

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 48

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

A FEW weeks ago, the news was announced that the recently (1947) established "Dominion" of Pakistan had followed the example in the British Commonwealth offered by its giant Indian neighbour and, whilst remaining within the Commonwealth, had opted to proclaim itself a Republic. However, unlike India, which has proclaimed itself as a "secular" state, with a political constitution independent of religious influences, Pakistan has declared itself to be, specifically and by definition, an "Islamic" state: that is, a state constituted on a denominational and religious basis; an essentially Muslim state, with tolerated—or so we hope—non-Muslim minorities.

Such an action is, after all, only to be expected, for India—that is, the old India of the British Raj—was divided between Hindustan and Pakistan in 1947 on, precisely, religious grounds.

"The Land of the Pure"

"Hindustan" is the land of the Hindus, whilst "Pakistan," translated literally into English, is "The Land of the Pure": that is, of the Muslims, the "pure" servants of the one true God. As is, presumably, common knowledge, the political history of the Indian sub-continent prior to the British conquest in the eighteenth century, centred around the repeated attempts of Muslim invaders to subjugate Hindu India, a feat which they temporarily accomplished under the Mogul Dynasty, 1550-1750. The names of the Muslim conquerors, Mahmud of Ghazni, Babar, Akbar and Aurungzebe, are household words in Indian annals.

An Islamic Theocracy

The predominant party which was responsible for the Constitution of the State of Pakistan was that of the Muslim Mullahs, the Islamic clerical party, to employ Christian vernacular. To-day, this party aims openly at the constitution of "Pakistan" as a clerical state, an Islamic theocracy. What non-Muslim minorities have to fear from such a medieval theocracy was vividly indicated, not only by the terrible border massacres which immediately followed the original partition of India and the withdrawal of the British, but, more recently, by the massacre, in Lahore, of something like a thousand members of the modernist Ahmedya sect, as heretics and apostates from the one true Islamic Faith. For it must not be forgotten that Islam, like its old rival, the Roman Catholic Church, is always potentially totalitarian and, like the Catholic Church, has inherited from their mutual spiritual ancestor, the Jewish Church, the duty to punish with death heretics and apostates from the One True Faith. The stoning, inherited from the Jews, of apostates, takes the place of the fires of the Catholic Inquisition.

[The heretical Ahmedya sect has English missions at Putney and Woking and publishes our contemporary, *The Islamic Review*. It is right to call itself Muslim as is strenuously denied by the Sunni (orthodox) Muslims as is the right of Unitarians to be called Christians, by the Roman Catholic Church.]

The Revival of Islam

The first half of the 20th century has witnessed a remarkable revival of the medieval creed of Islam, the traditional rival of Christianity throughout the Middle Ages: the creation of new Muslim states in Pakistan and Indonesia, the formation of "The Arab League," the unification of Arabia by the recently deceased King Ibn Suoud, and the current revolt of Moorish North Africa against French Imperialism—followed with passionate interest by the whole Muslim universe—represent the high water marks, the outward and visible signs of this contemporary Islamic revival. There have, of course, been

set-backs as well: the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, where there is a large Muslim population in Central Asia, which created a secular state, the anti-clerical reforms of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk in Turkey; and, last but not most keenly resented of all by the whole Muslim world, the creation by force of the State of Israel at the expense of the Arab race. One must, in this connection, also mention the steady advance of Islam in still-Pagan Negro Africa, where the religion of the Koran appears to be making steady advances at the expense of its Christian and Pagan rivals.

Islam and Christianity

The creed founded by Muhammed (A.D. 570-632) ranks along with its ancient Christian rival as one of the still-powerful religious cults: it constitutes a solid religious and cultural bloc, from the East Indies to the Atlantic, from Central Asia to Central Africa. Some 300 millions of people still call daily upon Muhammed and his Arabic god, Allah; over the whole of this vast area, the Holy Koran, traditionally dictated to Muhammed by an angel, replaces the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God. To-day, in the 20th century as, formerly, in the era of the Crusades, Christianity and Islam constitute the two strongest bulwarks of the supernatural in the modern world.

"Jewish Catholicism"

The creed of Islam, like that of Christianity, derives ultimately from the ancient Jews, and in Islam as in Christianity, the ancient Hebrew prophets are regarded as the divinely inspired forerunners of the later universal creeds. The present writer has, indeed, elsewhere described Islam as "Jewish Catholicism": that is, as Judaism stripped of its original local and tribal association, and with its Unitarian theology raised from the Hebrew to the "Universal" ("Catholic") level. In Islam, it is the entire congregation of the Faithful, and not any particular race, which is to be regarded as "the chosen people." In this universal sense, it is indisputable that both Islam and Christianity represented an advance on the purely tribal cults, such as Judaism, which preceded them.

Islam—that is, "submission" to Allah, as the creed founded by Muhammed describes itself—is strictly

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Revival of Islam

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

Unitarian in its theology. Such Christian theological concepts as belief in the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Real Presence, the Divinity of Christ, are entirely reprobated by Islam as false and, indeed, blasphemous, though Jesus (Issa) is regarded as an authentic, though human, prophet. (That he existed is proved by the fact that the infallible Koran says so!) It is, however, a mistake to regard Islam as, simply, Unitarianism pure and simple. Belief in the infallibility of Muhammed and in the verbal inspiration of the Koran are, equally with the Unity of God, fixed and distinctive tenets of the Islamic creed. Muhammed, it is true, is regarded as human, quite distinct from Allah.

On behalf of the Koran, however, claims are made, both for the Holy Book itself and for the Arabic tongue in which it is written, which surpass the most "Fundamentalist" attributes of the Christian Bible. Not only is the Koran itself verbally inspired, but it is the orthodox doctrine of Islam, dissented from only by "modernist" heretics, that the Holy Book must never be read in any other tongue than the Arabic one in which it was divinely dictated to the prophet. Though the joys of the Islamic paradise have been much written-up by western scribes, the Muslim doctrine of a Future Life does not actually appear to differ much from those of Judaism and Christianity.

Christian and Muslim Theology

Despite their mutual derivations from Judaism, there are many differences between Christianity and Islam.

This is so, particularly, in relation to Catholicism. Islam is puritanical; any visual representation of the Supernatural is strictly forbidden. Further, there is, strictly speaking, no Church nor sacerdotal caste in Islam; there is no religious rite in Islam which cannot be performed by any True Believer: it appears to be indisputable that, as a religious organisation, Islam is more democratic than most forms of religion, including most forms of Christianity. However, Muhammedan schisms parallel Christian ones: alongside of orthodox (Sunni) Islam, are sects which are heretical in various degrees; both "Fundamentalists" who reject the Muslim "Hadith" ("Traditions") and assert that the Koran alone is essential to Islam; and modernists who attempt to liberalise the creed by removing its medieval accretions and coming to terms with modern knowledge.

The Future of Islam

At present, with the rapid introduction into the East of Western science and technique, Islam is entering on the same era of "storm and stress" as Christianity. Can the originally pastoral creed of the Arab camel driver survive in our era of complex science and industry? Probably not. Though its simpler and less overburdened theology should prove easier to adapt to modern knowledge. In any case, Western Rationalists ought not to ignore the existence of this formidable creed.

"The Case for Rationalism in Brief"

By D. ALEXANDER

OFTEN in the course of discussion with sincere religious people, when one has knocked down the super-structure of obviously illogical apologia, one is asked: "Well, what does Rationalism offer? What do you believe in?" I am attempting here to give the short kind of answer, which would be useful in discussion, rather than a fundamental exposition of the Case for Rationalism. This latter need has been met by many distinguished authors in full-length treatises.

Before I attack the subject in earnest, I would like to tell a true story with a moral. One day, I was travelling from London to Rickmansworth by train, when I was accosted by a Salvationist with a pile of tracts, of which she gave me a small sample. In the course of discussion she put forward various arguments of more or less superficial grade. I did not attempt to refute these, as I was trying to understand her thought processes; I asked her why she believed in the World to Come. After various false sallies, she suddenly said something which I believe to be crucial. "You see," she said, "I *must* believe in the World to Come because my son was killed in the R.A.F. during the war. Unless I believed I would meet him again, life would not be worth living." This is, of course, a mode of thinking known popularly as "wishful thinking."

I did not attempt to argue with the good lady, not only because there was little time, but also because I did not want to try to take away from her one of the most important factors which made her life worth living. We Rationalists must accept that our society contains within it systems of tension: this is relieved for the weak person by accepting the line of least resistance—the respectable correct views propagated by all organs of publication and news diffusion. I need hardly add that the same remark frequently applies to mass political views and social conventions; I will refer to this problem again later.

Why is it that we call religious people weak? Because

a religion is a system of prefabricated morals. It is a orientation of the society in which it grew. This society may be many centuries dead. Despite being out of date, however, a religion dare not condemn any practice which is economically desirable. For instance, before the abolition of slavery religion did not condemn it; although the New Testament implies that usury is wrong, many prominent bankers are very religious; the Reverend Dr. Malan finds nothing wrong with segregation, despite the fact that "all men are equal before God." There are many more examples one could give of religious views and practices being out of consonance with economic necessities, and the latter being accepted as having priority.

To return to the main point: religious morals and ethics being developed centuries ago, are, like the legal system, not always equal to the challenge of modern problems. Is it right to use atomic energy? Is segregation moral? Is birth control sinful? Is gas warfare allowable? Is masturbation immoral? Is it a sin to burn a heretic? Various religions have differing answers to these questions, but they are based on arbitrary criteria; these criteria are frequently only ethically allowable when used by one's own religion; they are frequently arbitrary. One example is that of forcible conversion during the Middle Ages. This was considered correct if you happened to be of the converting religion, but a mortal sin if a potential victim. I would also like to give an example of the arbitrary nature of religious decisions. Most orthodox people agree that intermarriage is undesirable on moral grounds. When pressed, after saying that "it's not nice," "these people are different," "they are of other backgrounds," "what will the neighbours say?" etc., they will fall back on this standby, "It's not they themselves who will suffer, but their children; look at the trouble they will have at school." At once the question leaves the moral plane and becomes a practical one in the method of living. One feels that the objection is a

rationalisation for a fear that their religion will be contaminated. One sometimes finds that it is those who so vociferously assert the inconvenience to children who are the cause of it; this is especially wrong if they admit that it is wrong for children of such a marriage to be victimised.

Not only is one presented with a prefabricated system of morals, but also a limiting one. It is permissible to think only to the degree to which thought does not endanger the system. Further thinking is heretical, egoistic, self-important. Do you dare to think you know better than God's servants? Do you have the conceit of trying to work out your own ethics? You have the vanity to believe that you are in a better position to decide your own criteria than were forecast 2,000 years ago. You think you know better than God! God will repay you for this. When it is demonstrable that he does not in fact pay off the personal scores of his servants, another question is asked: "Why is it," poses Job, "that good men suffer and evil men prosper?"—a valiant question.

In order to answer it, founders reacted with the same wishful thinking as the Salvationist in the train. No one wants to die; so they invented a useful "World to Come" to which they could consign the backlog of unrequited moral punishments. Insofar as there is no return, and no proof, except all-powerful fear of death, the world to come fits the rôle very well.

In saying that religion is for the weak, we come to the main positive aspect of Rationalism. It is its strength. It not only allows us but encourages us to think for ourselves, without fearing the consequences. It gives man the enormous confidence in his ability to tackle his own moral problems. In a brilliant study, "Fear of Freedom," Erich Fromm has shown how the greater the freedom of choice and power man has created by technical advance, the more he has become scared of exercising it, and he has sought to abdicate it. At every juncture, in fashions, in religion, in politics, he has thrown away the opportunities which technology and education have given him for deciding his own fate. We know how many people to-day read the same newspapers full of insignificant nonsense; how one man, Mr. Dior, sits in a Paris office and decrees that women's dresses will be shorter. But the responsibility for complete lack of critical appreciation in every field of human activity must be laid on the shoulders of those who teach children all kinds of beliefs because their fathers, teachers, priests, apostles or gods said so.

(To be concluded)

THE DRAWBACK

or Lord Byron's Meditation

The horrors of eternal life
With all my lovers, and my wife,
Give ground for thought, as well as strife.

I could not face them, truth to tell;
If they're in Heaven, give me Hell;
The quiet there would suit me well.

I only wish the ladies good;
They were, it should be understood.
So why should I on them intrude?

I had them, they were good to me,
But in the end I had to flee—
Heaven is not all it is cracked up to be.

B. S.

Thoughts of a Norwegian Resistance Fighter

IN the course of a recent visit to Great Britain what I heard freely spoken confirmed the opinion which I, distant onlooker, have held for many years, that the greatest asset of the British Commonwealth is freedom of speech.

Such a valuation requires a contrast, and such a contrast was my personal experience of forty-one months as a political prisoner in Hitler's concentration camps. There I saw what happens when thought is not freely expressed, but ruthlessly suppressed.

This, I think, is set out in a letter I addressed to Kriminalrath Fehmer, the Gestapo officer in charge of my case, until he too was arrested. Then it was my turn to visit him in jail.

As I was arrested with secret mail in my possession which I was about to smuggle over the Swedish frontier and deliver to Allied legations in Stockholm, I expected the death sentence. In the end it was Fehmer who occupied the death cell, and there I saw him on February 13, 1948. Among other subjects we discussed the causes of war and the different systems of government. Then I wrote him a letter which contained the following passage (translated into English):—

"You joined the Nazi Party. For centuries the German was drilled in complete submission to authority, the sole education which, declared a concentration camp commander, gave positive results. Germany collapsed after the first world war, and the resultant misery was plain to any observer. The man who could dispel the general apathy would win the nation's confidence. This Hitler did, but the price to be paid was not at first apparent.

"You considered the British power of cohesion to lie in the general respect for the royal house, an opinion natural to a German, but you did not seem to grasp my meaning when I spoke of the 'Hyde Park' system of Anglo-Saxon society: by that I meant a system which allows of free speech. To be able to say whatever one thinks openly and freely, without fear of prison or concentration camp, gives a singular power and resilience to the community which is so endowed, no matter that the vagrant may sleep in a ditch by the wall of a millionaire's park. It is this tolerance for other people's thoughts and customs which is the key to the British success in colonisation. On the other hand, the intolerant oppression of the German leads to an equal intolerance of the German by others, hence; the sentence now passed on you." (Fehmer was to be executed.)

"The British flag and British royalty represent now not so much a respect for monarchy as a respect for the opinions of others; they have become the symbols of a freedom, a Magna Carta for mankind, which shall inspire the best men and women long after Norway and Germany will have faded from the map.

"The different and almost incongruous elements of the British Commonwealth require something with a quality of permanence to which they can all look with respect as a symbol of their spiritual unity. Coronation is then the effect, and not the cause of British union."

MORTEN GRINDAHL.

Stockholm. August 2, 1953 (per C.B.B.).

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today, By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

THEISM OR ATHEISM. The Great Alternative. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH. By Colonel Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

This Believing World

According to an article in our contemporary *Truth*, religion in Britain "is virtually non-existent on a national basis." In fact, "for many millions of men and women the motive of spiritual idealism has gone from life." But is not all this something to be proud of? Is it not about time that "spiritual idealism" should be cleared out of the country? What is it, anyway? One sufficient answer could be that all this high-sounding phrase means is a belief in Heaven and Hell, in Devils and Angels, and a number of utterly absurd miracles supposed to have been performed by a mythical Deity called Jesus. If British men and women have given up belief in all this twaddle, then it is an occasion for congratulation.

Needless to say, the article in question drags in St. Francis of Assisi—no doubt to placate Roman Catholics—and Wesley, Calvin, and Luther. Calvin's murder of Servetus is a fine example of "spiritual idealism"; so is, when they quarrelled, Mrs. Wesley's dragging her noble husband round the room by his hair. As for Luther, he didn't mind a little polygamy if discreetly done. Still, they were not merely religious "revivalists," says *Truth*—"they were religious regenerators" also. The rest of the article is the usual kind of religious balderdash full of "Christ chose the hard way"—as if anybody these days with a spark of intelligence cares. As Carlyle said somewhere, the best thing that could happen to any country is—"exit Christ."

The Rev. D. Stevens, Vicar of Cross Heath, is very puzzled to find a proportion of people turn to Spiritualism rather than to the Church for "spiritual healing" as well as for "physical healing." Don't they know, he pathetically asks, that the Church has full power for both? Well, the Spiritualists have got in first. They prove "immortality" or "survival" by easily "materialising" dead people, and they heal on an average 10,983 incurable patients every week. And unless Mr. Steven's Church can do likewise, he will have to stay puzzled. The Church has taught "safe in the arms of Jesus" for many centuries, as well as the laying on of hands; but any Spiritualist will insist that Spiritualism has produced the goods. The fact that we Freethinkers are quite sure that both sects are hopelessly deluded is beside the point.

We have always felt that it was about time that the Virgin paid a visit to America—we mean, of course, the U.S.A., where hard-headed business men abound; for if these blatant Materialists could be made to believe in the reality of a "vision," it would be bound to help the conversion of the world to Roman Catholicism. So it is with joy we report that the Virgin made a personal visit last September to some children at a Fairmont Park. And as the little angels swore that she would return to perform three miracles on a certain day, a crowd of about 50,000 people gathered in the park to see them performed—a proof how hungry the people are for true religion.

It was altogether a glorious success—for the Pope. The sick, the lame, and the blind, came in scores. Candles were burning on the Holy Place. Huge masses of flowers were brought so that the Virgin could have a suitable bouquet when photographed for the Press. Articles, some very expensive, were packed round the Bush where the Divine Lady had appeared first. Crowds of those present grovelled in the most Holy Way for hours uttering prayers. At least one cripple threw away his crutches and danced around. Unfortunately, the Virgin, when making the

appointment, had turned up the wrong page in her diary, and was really due to appear in Europe and so couldn't possibly turn up in America. And, the unkindest cut of all, the Roman Church disowned the whole affair—after the Virgin's mistake. How very, very sad.

That Master of credulous belief, Mr. G. N. M. Tyrrell, in his book on Apparitions, advises all those who see a spook to keep calm and "make sure it is not a hoax or a dream." Always try and get someone to see the spook at the same time so as to have a reliable witness, and don't be sure, because it is dressed in what looks like a prosaic bed sheet, that it is so dressed. Never touch or speak to a spook. You will find, if you touch one, your hand will go right through it. Tyrrell doubts the efficacy of prayer even if devoutly uttered by a priest. We trust the above recommendations will be seriously followed by all spook-hunters, otherwise we—and Tyrrell—cannot be answerable for the consequences. An angry spook may even be worse than an angry God.

Theatre

The Return, by Bridget Boland, at the Duchess Theatre, is a play about a nun who returns to the world after thirty-six years.

In one of the best first acts ever written the play promises well, only to weaken irretrievably in Act II because the author was groping about on ground of which she had insufficient knowledge, very much like Sister Agatha who had to revisit a world she had not seen since 1913. Her first reactions in Act I are excellently portrayed, but the author skips over three weeks which could have been the most interesting in the life of this nun, for when we see her again she has reconciled her religious and restricted outlook with the world as she finds it, and her problem is not how to rise above her long-enclosed life, but how to find an occupation where she can feel she is doing useful work.

Flora Robson as the nun has a very good acting part and makes the character live as no other actress could. Ernest Jay is a cynical chaplain who uses American slang when addressing the prioress. Peter Martyn and Ann Walford, as the nun's nephew and his wife, use rather noticeably more "damns" and "hells" when addressing the prioress than would come into natural conversation.

The play is worth seeing for the acting, but what might have been very good conflict based on life in a nunnery has a kind of Rip van Winkle effect.

Antony and Cleopatra could rarely have been better presented than in the Stratford festival's rendering at the Princes Theatre.

Much credit must go to Glen Byam Shaw's direction for its ingenuity and even timing, and to the leading actors. Peggy Ashcroft as Cleopatra amply expresses her deep love for Antony through a character that is both queasy and abandoned to her passion, which must be partly inspired by Michael Redgrave's buoyancy and vigour. Marius Goring's Octavius Cæsar is stern and abrupt; he shows us a man of astute mind used to great decisions. Shakespeare's knowledge of asp was limited, for he leaves the killing of three people in a few minutes to one miserable specimen, but the producer has wisely brought out three asps.

The Love Match at the Palace Theatre is a weak, almost humourless play written by Glenn Melvyn.

What life it has is given to it by the acting, for Arthur Askey can never be dull, and he is well followed by Thorold Hird and Anthea Askey. But something stronger than semi-humorous situations is necessary to make a good farcical comedy.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

To Correspondents

D. G. HOLLIDAY.—Thank you for your contributions. These will be carefully considered and returned if unsuitable.
L. MAITLAND WOOLF.—Unfortunately, *The Freethinker* is not able to pay for published articles.
HISPANICUS.—Thank you for contribution, which we hope to use shortly. Meanwhile, Salud! You are a worthy countryman of Francisco Ferrer.
A. YATES.—Thank you for your article.
JACK BENJAMIN.—Thank you for your letter and good wishes, which we heartily reciprocate. We are pleased to find that you agree with our estimate of Freethought in U.S.A.
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.
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 should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.
Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.
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, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields, a Lecture.
North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Thursday, 1-15 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, November 29, 7 p.m.: "Brains Trust" by Panel of Birmingham Secularists.
Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, November 29, 6-45 p.m.: E. STOCKDALE, a Quaker, moves "That the N.S.S. is a deeply religious organisation."
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 1, 7 p.m.: Dr. EUSTACE CHESSER, "Crime, Psychology and Punishment."
Glasgow Secular Society (Branch N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Buchanan Street).—Sunday, November 29, 6.30 p.m.: J. P. MORRISON, "Philosophy, and All That."
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 29, 6-30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Millions Now Living."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, November 29, 2-30 p.m.: Nottingham Methodist Youth Club (Albert Hall Institute).—Sunday, November 29, 8 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Why do Right? The Secularists' Outlook."
S. B. LEE, "Is the Papal Church the Church Christ Founded?"
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 29, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Problem of the Press."
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.).—Sunday, November 29: WILLIAM KENT, F.S.A., "London for Heretics."

A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 371)

NEVERTHELESS, I claim the opinion to be founded on the facts, and I am sure no thoroughgoing secularist can subscribe to Holyoake's admiration of Comte's Positivism, which has been called Roman Catholicism minus Christianity. It is only fair to add that a case can be made for secularists getting on with the job without unduly antagonising their potential supporters with such shocking heresies as Atheism and the denial of survival after death, not to mention the exposure of Bible absurdities.

In the event it was Bradlaugh who got the major following: his prestige among secularists increased as Holyoake's declined. In this I feel bound to applaud the secularists of the time. It is good not only to be on the right road but also to know why you are on it. I do not doubt that vast numbers of nothingarians, indifferentists and liberal Christians will follow the Holyoakes who lead them to brighter Sundays. They will be equally ready to follow the Churches should the latter decide the time is ripe to take the lead from secularism in order to keep their own heads above water and so retain the privileges that are left to them. Bradlaugh wanted the amelioration of social conditions as much as Holyoake, and in fact his own career in this direction will compare with Holyoake's or that of anyone else in the 19th century. But he intended to have an intelligent following fully conscious of the anti-social nature of religion and of its utterly fallible credentials. In a word, he was "Thorough." He was uncompromising on doctrine as well as in practice. He was, therefore, the most Christian-hated reformer of the century, and that means of any century. And while Holyoake had shed the teachings of religion he never quite shed the atmosphere, with his secular psalms, prayers, hymns and ritual.

* * * *

To resume the factual account:—

1862. The National Reformer Co. ceases and Bradlaugh becomes proprietor. *Propagandist* appears.

1863. During a period of ill-health Bradlaugh relinquishes the editorship of his paper. He continues to write on poverty and on parliamentary representation. Holyoake's paper becomes the *Reasoner*; he is publishing secular tracts and working on the latest affirmation bill.

1864. John Watts, now editing the *National Reformer*, rents 17, Johnson's Court for it: his brother Charles is sub-editor and is doing some secularist lecturing. After irregular appearances Holyoake's paper dies. Bradlaugh writes his *Plea for Atheism*.

1865. The *National Reformer* office is moved but No. 17 is kept on by a company under Austin Holyoake, brother of G. J.

1866. Another nodal point is reached: secularism becomes national in character. The NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY is formed. Bradlaugh, who resumes editorship, is President. Its principles are: to promote human happiness, to fight religion as an obstruction, to attack the legal barriers to Freethought: and its objects are Freethought propaganda, parliamentary action to remove disabilities, secular schools and instruction classes, mutual help and a fund for the distressed. The headquarters are in London, and the executive includes several Vice-Presidents of whom C. Watts is one. Besides the officers there is a council chosen by the local secular societies, meeting monthly, with the annual conference held on Whit. Sunday and proxy voting permitted. Leicester Secular

(Continued from preceding column)

Society takes its final form. Secularists are now aiding a League for manhood suffrage, of which Bradlaugh is Vice-President. A Reform League meeting in Hyde Park is forbidden; nevertheless, the crowd assembles: the police interfere and so Bradlaugh and others lead the crowd to Trafalgar Square, where the meeting is held.

(To be continued)

(Continued at foot of preceding column)

Mr. J. Arthur Findlay Replies

By H. CUTNER

THE following is the letter I received from Mr. Findlay in reply to my criticisms of his two books:—

"Dear Mr. Cutner,

I am in receipt of your letter of November 2 enclosing me copies of *The Freethinker*, in which you criticise two of my books. I may say that I have already read these articles and I think your criticism was most unfair. You do not quote me correctly, and you burlesque the whole subject.

I do not object to honest criticism, in fact I welcome it, but, if I may say so frankly, in my opinion your criticism was not honest. Moreover, it is not criticism to make out that I and other Spiritualists are complete fools. That is only your own opinion.

Throughout, you write as if Sloan did all the talking, but you completely ignore all the precautions that were taken to make sure that he did not speak. Further, you completely ignore the evidence, and I challenge you and any other critic to explain what I write on pages 117-118 of "On the Edge of the Etheric." You cannot do so, and you cannot explain away all the evidence that is given in this book. It was quite impossible for Sloan, or anybody else, to have produced these facts.

Instead of facing matters squarely and admitting that these evidential facts could not be explained, you write in such a way as to make your readers think that I am a complete fool, and everybody else who has accepted Spiritualism is either a fool or a knave.

For that reason your articles are, in my opinion, not worth replying to, and the readers of *The Freethinker*, if they are satisfied with your burlesque of Spiritualism, are simple and gullible, and that is all I have to say.

You say that you have made a study of Spiritualism, but, in my own opinion, you have done nothing of the kind, and you know little or nothing whatever about the subject.

Yours, sincerely,

J. ARTHUR FINDLAY.

[P.S.—If you care to publish this letter in *The Freethinker* I have no objection.—J. A. F.]

Those of us who have read some of the "replies" to Thomas Paine, Robert Taylor, Robert Cooper, Charles Bradlaugh, and G. W. Foote—to mention only a few "infidels" of last century who were the objects of Christian love and charity—will easily recognise in the above a direct line of succession. Mr. Findlay is not even original in his expressions.

Just let me give one example. In 1864 appeared Evan Powell Meredith's *Prophet of Nazareth*, one of the most remarkable books ever written on that mythical deity—far and away superior to Renan or, in my own opinion, even to Strauss. The Christian Churches almost completely boycotted the book and, it must be confessed, that this was their best answer.

One parson, the Vicar of Whaplode, Spalding, the Rev. J. A. Francklin, M.A., however did pluck up courage and wrote to Meredith; and I am sure it will interest readers to see how an M.A., fortified by Christ, approached the "infidel." Here are a few extracts from his letters:—

"I have just perused some extracts from your horrible and blasphemous production, entitled 'The Prophet of Nazareth.' Your pestilent doctrines prove, beyond all doubt, that you are nothing more than a Deist. . . . And, while plying your ungodly pen in the service of Satan. . . . I will not needlessly trouble myself to contravert the miserable fallacies, the wilful misrepresentations, and perverse distortions. . . . If, therefore, there were five hundred powerful Merediths, instead of one weak and puny one. . . . I should laugh their efforts to scorn. . . . Your views and assertions. . . . so often refuted by former writers. . . . this, your cockscumbry and self vanity, I presume has overlooked. . . .

And so on. Mr. Findlay had some glorious precursors and the ineffable Mr. Francklin was only one of thousands.

Mr. Findlay says that my criticism was not "honest" and that I completely ignore the "evidence." And he cites pages 117-118 from *On the Edge of the Etheric* as the kind of evidence I ignore. I certainly ignored it. I was not there, I do not really know what happened, and I am only

too well acquainted with the methods of mediums to trust any of them in any way whatever.

Let me, however, examine this particular bit of "evidence." It appears that—about thirty years ago—Mr. Findlay was asked to take someone to a sitting with Sloan. Neither knew who he was. At the seance, "a voice addressed him correctly," and when asked whose voice, the reply was, "When on earth, I was known as King Edward VII." Then ensued a personal conversation "names being mentioned which my acquaintance recognised"; and finally the voice said, "I must thank you for all your kindness to my wife, Queen Alexandra." After all this, the "unknown" gentleman then told Mr. Findlay that he was "the Controller of her household."

Now, I submit that it is impossible for anybody at this distance of time to say what *exactly* took place. Mr. Findlay's account is, of course, written in perfect good faith, but what would he say if I minutely described Houdini walking through a brick wall, that I actually *saw* it done, and that my account of it was absolutely correct, and no other account was possible? As he knows, Sir A. Conan Doyle insisted that Houdini "dematerialised" himself, got through the wall as "a spirit," and then materialised himself back again. But if I still insisted that I saw it done and Houdini was never a spirit? I certainly saw Houdini do the trick but that is all.

There are a dozen questions I should like to ask Mr. Findlay before accepting his version of the incident he relates. It was the Hon. E. Fielding who sent the Controller to Mr. Findlay. Why? Did Mr. Fielding say that the medium would be Sloan? Mr. Fielding was a member of the Society for Psychical Research, and I should like to hear what he had to say. Did he know Sloan? Was Sloan completely unknown to everybody but Mr. Findlay and a small number of friends, or what?

Moreover, King Edward always spoke with a German accent. Had the voice, coming through Sloan, a German accent? Was it the voice of a young man or an old one? But why go on with these questions—as I have already said there are no ways of finding an answer to any of them. One has to take Mr. Findlay on trust, and if the two books I reviewed are anything to go by, I should say there is nothing too silly which he would not defend as "Gospel Truth." My own impression, after reading the two works, was that Sloan very successfully bamboozled everybody who came to him. And the more he did so the more they believed.

One of my friends went to an "automatic writing" medium—the late Hester Dowden—and she got him in touch with William Shakespeare, the Earl of Oxford, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, and many other famous Elizabethans. He has published his "conversations" with them, and very entertaining they are. But does anybody really believe that the great Elizabethans named really talked with my friend, that as soon as he sits with a medium, they know where he is and come scurrying through the "etheric" world to the exact place? Why do they speak perfect Georgian English?

Yet Mr. Findlay wants us to believe that the spirit of King Edward had been hovering about in a world exactly like this but of a different "vibration," that he knew the Controller would be sent to Sloan accompanied, of course, by Mr. Findlay to give him "evidence," and that Sloan would demonstrate in a house in Glasgow the exact spot easily found because all spirits can find "mediums" wherever they are. And naturally, the Controller would

G.B.S. and Mrs. Pat

By JOHN O'HARE

IRRATIONALISM is a necessary complement of rationalism: the man who tried to live rationally at all points would drop down dead. One of the chief rationalists of our era was a sage called G.B.S.; one of the leading irrationalists was an Irishman named George Bernard Shaw. Like most iconoclasts, arch-iconoclast Shaw had much conservatism in his make-up. He had love for woman. This in face of Frank Harris, H. G. Wells, and other sensual men, who, confronted by a higher sensory development than theirs, declared Shaw emasculate.

Oceans of words have been spilt about Shaw, but nearly all the flood has avoided Shaw the human being. Shaw was a human being. Behind the placards of his profession he often took his armour off and tossed his lance in the corner; and though he never called for a bowl of punch, nor busied a serving wench, yet he wrote love-letters with the abandonment of a fiddler at a wake. And he—the all-brain, the giant unemotional—did that illogical act: wrote verses (or tried to, which is the same thing) to the lady of his heart. "Ah, but this," says the logician, looking up myopically, "this was but a temporary deviation." Not on your unsweet life was it! Shaw was a man of deep emotions; but as he was also a great Irish dramatist, he used his emotions with the cunning and effectiveness of concealed batteries, and confused the English (but not the French) into believing that he was untouched by all passion not intellectual. Art thou there, true-penny?

"Oh, before you go, my Stella, I clasp you to my heart with 'such a strained purity.' . . . a thousand beauties, a thousand hopes and faiths and loves and adorations watch over you and rain upon you. Goodnight, goodnight, goodnight, goodnight, my dearest dearest."

This is Shaw at 56 speaking, the creator of John Tanner, the man of the splendidly reasoned argument, the pontiff of platform and prince of print—and the artist whose Killiney youth lay soaked behind him in music and poetry. And Stella! That was a woman, that was a female magnificence all too rare. In his own Eliza Doolittle Shaw noted that tremendous quality of attractiveness-vitality; and Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the first Eliza, was vital as sunlight, large as deep seas, radiant as Tokay. It was to Mrs. Pat that Shaw spoke with his deepest voice, deepest because most hidden; and it was Mrs. Pat, alone of all his acquaintances, who addressed him by a pet name. Joey, she called him—"dear, dear Joey." They met and corresponded for half their long lifetimes. Much of their correspondence, unobtrusively edited by Mr. Alan Dent, has fortunately been published by Gollancz. Reading these letters is like living life in the round, not just at one angle. Each writer was a splendid creature, unbounded and magnanimous, deeply gifted, yet widely differing. To watch, as it were, the spectacle of these two beings in the intimacy of their affection for each other and their devotion to the art of acting is an enhancement of life's richness.

Mrs. Campbell was as much the mistress of *le mot juste* as Shaw was the master; she had a deep intuitive understanding of the shy, sensitive man behind G.B.S.'s assertiveness and bombast; and she brought to that sensitive man a great deal of comfort and no small happiness. They disagreed on practically every aspect of life and nearly every topic; they flared up at each other time out of mind; theirs, in a word, was a real man and woman friendship. No grated carrots, cold water, and the higher thought here! That might be all right for Fabian pamphlets and local government; but *Heartbreak House*, *Man and Superman*, *Saint Joan*, could be written only by a man who

be absolutely convinced that he had heard King Edward. But in case we are not yet convinced, Mr. Findlay sends us to Admiral Moore's *The Voices*—in which the gallant sailor (if I remember aright) describes dogs barking from Summerland to prove that the spirits of dogs also survived. Is there no end to all this credulity? And does Mr. Findlay maintain that Moore's medium, Mrs. Wriedt, was never exposed?

Mr. Findlay claims that "I do not quote him correctly"—but evidently thinks that there is no need to say which are my "misquotations." I am not—as he is—infallible, but I deny that I have misquoted him. In any case, as I pointed out in my articles, he says that "Materialism has an answer for everything." Would he give me the names of six eminent Materialists, with chapter and verse where they make this utterly preposterous claim? Or does Mr. Findlay think he has every right to libel anonymous Materialists and yet indignantly expostulate when his own childish beliefs are questioned?

And finally—it is never a pleasant task to expose any kind of credulity, for the critic is often bound to hurt wherever there is sincere belief. But Freethought will never make any headway in getting people to shed their primitive superstitions except by drastic criticism. If Spiritualism cannot survive such criticism, if it cannot bear "burlesque," then it should join forthwith with all the other infantile beliefs which science and common-sense exploded long ago.

"Atom Bomb" at Bible Headquarters

THE Revd. John Eric Fenn, B.Sc., is the Editorial Secretary in the Literary Department of The British and Foreign Bible Society. Unlike the National Secular Society, Mr. Fenn's employers enjoy the patronage of the B.B.C., and their work has been the subject of recent eulogistic broadcast talks. After hearing these, a reader of *The Freethinker* and member of the N.S.S. wrote to Mr. Fenn and inquired if at any time a reply to *The Bible Handbook* had been published.

He replied: "I can find nobody amongst my near colleagues here who knows this book, nor do we know whether my reply to it has been published." Our reader thereupon sent him a copy of the Handbook to be placed in the Bible Society's Reference Library, and it was duly acknowledged with thanks.

The thought of a copy of *The Bible Handbook* at the headquarters of the organisation that has been responsible for publishing and circulating hundreds of millions of Bibles in almost every known language is a sobering one. Suppose Mr. Fenn actually read it? Suppose he then thought it to the notice of all those colleagues of his who have never yet heard of it? Suppose it had the same effect on them that it has had on tens of thousands of erstwhile Christians whose eyes it has opened to the contradictions, absurdities and other questionable contents of God's Word? The British and Foreign Bible Society, which has flourished for nearly a hundred and fifty years, might lose the whole of its staff by resignation in the course of a few weeks!

What would the supporters of The Bible Society think, if they knew of this imminent danger? What would they say, bearing that responsible executives at "The Bible House" are not even aware of the existence of this "systematic exposure of the most exalted volume in Christendom," as a recent reviewer has described it? Mr. Fenn's admission of ignorance regarding this book is surely an admission also of gross laxity, for *The Bible Handbook* has steadily undermined Christian bibliolatry all over the world, since the whole of its ten editions was published nearly sixty-five years ago.

P. V. M.

knew feeling as well as thought, by a man who knew the heart's blaze when colour and music combine, and when the sonorous splendour of words comes like an ocean resplendently washing away the grubby litter of the trippers' beach that is so much of our life. It was this man that Mrs. Patrick Campbell knew—"Joey, the clever Irish lad," and the most enduring Shaw.

Correspondence

WHY DO THEY SING IT?

SIR,—The silly habit of connecting any public gathering—even for the purpose of hearing Beethoven or Molière—with a (mostly shortened) rendering of the National Anthem is of rather recent origin. To sing a different version of the words while still howling with the herd will hardly help to end this uncouth mannerism; it is not law, but just a backwash of patriotic hysteria, fossilized since the first war, and no punishment can be inflicted on those responsible for the gathering for not playing the Anthem. So why not start a campaign to get things moving and discontinue the tradition as such?

To my knowledge, no people on the Continent—not even the Prussians—has reached similar depths of spittle-licking; they play their National Anthems only in war-time or in patriotic gatherings, and even then only military people are obliged to stand to attention, whilst all civilians go on sitting.

If these facts were called to the attention of the public, more people may be inclined to allow this mannerism to fall into oblivion. Homage to the reigning monarch is only of secondary importance; the main thing—as shown by the standing of civilians during the act—is regimentation of the populace for war purposes. Once again, Dr. Johnson's dictum is corroborated that: Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.—Yours, etc.,

TOM HILL.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

SIR,—Contrary to Mr. Alexander's opinion, I understand only too well the meaning behind his article on the National Anthem.

What I object to is not his desire to change the words but his suggestion that we should, if possible, leave the hall before the National Anthem is played. Unfortunately, I am not able to quote the exact text of the offending paragraph as I have already sent that copy of *The Freethinker* to a friend overseas.

Surely, such an action as this could only be interpreted as the grossest disrespect to our British democracy?

If Mr. Alexander wishes to sneak out he is free to do so, of course, but I suggest it is hardly rational or ethical to advise others, via the columns of *The Freethinker*, to do likewise.—Yours, etc.,

BASIL J. EDGECOMBE.

REALITY

SIR,—After some 30 years in the Great Canadian Bible Belt I learn with apprehension that "The stuff of the cosmos is mental." As I understand it, nothing is real, only the idea of it. Could be, okay. Only how can they tell, as the statement implies that there is no test of objective reality, since all such tests would still be in the realm of ideality. For me, a practical Joe, the meals I eat seem real enough for every-day use. I think maybe we get too academical for most Freethinker readers. Just what is reality, anyhow? Or am I starting up another gossamer argument! Anyhow, I find your paper a grand refresher here in Toronto, the City of Churches. It restores my sense of reality in this witch-hunting part of the world.—Yours, etc.,

J.F.K.

IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

SIR,—I have read Mr. Day's correspondence ("Critics of Freethought") in your issue of October 30, and I thank him for his observations to my communication of the 2nd of the same month ("Ascension or Assumption?").

I am glad to note that Mr. Day approves (at least indirectly) of the central point of my letter, to wit, that, in the question of the "where" and the "when" of Christ's Ascension to Heaven, there is no contradiction between Mark, Luke and the Acts. That was my principal point against Mr. W. A. Vaughan. The question about *Christ's brothers or brethren* came in incidentally. It seems, however, that Mr. Day is not much up to date with the question. John, in fact, was not one of them, if not in a very broad sense, which Mr. Day wishes to exclude in order to attack the perpetual virginity of Mary. I think an article on this famous question would interest your readers very much if published in *The Freethinker*. Curiously enough not one of the so-called four

"brothers" was present at the crucifixion, and Jesus from upon the cross had to entrust John, the beloved disciple, with the care of his mother. There is an article quite to the point on "Christ's Brothers" in the recently published "A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture," p. 844. A pamphlet dealing with the question might perhaps be obtained from the Catholic Truth Society (London).

Mr. Day asks me to tell your readers when, where and how the levitation involved in the Ascension of Jesus and the Assumption of Mary took place, who were the witnesses, etc. Well, let Mr. Day read the First Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. There he will find the answer. The Acts and the Gospel of St. Luke were, according to rationalist Harnack and other critics of modern time, written by St. Luke himself. The Assumption of Mary is out of the subject for the moment.

With regard to the witnesses, St. Luke says that the Apostles saw Jesus going up, etc. (Acts Ch. 1) Mark and Matthew affirm the same thing. Matthew, as he was one of the Apostles, must have been present. Papyri of the first century of the Christian era and of the first half of the second, recently discovered, demonstrate objectively the truth that the Gospels were written in the first century. Archeological discoveries confirm many a fact narrated in the Gospel.

Mr. Day (maybe jokingly) asks me whether the witnesses testimony was sworn. I am sorry I cannot give him the name of the public notary to whom (if ever) they had deposited their testimony! But there is something more convincing, they paid their testimony with their life and martyrdom.

And "What is to-day's value of such testimony?" asks Mr. Day. Well, to-day's value of that testimony is the living Church of Christ. I mean the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church (which is the only one of the Christian Churches that bears the true marks of Christ's Church, namely, Oneness in faith and authority, Catholicity: for all nations and for all times; Infallibility in Faith and Morals, etc.; the only one which claims to be built on Peter, the Rock). She is stronger than ever, though she suffers for the Faith, Justice, and Truth.

Finally, Mr. Day asks me to deal with the question: "How had Jesus become possessed of his clothes after the Resurrection?" (This is in substance his last question.) Theologians try to explain this and similar difficulties about Christ's body after the Resurrection; but I prefer to tell Mr. Day that once Christ's divinity accepted all such difficulties disappear, at least as to the fact. The difficulty involving the explanation of the fact remains. By the way, in the Transfiguration Christ's "garments became white as snow" (Mt. xvii 2).—Yours, etc.,

G. M. PARIS

OUR YOUNGEST CORRESPONDENT WRITES

SIR,—I am 11 years old. My Grandfather was a Freethinker. My Daddy was, and my Mummy is, so you see I do not take Scripture lessons or prayers. We believe in higher standards of mentality. But why if I do something wrong but no different to the other boys am I punished more, and they say it's all you can expect, his people are Heathens? My Daddy has been away with T.B. for nearly three years, and again I hear them say it's his punishment, and he is a German anyway. I think these Christians are very unkind people. I am glad we don't belong to them.

JACQUES REPPÉ.

EXISTENTIALISM

SIR,—Mr. McCall at the end of his interesting article on Existentialism gave the impression that I think Existentialism is what we want, or something like it. I do not. He quotes me as saying, "The importance of existentialism is in expressing the crying need for humanism." By that I meant the opposite of what he seems to suppose. I meant that the state of mind exhibited in existentialism shows the need for humanism.

Not merely for materialism. I am a materialist. So is Sartre. Many are materialists in the sense of believing that matter is prior to mind and mind is bound up with its material organization. But that belief is a beginning, not a final answer to all questions. One can be a materialist, for example, and subscribe to physicalism or behaviourism or Marxism; and one can be a materialist and subscribe to none of these philosophies. To be a materialist *sans phrase* is like being an animal. There are no animals, there are only individual dogs and men and bears.

I don't suppose Mr. McCall would disagree, but I think that in discussing "isms" we are all in danger of supposing that our position is not only necessary but also sufficient.—Yours, etc.,

H. J. BLACKHALL

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By G. W. Foote
Price, cloth 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.