the Presbyteries which voted on the petition favoured women pastors. However, they were far below a necessary majority of the 257 Presbyteries of the Church. With reference to the petition for women pastors, 66 of the Presbyteries favoured the motion, 21 were in opposition to the motion, and 17 Presbyteries voted no action. The remainder entirely ignored the overture for women in the ministry.

The vote in the American Presbyteries, pertaining to the ordination of women, indicates that women are losing ground in their struggle to attain the pastorate. When the same issue was voted on in 1947, a hundred Presbyteries voted for the proposal and 104 against. In 1947, nearly all the Presbyteries expressed an interest in the fight of women to achieve ministerial recognition in the Presbyterian Church, which has only been the prerogative of the male members. However, in 1953, less than half the Presbyteries showed any interest in the issue. Perhaps the latest

proceedings of the Presbyterian Church will give the female members of that religious body food for reflection as to why women are deemed unqualified to perform "sacred functions" in that Church, while in Secular provinces, such as politics, women are appointed to cabinet posts, ambassadorships, and elected to legislative bodies, and are receiving their due merit in various fields of endeavour.

The astute observation, attributed to Giordano Bruno: "If the first button of a man's coat is wrongly buttoned all the rest will be crooked," is a parallel which can aptly be applied to Christian dogma as the source of numerous social evils. The Old and New Testaments, the commentaries of the Church Fathers, the fulminations of John Knox, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries of greater or lesser renown, have been woven into the texture of the Christian fabric of social thought, which deemed the female sex mentally, morally, and physically inferior to the male.

The Old Testament is replete with instances of woman's servitude and humility under a covenant which is supposed to have been concluded between Jehovah, the avenger and fickle whose thunder emanated from Mt. Sinai, and the people supposedly selected to enjoy his divine favour. It would be instructive for the female adherents of the numerous religious bodies if only they could momentarily discard their religious prepossessions, to study the lot of womanhood in those "divinely inspired days." No amount of "moralising" or subtle reasoning can nullify woman's debased social position in Biblical Judea.

"Suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2, II, 12), is scriptural warranty which, literally accepted, should be sufficient to debar the ladies seeking elevation to the Presbyterian ministry. "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ so let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 22-4), is eloquent testimony to the primitive domestic counsel held forth by "sacred scripture" to women, upon her position in the domestic scheme of things. "No Gown worse becomes a woman than the desire to be wise," by Luther; "Thou art the devil's gate, the betrayer of the race, the deserter of the Divine Law," by Tertullian; "What does it matter whether it be in person of a mother or sister; we have to beware Eve in

# Whither Freethought?

By H. CUTNER

OLDER readers will, I am sure, have read numerous articles on this theme such as "Where Does Atheism Stand?", "Where is Rationalism Leading Us?", "Is Freethought Played Out?" and many others with similar titles. Mostly, their writers wanted us to give up Freethought and get back to "Religion"—any Religion, so long as it was a Religion. Some, like Mrs. Allpress, were ready to hand us a Beautiful God (of sorts) with Miracles complete. Others implored us to remember that the Teaching of the Great Nazarene had been completely misrepresented by the "Churches"—all of them. Every Freethinker was beseeched to get back to "true" Christianity—the mighty Religion of Jesus of Nazareth, the Greatest Man who ever trod this Earth of ours. Of course, he wasn't really God, and his Miracles were always misunderstood by everybody—except His loving Followers, our Reverent Rationalists.

I am bound to admit that these people have followers, and that such uncompromising Atheists as myself succeed only in raising their lavish scorn. For example, in his defence of "true" Christianity, Mr. Bennett, with the help of Havelock Ellis, almost boils over with rage at the harm Paul has done to the one true Religion. He and he alone is to blame for the false representations we all suffer from of the Beautiful Religion of Jesus. You can attack Paul as much as you like—that is perfectly legitimate and not at all "rabidly" anti-religious. But God help you if you say that—in your opinion—the religion of Jesus is worse than that of Paul. That is foully and "rabidly anti-religious" which no self-respecting Atheist ought to tolerate.

Mrs. Allpress need not worry about my trying to demolish her—on paper—or in any other way. The God idea was thoroughly demolished by the Baron d'Holbach in his *System of Nature*, published as far back as 1770; or in a smaller work by Charles Bradlaugh, his *Plea for Atheism*. Before anybody tries to reintroduce God they should first do their utmost to reply to Bradlaugh and d'Holbach. The ideas on Freethought so thoughtfully presented to us by Mrs. Allpress appear to me to be of far more use to the readers of the *Church Times* than to those of *The Freethinker*.

We also get wonderful advice from very young newcomers to the movement who solemnly rebuke us for not swallowing Philosophy as much as they themselves do. With pitying scorn, we are told that it is probably not altogether our fault—and that therefore we should eschew "Emotion" and concentrate on "Intellect." As an unregenerate Materialist myself—of the "mechanist" kind, not of the "Dialectical" persuasion—I am all in favour of Emotion. I never see a picture by Rembrandt or by an Italian "primitive" without "Emotion." Beethoven's music always engenders in me "Emotion." I can read Dickens and Byron and Burns and Dumas—and even Paul de Koek—and enjoy every moment. I am thrilled by many cinema masterpieces, by the great comedies and tragedies on the stage, by TV representations of our Test Cricket matches. God forbid that I should ever suppress my "Emotions."

The way Freethought should go is to abolish "religion"—the religion of Jesus or Buddha or Mahomet or Mrs. Eddy—the whole lot. And with it must go the God idea and Miracles. There is only one world—the world we are living in—for us. Let us do our best to make Happiness in this world our goal.

every woman" and "How much better two men could live and converse together than a man and woman," by St. Augustine; are quotations which strongly indicate the contemptuous attitude of the Christian theologians toward woman.

The most vehement tirade against women was delivered by the vociferously coarse Scottish Divine, John Knox, who wrote the notorious work against women, pompously entitled, "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women." This pastor over God's flock stated, in effect, that a woman should rule, dominion, or superiority over any nation, realm, or city, is repugnant to nature, "contumely to God," and will be subversive of "law and order," and that women are weak, foolish, and feeble. John Knox, in his thunderous denunciation against the dominion of women, exhausted the arsenal of invective and condemnation. If John Knox denounced, with such unrestrained vehemence, the sovereignty of queens, it is needless to speculate what his attitude would have been toward the proposal to ordain women to the ministry.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, an active Pioneer of the American Suffrage Movement for Women and author of the "History of Woman's Suffrage," outspokenly commented: "The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of women's emancipation." Mrs. Stanton was very critical of the shabby record of Christianity as an agency for the amelioration of the degraded status of women, and was deeply touched by the humane sentiments of Robert Ingersoll, the great Agnostic, who boldly asserted, and forcefully advocated, social and political equality for women, in a day and age when the persons either heaped abuse or kept aloof from the early Women's Movement. R. H. Bell, in tracing the struggle of women, commented in her famous work, "Women From Bondage to Freedom," "The torture, the maiming, and the murder of Elgira by Dunstan illustrates further, amongst thousands and thousands of similar bloody deeds, the diabolical brutality of superstition perpetuated in the name of Christianity upon women in the earlier centuries of our epoch. Indeed, religious superstition always has contrived to rob, to pester, to deceive, and to degrade women." However, despite the imposing array of evidence against Christianity, as a factor in retarding the advancement of women, women are, in the words of a famous American cleric, "the backbone of the Church." Perhaps an era of commonsense will be inaugurated among women which will reveal to them the various injustices Christianity perpetuated and practised upon them, and justify the inferior status in which they were kept. And that such prominent sceptics as Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, Mill, Bentham, Owen, Huxley, and others, did more for their cause than the clergy, whose behests they have abjectly and unquestionably obeyed, and to whose charge they have entrusted their children, as their educators.

"If the first button of a man's coat is wrongly buttoned all the rest will be crooked," can be applied to those who are ready to accept the Bible and theological commentaries, as the fount and foundation of social wisdom, and is aptly applicable to those who are unable to discern that Christianity, from its inception, has opposed women as administrators of "sacred functions."

The application of logic to social life, to "sacred books," and the freedom to dispute and question conventionally accepted religious dogmas and political doctrines, have been the solvents which has dissolved the crystallisation of erroneous Christian social doctrines, among others, the "impropriety" of women to achieve equality with men, in spheres sacred and mundane.

## This Believing World

**Shades of Charles Bradlaugh!** Sixty-five years after his famous Oaths Act which permitted any person to be believed on his word and relieved him from "kissing" the—more or less—unclean backs of a Bible, we have Mr. William Raeburn, Q.C., pleading for the "s'elp me Gawd" oath to be abolished. He told a meeting that "it was sickening to watch the succession of witnesses taking the perfunctory oath on the Testament." Naturally—as far as we can judge from the *Daily Mail* report—he did not mention Bradlaugh or even the Oaths Act of 1888. But he did know that kissing a Bible did not stop lying on the part of the kisser. In other words, just because a good Christian kisses a Bible does not necessarily make him tell the truth. And we could have told Mr. Raeburn that ages ago.

**Anything to do with "faith-healing"** arouses our curiosity, and so we are pleased to give the name of a Mr. Wyndham, who keeps a small grocer's shop, as another addition to Britain's 19087 Faith Healers. According to the *Sunday Dispatch*, the Healer of Ladbroke Grove (as he is known) is ready and anxious to cure anybody who comes into his shop, and he already has some remarkable cures to his account. Had he claimed that they were done with Holy Lourdes Water or a Sprig of Heather from Fatima or through a "doctor" Spirit Guide, what a splash he would have made! But Mr. Wyndham is only a humble grocer, and makes no supernatural claims—or spiritualist ones, for that matter.

**Exactly how many books** for and against Christianity on "Christian origins" have been written it is probably impossible to compute—but the latest, called *The Other Side of the Story*, by Rupert Furneaux, appears to have upset some pious believers almost as much as *The Age of Reason* upset their ancestors. Indignant letters have been sent to the publishers insisting that the book should be suppressed, a favourite method Christians have used for centuries; though, in the Ages of Faith, this was supplemented by torture, imprisonment, and burning at the stake. No doubt, some indignant Christians wouldn't mind a bit if these delightful incentives to true Christianity were revived.

**The author himself claims** that he has presented "a new light on the Gospel story . . . in terms that the general reader can understand." We wonder whether he has read *The Age of Reason*? The value of that famous work is that, although it is 160 years since it was written, the "general" reader will easily understand it just as well as the scholar; and within its own lines, it is unanswerable.

**Needless to add, the Rural Dean of Arundel** has described the book "as unworthy of the publishers and an utter waste of good paper" which reminds one of the stronger invective the rural Deans of Paine's day heaped upon *The Age of Reason*. Perhaps a copy of Mr. Furneaux's book will come our way. If so, we shall be able to judge whether it has thrown "new light" on Christian origins.

**Although the Roman Church** never ceases boasting of its huge success in the U.S.A., every now and then some indiscreet priest lets the cat out of the bag. For example, Mgr. W. McGrath at the Congress of the "Blue Army of our Lady of Fatima" moaned, "Twenty-five million children never hear the word of God spoken. Seventy

million people never darken the door of a church. There is virtually a revolt against God. . . ." Of course, these figures must be taken with a little caution as they really refer to—Protestants! Everybody who isn't a Catholic is, in the eyes of the Church of Rome, an "unbeliever." However, God be praised that there is a little truth in Mgr. McGrath's accusation.

**Two dear little boys** charged at Warrington "to give evidence in an indecent assault case" the other day said that they didn't know what the Bible was, and had never been taught about God at school. It was, of course, obvious that they were impudent little liars, for an official of their school indignantly denied that religion was not taught at their school. It has, in fact, *to be taught by law*; and these boys are a delightful product of religious teaching—as even the Christian magistrates must have seen. But this case will never be produced by religions as a beautiful example of what true Christianity can do for boys at school.

## Theatre

**Paint Your Wagon.** Book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner. Music by Frederick Loewe. Her Majesty's Theatre.

We have had many American musical plays since the war. Some of them have been of excellent quality, others certainly not so good and hardly worth the elaborate advance publicity that have been given them. Here is one that has reached us almost unheralded and with comparative quiet, and it can rank among the better of them. The play opens quietly in a gold-rush town in California. The period is 1853 and this is a place built almost overnight of bungalow sheds or cabins. The casting is notable for Bobby Howes appearing with his daughter, Sally Ann, as her father in the play. These two make a successful combination, and Sally Ann Howes again shows us that she is an actress of note. She can sing pleasantly and audibly, but she tends to sacrifice tone to clarity. Opposite her is Ken Cantril as a prospector, who has a fine singing voice and is given opportunity to use it in many of the captivating songs.

The beginning is relatively quiet, but when a coachload of girls of easy virtue arrive it is like releasing a score of colourful birds among the sparrows. Each one is a distinct type and the town goes gay with original dancing and rhythmical music.

This show has much to give that is pleasing and entertaining, and it deserves to be a success.

**"Happy as a King,"** at the Princes Theatre, is aptly described as a musical frolic. The imaginary country of Illyria.

Austin Melford and Fred Emney, who take leading parts, are responsible for the book, and the music and lyrics by Ross Parker, though not possessing much originality, are gay and rhythmical, with tunes that can be pleasantly recalled. The book, unlike many shows of this kind, contains an amusing plot which has an interesting twist.

Fred Emney, as the King, is a great personality for humour. Dickie Henderson and Shani Wallis keep us entertained as the lovers. Greta Unger dances dexterously and Eve Lister charms us with her singing. Roger Avon, Charles Peters and Phillip Jay burlesqued the three hired assassins.

A bright show, worthy of a visit.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

A. YATES.—We hope to use your article shortly. We receive very numerous contributions and it is quite impossible for us to acknowledge them all individually. We either publish eventually or return the contributions.

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, 7-9 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. BARKER and MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 7 p.m., at Platt Fields, a Lecture.

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

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

J. CLAYTON'S Engagements.—Friday, September 4 (Moor Lane), 7-9 p.m., Clitheroe; Sunday, September 6, 7 p.m., Blackburn Market; Monday, September 7, 7-9 p.m., Padiham.

### INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group, South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, September 4, 7-15 p.m., L. P. PRESTON, "The Triumph of Age."

Wandsworth Branch Toc H ("The Stables," 1, Woodford Road, E11; few minutes from Snaresbrook Station).—Wednesday, 9th September, 8 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Right and Wrong—the Secular Point of View."

## NOTES AND NEWS

The recently published *Kinsey Report* has proved, as one might expect, a positive godsend to the churches. It has given them something to talk about during the "silly season" during which the rich pursue the eminently civilised sport of shooting grouse, whilst the poor spend their time grousing at the weather! It is a matter of common knowledge to all students of Christian ethics, or what pass for such, that Christianity has reduced morals almost entirely to two things: sex and orthodoxy. Dr. Kinsey is by all accounts a strictly moral man, and his investigations which have resulted in his two monumental reports on, respectively, the sexual characteristics of American males and females, appear to be strictly scientific in intention and approach. There does not seem any case

for applying to either report the comment of the wit who paraphrased a well-known text of St. Paul's "to the pure all things are pure, and to the impure all things are scientific"! Contrarily, the *Kinsey Report* appears to be the work of a genuine scientist and to contain valuable information on a vitally important sphere, which the churches have kept shrouded in an unnatural veil of prudery and mystery.

Nowhere, in fact, are the so-called morals of Christianity more completely unscientific either in emphasis or in analysis than in relation to the problems roused by sex. In the first connection, clerical "morality" fantastically exaggerates its gravity. Excess in sex, as in all other matters, is certainly bad, and any rational ethical theory would discourage such excesses. But, in general, sexual aberrations are very minor peccadilloes. One could not, in general, compare them with, say, cruelty to children, or even to animals. This, however, is not the view of the Church, either Catholic or Protestant. In Calvin's Geneva, adultery was punished by death. Whilst the terrible misery caused by Catholic prohibition of divorce and penalisation of illegitimacy are, nowadays, common knowledge. It is not too much, in fact, to say that, in the eyes of the clergy, sexual irregularity is "the sin against the Holy Ghost," the supreme sin; only "heresy"—that is, thinking for oneself!—is equally criminal. An apt illustration of this obsession with sex to the exclusion of far more serious social crimes, is to be found in the *causes célèbres* of Oscar Wilde and Charles Stuart Parnell whose respective violations of the Christian "moral" code drew down upon them the full fury of the churches; and that at a time when the brutal Poor Laws of the Victorian period, not to mention the frequent recurrence of fraudulent financial transactions, excited hardly any clerical condemnation.

We think that it is high time that a scientific outlook upon the sexual basis of life superseded the mass of mumbo-jumbo and prehistoric taboos with which Christian "ethics" have so long surrounded this subject with a murky veil of inverted pornography. We congratulate Prof. Kinsey—more power to his elbow! Freethinkers must fight for the right to pursue such researches of a genuinely scientific nature against the churches, who are already hinting at their legal suppression. In a land where any deviation from orthodoxy is automatically hailed as "communism," Prof. Kinsey had better be careful or Senator McCarthy will hale him before his "Committee for Un-American activities."

We trust that the tenth edition of our *Bible Handbook*, which is now for sale, will not receive the fate meted out to an earlier edition and described by Mr. Chapman Cohen in *The Freethinker* for March 13, 1932. The Customs authorities held up the orders given by the Rationalist Association of Australia under the pretence that "the publication" was "blasphemous"—which it certainly was from a Christian standpoint. In fact, any book exposing the Bible and its Divine Claims is bound to be blasphemous. Mr. Cohen told the Secretary of the Association to enter an action for the return of the books "as this would throw upon the Custom Authorities the onus of proving that the books were legally condemnable." We think that ultimately the *Bible Handbook* was admitted into Australia without further trouble. Those of our readers who have not a copy should hasten to obtain one as we believe it to be one of the most drastic criticisms of the books in the Bible and its claims written in recent years.

# Rationalism and Tolerance

By W. H. WOOD

ONE of the commonest accusations made against Christianity is that it demands absolute and unquestioning acceptance of its prescribed Articles of Faith, no matter how contrary these may be to common sense and reason. The Christian, too, always assumes that he is right and that his religion is true—all other creeds are false and all non-Christians must burn in everlasting hell-fire! Such dogmatism should have no place in the realms of Rationalism but can we be sure that we are entirely free from this unpleasant taint ourselves?

There is, unfortunately, a certain type of Freethinker who imagines he knows all the answers and who will roundly abuse anyone who disagrees with him in argument or controversy. Such a man is guilty of the same failing for which he condemns his Christian opponent—Intolerance. He believes that *he* is right and he is not slow to denounce those who would think differently. If freethinking means anything at all it must mean that *every* man shall enjoy the right to think as he chooses—not only the Rationalist. Freedom of thought can never be reconciled with rigid and unchanging thought: it must permit complete freedom of the individual to revise and change his views as conviction necessitates. No Rationalist must ever be bound by rules and tenets nor be afraid to admit there may be something in the other fellow's point of view after all. Once he allows anger or prejudice to warp his reason or sway his judgment he forfeits all right to call himself a Rationalist.

I may be very dull but I still cannot understand why the Rationalist who dares to admit the possibility of some existing, but as yet unknown, non-physical force interacting with physical matter or even existing apart from it, must be a rank heretic. Why must I accept a solely physical existence in a solely physical universe before I can call myself a Rationalist? Why must I refuse to admit the possibility of other forces and other laws in operation beyond our limited sensory perception when my *reason* tells me that what we already know is infinitesimal to what we do not yet know?

To quote Aldous Huxley\*: "Nothing compels us to believe that the only intelligences in the universe are those connected with the bodies of human beings and the lower animals. If the evidence of clairvoyance, telepathy and prevision is accepted (and it is becoming increasingly difficult to reject it) then we must allow that there are mental processes which are largely independent of space, time and matter. . . . We are still ignorant of the way in which human minds are associated with that highly organised vortex of cosmic energy known as a body. How energy gets transformed into mental processes, and how mental processes affect energy, we still have no idea." (Refer Sir Charles Sherrington's Gifford Lectures published in 1941 under the title of "Man on His Nature").

The constitution and functioning of the mental forces; the conscious and unconscious minds; and the conflicts of the Ego and the Id are still but vaguely fathomed. The creation and evolution of life and matter; the processes of growth, death and decay are still open to conjecture and speculation; time and space—even the *reality* of existence cannot be taken for granted because of our present limited knowledge of these things. Surely when so much lies hidden behind the veil of ignorance it would be presumptuous for any man, much less a Rationalist, to

assume that what he does not know and cannot explain *cannot be*.

To be truly rational in our thinking we must be prepared to admit that science has not yet solved the Riddle of the Universe, and that its present findings may well be disproved in the years to come. Every Rationalist must preserve an open mind and be ever ready to extend his mental vision to the utmost. Leave rut and narrow horizons to the ignorant know-all who fears to have his pet theories confuted and falls into an apoplectic fit when his *material* toes are trodden upon.

It is our belief that if Rationalism is to make any real progress it must become something stronger than a rickety soap box from which to hurl abuse at the Church and vilify religion when more important considerations should occupy our minds. The Colour Question is crying out for all the help and sympathy we can extend and yet no one seems to be doing anything about it. The racial problem in South Africa weighs heavily upon our negro friends who have every cause for resentment and bitterness yet Mr. O. A. Olowu, of Lagos, Nigeria, writing recently in *The Literary Guide*, pleads that even this vital problem should not be made a political issue lest Communism, Capitalism and Mau-Mauism result. This surely is an example of tolerant Rationalism at its best.

Tolerance is the one virtue we must try to cultivate: we must tread the broad path and leave the narrow way to the Christians who have never shown any sympathetic understanding towards other people's views and problems. We should be patient and charitable to those who differ from us and allow them the right to think as they choose, but any attempt on the part of Christians to disallow others complete freedom of belief must be vigorously opposed.

We must work tirelessly to obtain a fair and just hearing in the public Press. The B.B.C. must be made to realise that plugging Christianity to the exclusion of any other school of thought is selfish monopolism at its very worst. Any attempt by Church or State to enforce religious education on the children of parents who resent it, or to penalise the non-Christian or the non-White must be strongly resisted. Thought-freedom must be preserved and encouraged at all costs if we are not to become a society of sickly sycophants or degenerate into a colony of crawling ants!

## Evensong

I had a friend when the world was young—  
A friend when the world was wide.  
True were the notes of the songs then sung,  
But the melody's played, the lute unstrung,  
All but the echo has died.

I had a dream when the sun was high—  
A dream when the heart was true.  
Pure was that dream as the summer sky,  
But the vision's gone, the memories die;  
The blossom has turned to rue.

I had a love when the world was wide—  
A love when the world was free.  
Deep was that love as the deepest well;  
Where it is now there's none can tell,  
Nor the deep dark heart of me.

\* "The Devils of Loudun" by Aldous Huxley.

## Book Review

**George Orwell**, by T. Hopkinson (Longman, Green, 2s.) [Mr. P. C. King, who writes this review of the recent memoir of the late George Orwell, was a personal friend and colleague of Orwell.—EDITOR.]

MR. HOPKINSON says Orwell had little sympathy with the individual though much with humanity in general, and dubs him a lonely man "who was not afraid of being lonely." Well, genius is a lonely state and Orwell undoubtedly had a touch of genius. From personal knowledge of Eric Blair, the name in private life of George Orwell, I would say that this summary of his social reactions was not unjust. But when Mr. Hopkinson goes on to deny Orwell imagination, to endow him with an "inspired common sense" and to declare him devoid of "historical perspective," I wonder if we are thinking of the same man?

I have my share of imagination, but in the presence of George Orwell I had that unusual and uncanny sensation of a mind that could roam in vast fields of imagination, fields into which I was not able to follow him. On the other hand, common sense is about the last thing I would have credited him with; like many brilliant people he was often impractical in every-day matters; an income-tax return, for instance, was something he could not cope with. If, by the somewhat contradictory phrase, inspired common sense, Mr. Hopkinson means that Orwell had a clear rational mind, then I would agree with him.

When, however, Mr. Hopkinson accuses Orwell of lacking historical perspective I can only conclude we understand different things by that phrase. Certainly history is not Mr. Hopkinson's strong point; he makes the astonishing statement that the Independent Labour Party was "a rather forlorn offshoot of the Labour Party itself," an essay in imagination which must make Keir Hardie, if not George Orwell, turn in his grave!

For me Orwell's most noticeable characteristic was his uncompromising honesty. He was, I think, intellectually the most honest man I have known. His dealing with the truth, as he saw it, was utterly fearless and ruthless; fall the lash where it might, let who will be pilloried, George Orwell would pursue its beacon undeviatingly. I recall once remarking to him on the dilemma we of the Left find ourselves in, namely, that in allowing our forces to be diverted to resist the disruption of Leninism-Stalinism within our ranks, we thereby weaken our forces for fighting the main enemy, Capitalism. To which he replied, "Yes, but if a thing's wrong you've got to go after it."

Mr. Hopkinson gives a full and concise survey of the author's publications. To his comments on Orwell's earlier writings and on *Animal Farm*, the author's most famous and most successful work, I can add nothing useful. In the matter of his final book, *1984*, however, I cannot let Mr. Hopkinson's criticisms go unanswered.

This novel, finished almost literally on his deathbed, was Orwell's most political work, the *Anti-Duhring* of the Orwellian philosophy. It is, to my mind, the most likely of all his writings to endure. Yet it comes in for some of Mr. Hopkinson's severest strictures. In it, says this critic, Orwell "has imagined nothing new"; in fact, once again he "shows little imagination" and "by amputating all courage and self-sacrifice from his characters he has removed any real tension from his story."

He has imagined nothing new, we are told, because he depicts the world of 1984 as "the war-time world of 1944 but dirtier and more cruel." Orwell's descriptions and design could hardly be more misread. What he was trying

to convey was how the world would look in thirty-six years if certain trends continued and became dominant. Totalitarianism, by crushing man's spirit and inspiration, must eventually impair his capacity for technical expression. Thereby the material progress that might reasonably have been expected in that period would not occur, and then everything would appear grimmer, shabbier and duller than now. Mr. Hopkinson even sees this when he observes that the weapons are still those of 1948, only of less effect. Wells, amongst others, uses precisely the same technique in his novel of the future, *The Shape of Things to Come*.

The lack of any "alleviating symptoms" is an essential part of Orwell's general design of his story: to draw a noble hero and make a display of those virtues which are held highly to-day would have been to make nonsense of the author's whole theme. He wanted to point out that with modern communications and with our present knowledge of physiology and psychology, it is possible for a ruthless clique to possess itself of man's body and soul with the resultant effect of an absolute power that would corrupt absolutely.

*1984* is satirical, as so much of Orwell's work. It is, after all, the same theme as in *Animal Farm* but projected into the future, to demonstrate the monstrous growth it could assume. It is not an effort to forecast events; Orwell is donning no prophet's mantle. He is pointing out how certain tendencies inherent in the situation to-day might turn out to-morrow, unless we exercise "eternal vigilance." And the value of this work for posterity is, surely, the insight it will give them into the workings and worries of the human mind of 1948.

And so, Salve! George. Hail and farewell to a mind so much greater than the frail body in which it dwelt so short, far too short a time. His best work was never written.

## A Golden Coach for a Rotten Relic

The Roman Catholics in Hungary regarded the putrid hand of St. Stephen as their most sacred treasure, kept in a golden shrine, and conveyed in a golden coach from Budapest to Estergom, where St. Stephen, the Hungarian king, was born, A.D. 977.

History records his life anything but saintly, for he died of rot, 1038.

The specially constructed coach contained a beautiful red, gilt and ornamented cushion upon which the shrine rested, with the "mummified" hand in it. The carriage window of coloured glass showed portraits of this Hungarian saint, guarded on the journey, day and night, by 16 officials, dressed in uniforms of scarlet and gold.

At every stage of the journey, church bells rang, while devout Catholics prostrated themselves in the thoroughfares, praying.

Eight cardinals with the Prince Primate, following the procession, made collections which amounted to £17,000, as recorded in the State annals.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

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**ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING.** By Chapman Cohen. First and second series. Price 3s. each; postage 3d.

## Correspondence

### IMPRACTICABLE?

SIR.—Mr. G. I. Bennett seems to entirely agree with me that the Administrators of the Christian Legend have grossly and treacherously twisted and distorted the teaching of their own Founder. Clearly it is so.

But when he thinks that Human Love and universal Fraternity is, or may be, impracticable, I find it almost impossible to agree!

I say that once there is a universal, just, and fair economic system to all mankind, I see *no* reason why all mankind should not live on the earth in peace and in the bond of the unity of all mankind, and the fraternity of all nations and peoples—a true and sincere civilisation.

I do *not* believe in the religious bunk about original sin, original hatred, which they regard as a barrier to human fraternity. Give mankind a fair and square deal and hatred, where it exists, would die a natural death. It seems to me that the brutal treachery of religious administrators and the callous nonsense of pharisees are the chief things that stand in the way.—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

### ESTABLISHMENT AND PARISH IN THE MODERN STATE

SIR.—The first two paragraphs in the article on the above subject by Mr. J. R. Howes will be generally approved by Freethinkers. Not so the remainder.

As Mrs. H. B. Bonner puts it: "Every church is an instrument of bondage . . . even the smallest puts hobbles on the feet of its adherents." And that would be true even of Mr. Howes' conjectured "Non-Theological Church." He says that an applicant (for ordination) might be a Papist, Buddhist, etc. Does he seriously imagine that the former could resist the temptation to teach supernaturalism, or that he would remain "non-theological"? Indeed, Mr. Howe expressly tells us that the practice and teaching of present incumbents need not be altered except by their own wish. What, then, are Freethinkers striving for?

In view of the bloody record of the Churches, and the fact that they have always opposed progress, no reliance whatsoever could be placed on any attempt to reform them. They should pass into oblivion. Men's minds and consciences are better stimulated by books, periodicals and journals; by cinema, radio and television; by free discussion and debate. Modern man needs no parsons or priests—not even if they label themselves "non-theological"—to stimulate his mental activities.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. HUXLEY.

### SUGGESTIONS

SIR.—I was reading the personal column in *The Times* the other day. As you know, it contains a number of religious suggestions, prayers and supplications.

It occurred to me that it would be rather a good idea to put the following notice under the "Personal" heading: "Sincere and honest religious people of all denominations are invited to contact the National Secular Society with a view to discussing beliefs with an open mind."

The first point is that *The Times* would probably refuse publication, which would be a good propaganda point. Secondly, if it were published, the fact that there would probably be little but abusive reaction would be of value. Of course, if it were taken up, one could hold a series of private (or public) discussions.

Alternatively, one could publish the same notice in the *New Statesman* and/or *Spectator*, and/or *Socialist Leader*. It would be valuable even in *The Freethinker*, although it might not reach the right people.

Another point. Would it be possible to insert notices of meetings of "New Generation"—younger group of Hampstead Ethical Society—under "Lecture Notices" at a small cost?—Yours, etc.,

HAROLD HILLMAN.

### ON "THE BUDDHA BUSINESS"

SIR.—As the founder of the first Buddhist Society in the West, I would like to make a few comments on the scornful scrip of "Internationalist." His attitude to Buddhism might be briefly put in a neat syllogism: All religion is superstition; Buddhism is a religion; therefore Buddhism is superstition.

Serious students of Buddhism, its doctrines and history, are aware, however, that the reform movement in Indian philosophic thought, afterwards known as "Buddhism," had as its great founder the unremitting *opponent* of "religion" and superstition. That is why many thinkers among ourselves in the West are turning aside from the somewhat empty abstractions of Atheism and materialism, and finding a more constructive technique of thought and action in Buddhism.

To write of "Buddhism, Christianity and other religions" is just a slovenly style of writing. The "Buddha," of course, is not a "god," and is not worshipped as such. The famous "Bodhi Tree" is an example of Gautama's spiritualising of existing superstitions. To the Buddhist the historic Tree preserves a hallowed memory of a great event; and none even of the simple lay-folk in a Buddhist land ever think of "worshipping" a tree! And it should be hardly necessary to say that the "Marxist Buddhist Red Star Communists" hiding in the jungles of Burma are just *not* Buddhists at all! Neither am I aware of any infringement of Freethought to offer flowers in memory of a great man—whether Buddha or Gladstone or Bradlaugh. No sir, Buddhism deserves to be discussed seriously and cannot, as a historical study, be dismissed in such a cavalier fashion.—Yours, etc.

R. J. JACKSON.

### SWEAR NOT AT ALL

SIR.—The oath is an ancient superstitious pagan idea reintroduced by wise Christian crooks contrary to the teachings of Christ. No difference what the text of the oath is, it is superstitious, and always neglected by wise criminals and high sworn men. Sworn are: Kings and Emperors selling their own people, generals and clergymen, bribed judges and lawyers, traitors, admirals, etc. Superstitious foolish oath does not act on human soul when such exists, but on existing, expanding and contracting leather bag called stomach. German Army was "oathed" in name of Hitler, Third Reich, Gros-Deutschland and Nazism. The Army neglected its duty when stomach was empty. The same was done by Russian Tsar's soldiers "oathed" by everything holy to act on superstitious, uneducated Tsar-time men. Empty stomach is stronger than oath. Hungry Mohammedan soldiers sworn in name of Koran neglected their duties when they had starvation. Significance of the oath was not increased by fear of Mohammedan hell or joy of heavenly gardens, streams of wine and heavenly girls. To make the oath effective it is necessary to fit the oath for existing body, but not questionable non-existing soul. Honest superstitious fools are necessary to make pleasant life for wise crooks.—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDANS.

### NO ORIGINAL SIN IN MARS

"Some experts believe that 'flying saucers' are manned by space-dwellers. This theory cannot be rejected *a priori* because experimental science does not exclude with absolute certainty the possibility of human life outside the earth.

Maybe there are beings of anatomical and physiological constitution notably different from ours, capable of resisting conditions of a different environment but always composed of a body and a soul so as to fall under the definition of human beings.

If, in more or less the near future, science should be able to ascertain the existence of human beings outside the earth, neither dogma nor theology would find themselves in difficulty.

If space-dwellers are human beings in our sense, they certainly would not be part of the human family, whose progenitor is Adam, since their origin could not be explained by the emigration of Earth-men.

Consequently, they would not be tainted by original sin, at least not by that one committed by Adam, nor would they have been redeemed by Jesus Christ who came to earth to retrieve original sin.

The inhabitants of the outer worlds, if they exist, are not subject to the destiny of Adam and his descendants.

Extract from an article in *Civiltà Cattolica*, the Papal newspaper, written by Fr. D. Grasso, and specially approved by Pius the Twelfth.—Translated by F.A.R.

### THE CHURCH AND CIVIL LIBERTY

What is needed is to spread more widely a proper outlook on sex and birth-control and to destroy the influence of religious reaction in high places. The second question, therefore, is how to watch vigilantly the activities of the Roman Church and relentlessly to pursue and expose them when they have interference with civil liberty. It is really much more important to do this than to expose the Biblical foundations of the Church as unscientific. People are not very interested in what happened to the Church 1,900 years ago, but they can be persuaded to take an interest in what the Church as a living institution is doing to-day. What the Church does now may affect them personally.—ROBERT S. POLLARD in *The Plain View*—August, 1953.