

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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ON Wednesday, November 18, our contemporary, the *News Chronicle*, featured a long article entitled *The Saints Are Ordered Back from Hell*. The article in question dealt with the recent decision of the Vatican to put an end to the experiment of "worker-priests" in France: that is, of ordained priests who work in factories as normally employed workers with the tools of their trade, and with no outward mark of their clerical profession to distinguish them from their fellow-workers of the authentic proletariat. The movement of "worker-priests" was originated some ten years ago by a French priest, the Abbé Godin, with the support of Cardinal Suhard, the then Archbishop of Paris: the period was that of the German occupation and of the clerical-fascist Vichy regime of the pious Marshal Petain.

Saints in Hell

The short-lived experiment of "worker-priests" and its abrupt suppression by the Vatican has aroused much discussion in France, and embraces problems which are of interest all over the Christian world as they concern what is, perhaps, the gravest problem that, to-day, confronts the leaders of not only the Roman Catholic Church but of all the present-day Christian Churches, the problem of how to retain or to recover the already largely paganised working-class, so important in modern economic and political life in, and to, the Christian Churches. A powerful French novel by M. Gilbert Cesbron, entitled in its English translation, *Saints in Hell*, deals with this problem from the point of view of the "worker-priests" themselves. Thanks to the kindness of the English publishers, Messrs. Secker and Warburg, we have been favoured with a review-copy of this book which we hope to review in the near future.

The Church and the Proletariat

Meanwhile, what is the current problem with which the Churches are now concerned, and with which the institution of "worker-priests" was designed to cope? In broad outline one can, we think, define the current problem of the Church in these terms. Whilst official Christianity undoubtedly started amongst the slaves and manual workers in the Roman Empire as is made abundantly evident both from its own early history and from the polemics of its pagan critics such as Celsus (A.D. 2nd century), it has long since become "respectable" and since the now far-off days of the "conversion" of Constantine, has been one of the firmest pillars of the *status quo*, of political and economic conservatism. In the Middle Ages it was the heretical sects, the Lollards, Hussites, and Anabaptists, which raised the banner of social protest and revolution. Whilst it was the Conservative official Churches, whether of Rome, Luther, or Canterbury, which stood solidly with, and for the then existing social orders. This state of things remained, in fact, normal and unchanged until the Industrial Revolution

and the subsequent rise of the manual workers, the modern proletariat, to the powerful position in the political and economic life of most modern communities which the workers hold to-day.

The Workers' Charter

The Christian Churches were, at first, slow to recognise, and to adapt themselves to, the new social conditions. Whilst "Christian Socialist" movements made their appearance in the more industrially developed lands, they made little headway, and were frowned on by the Church hierarchy, besides being distrusted by the workers. For example,

Charles Kingsley, one of the early "Christian Socialists," has left a vivid description of how suspiciously he was regarded by the Chartists of his day who could not believe that an Anglican cleric could really be a radical. The first real large-scale attempt made by the Christian Churches to win the support of the proletariat was represented by the Papal Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1891, and still commonly referred to in Catholic circles as "The Workers' Charter."

The Rejoicing Third

This Encyclical was a literally epoch-making document. For it marked a radical change in the social policy of the most powerful of the Christian Churches; and most of the other Christian Churches have, subsequently, followed its lead. It should be noted that *Rerum Novarum* was not a socialist or a revolutionary document; since the days of Constantine the Churches have always held fast to the axiom that "the powers that be are ordained of God." However, since 1891, the Papacy has officially recognised the existence and grievances of the proletariat, and, as the present writer has elsewhere phrased it: "ever since *Rerum Novarum*, the Catholic Church has posed as 'the rejoicing third,' between the two great social classes of modern times, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." We may add that this is still its position.

A Matter of Life and Death

It is not generally known that Pope Leo issued his most famous Encyclical at the direct request of a former French socialist, a follower of the famous St. Simon, by name, Isaac Pereire, who warned the Pope that, unless something new and drastic was done to retain their allegiance, the working-class, newly-created by industrialisation, would abandon Christianity altogether and become completely paganised. The Pope's correspondent insisted that, as the ultimate future in modern society lay with the workers, the matter was, literally, one of life-or-death for the Church. *Rerum Novarum*, with its outspoken denunciations of the "new slavery" which modern capitalism was imposing on the working-class, was the Vatican's answer to this appeal: the modern "worker-priests" represent a continuation of this policy of the Church's drive to recover its proletarian lost sheep.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Church and the Proletariat

By F. A. RIDLEY

Why the Experiment Failed

According to the correspondent of the *News Chronicle* already quoted, the immediate reason for the recent suppression of the "worker-priests" by the Vatican lay primarily in the embarrassing position which the activities of the proletarian priests created for the Church. Priests have, so it is stated, actually been arrested by the police in communist-inspired demonstrations; and have signed manifestoes calling for strike and "direct action." No doubt, contact with "subversive" communist forces represents a two-way traffic, and the present effort of the Church to beat the communists on their own ground may produce the opposite effects to what was originally intended. A cynical French critic has also alleged that a priest who works with

his own hands "lets down" the dignity of his profession. It is a long time since the days of the carpenter of Nazareth and his disciples, the weaver, St. Paul, and the apostolic fishermen.

A Social Paradox

Anyway, whatever the cause, for the time being the experiment is over. "The Saints" have been withdrawn from "Hell." It represents the latest phase in the social paradox of Christian evolution: a movement which originated amongst the ancient proletariat, and has ended up as (very) "Big Business." The modern successors of the apostles have found much easier and more profitable means of livelihood than by taking out a trade union card!

Dialectical Materialism

By JIM GRAHAM

WHEN a subject like Dialectical Materialism is being discussed, one would naturally think those taking part should at least know something about the matter. The reply to my article by Mr. H. Cutner demonstrates his complete ignorance of even the fundamentals of Dialectical Materialism. In fact, he has given no evidence of a knowledge of Mechanical Materialism which he claims to support, and I should think the inquirers he mentions will receive little enlightenment on the questions relating to the differences between Mechanical and Dialectical Materialism. His whole approach to the subject is wrong; he does not appear to wish to understand it.

Firstly, he complains I gave no definition of Dialectical Materialism. Definitions have their limitations, and the whole of the article could be taken as defining what is meant. If one approaches any science in the hostile manner of Mr. Cutner it is not surprising he finds difficulty in understanding what it is about. I note also by his reply that dogma is not confined to the Church, but the stock-in-trade of at least one well known contributor to *The Freethinker*.

Secondly, he states: "So far as I am able to understand it, any Christian can be a Dialectical Materialist." What utter rubbish! This remark shows he has no knowledge of the subject at all, as this is precisely what no Christian can be. Where on earth did he get the idea that John MacMurray and the Dean of Canterbury were Dialectical Materialists? They are not: both are idealists.

Mr. Cutner states: "And in Russia there must be millions of fervent believers in both Christianity and Dialectical Materialism." It amazes me to note that the man who accuses me of incoherency could write a sentence like that. It can mean anything or nothing. Likely enough, there are millions of fervent believers in both Christianity and Dialectical Materialism in Russia, *but not the same people at the same time*. The millions who are Christians cannot be Dialectical Materialists and the Dialectical Materialists cannot be Christians.

Apparently, the significance of the Nebular Hypothesis means as little to Mr. Cutner as does Dialectical Materialism. All he knows, evidently, is the Napoleon-Laplace incident which he says was known for 150 years. What then? Does it invalidate the lessons to be learned from the Nebular Hypothesis, because the incident was known? Does Mr. Cutner know the remark of Lagrange—a mathematician at least the equal of Laplace—when Napoleon related to Lagrange what Laplace had said?

For those who wish to know: the great significance of the Nebular Hypothesis was that it removed the necessity of having some mysterious power behind the Universe, and demonstrated the self-motion, and self-sufficiency of Nature.

Mr. Cutner asks: Do I know where, in all this, is Dialectical Materialism? Certainly, I know. I could also tell him, but he appears like a child learning arithmetic and who wants to quarrel with the multiplication table. One can do nothing with an approach like that. His illustration of motion "time moves on" shows his metaphysical and static method of thinking. Motion, a fundamental process in nature, holds no significance for him. He demonstrates this himself with his infantile query, "So what?"

Surely, Mr. Editor, we now come to what can only be classed as drivel. When I state that: "Hegel was one of the most important of idealists"; "That he was born in a revolutionary age"; and "Dialectics are revolutionary" the meaning is clear. The reason Mr. Cutner compares these statements to "Pork pies are fatty", etc., is because he knows nothing whatever about the subject and indeed I doubt if he knows what Materialism means—either Dialectical or Mechanical.

Mr. Cutner has read somewhere that Hegel was "half mad," and he also finds him "unintelligible"; "Hegel is as dead as his unreadable works." We are also informed: "Hegel was Marx's teacher." Hegel was as much the teacher of Marx as were Heraclitus, Democritus, or Aristotle.

Marx was 13 years old when Hegel died.

Hegel was the outstanding philosopher of his time. Many of the methods of investigation used by Hegel—for instance, the "Hegelian Triad" were utilised by Marx, but while Hegel was dialectical, he was not materialist, and from Hegel's work Marx took the rational kernel only. In other words, what he took chiefly from Hegel was his departure. In the main, his work was not only different from Hegel's but opposite in its philosophy.

The hypocrisy of Mr. Cutner's next inquiry sticks out all over. He asks for the exact passage where it is shown Marx standing Hegel right side up. Now if Mr. Cutner was sincere in this request, I should give him the information, but just below this he states: "Who cares a brass nail what Marx did to Hegel?" He does "not in the least worry what Marx or Hegel thought or even care two hoots at Mr. Graham's ludicrous attempts to introduce Dialectical Materialism." Then it must simply be impertinence on his part to ask for information he holds in contempt. His whole approach is that of a Bourgeois Philistine.

He quotes from my article: "Students of Dialectical Materialism must keep in mind not only the activity of 'objective processes,' but also their own social activity in their attempts to change their environment for the better." He doubts if this has any meaning, but if it has, he asks if it is only students of Dialectical Materialism who should bear in mind objective processes and "changing environment." I can assure Mr. Cutner I have no concern

whether he studies them or not, but suggest he learns something of any subject he attempts to criticise. So far his attack on Dialectical Materialists resembles nothing so much as the primer scholar bawling his opinions at the algebra class.

To those sincerely interested in the subject, Mr. Cutner's article may be useful in calling attention to points which may be elaborated. The question of Christians and their relation to the subject is fundamental. Dialectical Materialism is a theory of knowledge—or as technically known—an epistemology. Just as the theory of knowledge of the Christian is theological, and therefore idealist, it follows he cannot be a Dialectical Materialist. Whether the ideal or the material has primacy is the main dividing line in philosophy.

Dialectical Materialists hold the material as primary and the idea is derivative.

Dialectical thought means the study of things in their relationship to each other, their interaction and self move-

ment, development and change. A dialectical idealist would recognise all these changes, but would hold the idea to be primary and the material as secondary.

Certainly all philosophy can be a guide. What would a philosophy be for if it were not a guide to action?

Theory is the eye of practice and without it practice is blind. Practical theory and theoretical practice form a unity which cannot be separated. They constitute a unity and struggle of opposites which interact, interpenetrate, change into each other, and in their self-movement produce new theory and practice at a higher level. That is the essence of Dialectical Materialism.

It should be noted that some study is necessary in order to fit oneself to use the tools and wield the weapons of Dialectical Materialism. Those who take the trouble will not regret it.

Those who approach the subject in a scoffing, jeering manner are usually to be classified with inter-stellar space-travellers, Gospel sharks, flat-earthers, and crystal-gazers.

The Cult of the Dead in a Catholic Country

ON the afternoon of October 31, All Souls Day, I joined the crowd on the way to the cemetery. All were in deep mourning and carrying great wreaths and bunches of flowers. The servants, in their gingham gowns and white aprons, laden with baskets of food, walked respectfully behind their masters. On arrival at the gates, we pushed our way through the hordes of ragged, hungry beggars to the well-kept gravel paths, bordered by flowering shrubs, topped by bright green painted railings, which cut off the part reserved for the moneyed class. I looked round at the rows of stupendous sepulchres with the sun shining at the white marble pillars, the sculptured angels, the ornate crosses. A peep inside revealed the coffins, lined with lead, placed on huge stone shelves—the plebeian worms have great difficulty in gnawing their way to that precious feast—an altar before which a light burned continually, branched candlesticks, priceless tapestries, statues dressed in rich brocade, gay-coloured lanterns. There is an air of a luxurious bedchamber about the place, given by the night-table, the electric-bell and in some even the po was not forgotten. The family opened the door with a great iron key, removed the old photos and hung up the latest ones, the frames of which were all bedecked with coloured ribbons. (One woman had a cut-out cardboard figure of her daughter on which she changed the dress every week.) The maids opened up the parcels and the family sat down to eat in the company of their dead ones. I wandered along to the tombs of the business people, thinking how like is the cemetery to the city streets. One grocer ordered his scales to be put over his coffin; another left six adverts of his demise to be put in six different papers; another bequeathed a considerable sum to certain government deputies and journalists whom he desired to attend his funeral.

Here are a few epitaphs: "Antonio . . . was honest in his public and private life; though he earned much, much was spent for the good of others. He was generous in the extreme but made many ingrates, whom God will not fail to punish." "To the memory of Pedro . . . my beloved spouse whom God took to himself, leaving me to weep my life away." But she was consoled as there are epitaphs to two later husbands. "To my husband, Carlos . . . who no sooner entered the bank than he was made treasurer, which cargo he held till his death."

Now we come to the slums, the Common Grave, a great monster into whose gaping mouth the bodies of the poor are thrown, naked, without priest and without Latin. The poor who can do so hire a coffin with a sliding bottom,

from which the body is dropped and the coffin taken back to serve again. Later I went to a country cemetery and saw a strange procession led by a priest with book and bell. Men, women and even children walked in their shrouds, and one man was carried in his coffin, to fulfil "Promises" to God for being saved from untimely deaths. Of course money for the Church always goes with a "Promise." Bones from ordinary graves are dug up at the end of five years. The unclaimed are burnt, those which the relatives claim are, with a fee, kept in the Charnel House. Of course another harrowing scene and another religious ceremony goes with this. If the flesh is not sufficiently decomposed the bones are put back in the earth for another 5 years and the same process is gone through. Every 31st of October the bones are taken out of the Charnel House to be kissed and slobbered over. I've even seen them laid back on embroidered cloths.

N.F.

Insomnia

Memory, like a furtive chambermaid,
Pries through all the corridors of his brain,
Looking for scraps with which to make a tale
Salaciously told behind a scullery door:
Memory like a murderer come to brood
Upon the scarlet odour of his crime,
Roams on the pillow muttering all the night
Of foul deeds done within the mind's recesses:
Memory, like a shy swift-footed girl
Dancing beyond the lamplight, murmurs ever
Into his midnight ear the unbearable
Sweetness of long ago when he was young.
Here in this sleeping darkness is no sleep.
Here is no rest beneath the whirling stars.
All of his life goes circling in the gloom,
And in the wretched confines of his skull
His world repeats itself beyond his willing,
And all the graves are opened that were sealed,
And all the dead he knew are back in life.
Lips burn on his that long the earth has taken
Back to itself; hands touch him on the forehead:
Voices are speaking from the soundless distance
Of the long past: and nothing is forgotten.
The smell of sea and sand is in his nostrils,
With all the urgent whisper of the Spring
Come from the land to prick his nervous heart
Into the breathless telling of things done.

—JOHN O'HARE.

This Believing World

It is difficult to imagine for whom the school broadcasts on "religion and philosophy" are really intended. If it is difficult to teach children how to read and write, surely the highly technical talks on such a subject are miles above them? For example, one of the latest was on George Eliot by Prof. Willey, and the talk was liberally sprinkled with allusions to both her, her friends, and her books; we wonder how many children have even heard of George Eliot, let alone read her once famous novels which, in these days of wireless and TV, would not even be looked at? Are they even ever asked for in the libraries which have them?

Prof. Willey, who is a distinguished Professor of English at Cambridge, gave a most interesting talk, striving hard to explain why George Eliot had given up Christianity, and forcing on to his hearers the fact that, while it is true George Eliot, after reading Hennell's *Origin of Christianity*, no longer was an ordinary Christian—thank God, she was a believer in Christian ethics. For Prof. Willey, goodness, kindness, love, honesty, etc., are all *Christian* ethics, and he could hardly conceal his sense of pride in thus claiming George Eliot as (perhaps) a "true" Christian.

George Eliot was actually of a very religious nature and it must have been very hard for her to give up the Evangelistic Christianity she was brought up to believe. But, in the only sense the word "Christian" has any meaning, she was *not* a Christian; and for the rank and file of school children who heard the broadcast, they couldn't care less. All most of them want is for the school lessons to be over—they would then be free to go to the "pictures," or read their "comics." For them, George Eliot is as dead as Sophocles.

A Northumberland coal miner claims that on several nights recently he and his wife have been awakened by "noises"; and on one occasion he received "a sharp slap across his face." The only true explanation of this is that spooks have invaded his slumbers—and his house—and, as he obstinately refused to wake up, one of them lost his temper and gave him what for. God forbid that we should suggest the slap came from his wife for snoring—for only a spook could slap a poor, dear miner across the face. Ask the *Newcastle Journal* which reports the veridical incident.

Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, who shares with the crudest Fundamentalist a profound belief in the Bible, now equally shares with the crudest Spiritualist a profound belief in spooks—only he calls it "immortality." He said recently that he "believes" we do not "sleep at death, but go on where we left off, and go on growing, or else its opposite, in spiritual appreciation." How parsons love such words! What is "spiritual appreciation"? Does he know? Does anyone know? And what good is it? And why do all believers in spiritual appreciation take every advantage of "faith-healing," or any other method of healing in this world, rather than enjoy at once "immortality" for evermore in their Heavenly Paradise?

If people wonder at the low standard of education in the country, they had a remarkable lesson in the broadcast of a "Bible Study Group" which, for three weeks under the Rev. E. H. Robertson, discussed the first few verses of the Gospel of John—as if they were *literally* true. The students who came from University College, London, betrayed a mentality which might well have come from an infant's Sunday school, and they and their leader talked

about God and Jesus and the motives which influenced them as if they were talking about their favourite footballers. The idea that John is a Gnostic document, and that the "Word" and the "Logos" were so much twaddle, seems never to have reached them.

Still we must never attack a "gift horse." By thus broadcasting the kind of bilge which goes on in our Bible classes, the B.B.C. is really doing a great public service. People can now see the hopeless nonsense that can be poured out from "Bible" students, and the great harm it must do to anybody with any intelligence. If the time wasted on this futile rubbish had been used to inculcate even such elementary subjects as reading and writing, there would be a less public outcry at the pitiful results of the millions of pounds spent on education.

Theatre

In *Blind Man's Buff* at the St. Martin's Theatre, Denis Johnston has taken a play by Ernst Toller and adapted it to an Irish setting. The result is successful.

On evidence which is largely circumstantial a doctor is convicted of killing his wife by poisoning. One of the witnesses against him is his former servant whom he knows to be a liar and a thief, but on the advice of his counsel nobody will testify against this woman because it would mean that the doctor's past would have to be investigated. As he had had an affair (as a married man) with a woman doctor this is considered undesirable, but ironically enough the doctor becomes his own enemy by accusing the woman in court and causing the investigation which eventually results in his being condemned to death, a sentence which is afterwards commuted to life imprisonment. The interest in the play lies mainly in the battle of wits between the counsel, and the state solicitor and the pathologist who by an excess of zeal influence the unjust verdict. Months later a chance remark made to the state solicitor brings about a reprieve, which all seems to lay emphasis on the necessity of certain reforms in law and legal procedure, as well as the necessity for abolishing capital punishment. For the doctor might well have gone to the gallows before his innocence was discovered.

This is a skilfully constructed play with excellent characterisation and effective curtains. Dennis Price gave a good impression of the hot-headed doctor, Elizabeth Allan gave great feeling to the woman doctor, and there were other notably good performances by Douglas Wilmer, Hugh Manning, John Phillips and Alan MacNaughtan.

Drama at *Inish* at the Arts Theatre by Lennox Robinson is, in fact, a comedy. A repertory company arrive in a small Irish town with a stream of Ibsen, Strindberg and Russian plays, and show the grimmer side of drama to the rather simple folk of the town. There results sentimental musings, suicide attempts and crime, so that the owner of the guest house in the play—who also runs the theatre—is obliged to sack the theatrical company.

The idea is amusing and it entertains, largely because there is some first-class character drawing. Charles Heslop and Binnie Hale as the two who run the Repertory Company make it quite clear that they never stop acting even off-stage. Among other good performances I liked Desmond Jordan as "Boots."

Fortunately, neither of these two plays brings in religion.
RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

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

THE FREETHINKER

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

To Correspondents

C. McCALL.—Thank you for your letter. We will publish this as soon as our crowded space permits.

I. GOMPERTZ.—Sorry! As you, no doubt, are aware, only people in Holy Orders can read and write correctly.

R. R. PRYNNE.—We note your point. This is, actually, a matter for the National Secular Society, to whom your letter should have been sent, in the first instance. It is quite outside the scope of the Editor of *The Freethinker*.

S. TUFAIL (Woking Mosque).—Thank you for your letter, which we shall publish as soon as space permits.

"The Freethinker" Fund

Previously acknowledged, £97 1s. 3d.; A. Hancock, 3s.; J. Bell, 6s.; F. H. Eastman (N.Z.), 5s. 3d.; A. George, 6s.; J. McDowall, 4s.; W. Angus, 6s.; T. Roberts, 2s. 6d.; A. I. Jones (S. Rhodesia), 6s.; F. S. B. Lawes, 6s.; "Anon", 10s. Total: £99 16s.

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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.

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Warrington 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, 7 p.m., at Platt Fields, a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Thursday, 1-15 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, December 13, 6-45 p.m.: Miss A. CLAYTON SMITH, "Traffic in Animals—For Vivisection Experiments."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 15, 7 p.m.: Dr. STARK MURRAY, "The Goal of Socialised Medicine."

Glasgow Secular Society (McClellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St.).—Sunday, December 13, 7 p.m., H. McSHANE, "All Dogmas are False."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Friday, December 11, 7-15 p.m.: Rev. D. E. EDWARDS, "An Introduction to Unitarianism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 13, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, December 13, 2-30 p.m.: C. DESMOND GREAVES, "The Partitioning of Ireland."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 13, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "The Number of the Beasts."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.).—Sunday, December 13: V. NEUBERG, A Lecture. 7-15 p.m.

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A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 389)

1875. *Republican Chronicle* appears. Mrs. Harriet Law, aged 43, an ex-Baptist who has been converted to secularism by hearing Watts's lectures, takes over *Secular Chronicle* as a weekly. In an "incident" at Willington in Durham, she opposes Joseph Barker in his pulpit ("Shame on you, Joseph!"), and when turned out of the Church she holds an opposition meeting just outside. At a Darwin meeting Mrs. Besant is stoned. She is now a Vice-President of the N.S.S. and under its auspices issues an "improved" collection of secular hymns. Bradlaugh debates with Grant on Atheism, Foote attacks the doctrines of God and immortality, Mrs. Besant attacks Christian teaching and also writes on euthanasia, and Holyoake publishes a history of Co-operation.

1876. At many secular meetings, both outdoor and indoor, disorder prevails, and Bradlaugh runs into trouble at Congleton, speaking to the accompaniment of smashing windows and bottles. Holyoake and Foote start a joint weekly enterprise, *Secularist*, eschewing theological attack. A most inauspicious combination, differences develop from the start and after two months Holyoake withdraws, leaving Foote in sole charge and himself starting a new weekly, *Secular Review*, similarly refraining from attack on doctrine. Bradlaugh holds four big debates in the year, Watts two, while Foote writes on Freethought heroes; Mrs. Besant extols the prayer book. A newcomer, Dr. E. B. Aveling, aged 25, son of a Congregationalist minister and a student, later teacher at London University, draws the inferences from evolution as they affect religious teaching.

1877. This is the year of the Knowlton pamphlet and its resulting test of secularist solidarity. Having been published in America in 1832, and first introduced to British readers by Jas. Watson in the following year, this birth control pamphlet is the work of Dr. Knowlton (1800-50). For publishing it Charles Watts is arrested, the pamphlet being described as obscene. Pleading guilty, he is released and his sentence suspended. Condemned by Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant for not carrying the case through, Watts is dismissed from the *National Reformer* and Bradlaugh also withdraws his patronage from Watts' publishing business. The N.S.S. Conference supports Bradlaugh, and so Watts, refusing the Vice-Presidency, resigns from the N.S.S. Holyoake dislikes the pamphlet and maintains that he did not sell it on his own account, as Mrs. Besant averred at the trial, but as an agent. He, too, resigns his Vice-Presidency and also leaves the society. Some secularists hesitate to champion birth control, or even oppose it, and they follow Watts and Holyoake out of the society to found the British Secular Union, which announces branches but has no president. It refrains from attack on doctrine. Holyoake, in frail health, hands over his *Secular Review*, now identified with the B.S.U., to Watts, whose publishing business now takes patronage from the new Union. Foote also goes over to the B.S.U. and brings his *Secularist* into line with it. *Secular Review and Secularist* are then amalgamated under that name with Watts and Foote as joint editors, but Foote returns to the N.S.S. and it becomes *Secular Review* with Watts as sole editor. Mrs. Besant becomes co-editor of the *National Reformer* with Bradlaugh. Among the premises being taken by local secularist bodies is a Freethought Hall at Walworth (ancestral to the S. London branch). Mrs. Besant is now writing much anti-Christian matter, and Foote is making his mark as lecturer and debater.

(To be continued)

The Judges and the People

By C. H. NORMAN

IN 1951, 13,800,000 electors voted for candidates of the Labour Party and 13,400,000 electors voted for candidates of the Conservative Party showing an almost equal balance of strength between the two sides. Does any corresponding state of things exist among the holders of judicial offices? Between 1945 and 1951, the Conservative Press, whenever a person with Labour sympathies or opinions was appointed to any public office, set up a raucous and repetitive cry of "More jobs for the boys." Below is set forth how the Conservative administration of the Lord Chancellor's office, which largely has the deciding voice in such matters, has put into operation the principle of "jobs for the boys" among the holders of high judicial office in England.

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The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice (both Conservatives) are also *ex-officio* members of the Court of Appeal.

The Court of Criminal Appeal consists of the Lord Chief Justice (its Statutory President), and the Judges of the Queen's Bench Division.

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Practically the same ratio exists in the case of the County Court judges the Chairmen and Deputy-Chairmen of Quarter Sessions, the recorders and the stipendiary magistrates of London and the Provinces. At the moment all the stipendiary magistrates in London except Mr. Rowland Thomas, Q.C., who is a Liberal, are Conservatives. This situation is one understood by very few ordinary English citizens unconnected with the law, though it is notorious in the corridors of the Law Courts. It does explain, in some degree, the niggling and querulous remarks made by some judicial officers concerning the legislation passed by the Labour Government between 1945-1951, when their Statutes came under consideration and construction in the Courts.

It may be said that these gentlemen, on assuming judicial office, in some mysterious way are able (at the age of 45 and upwards) to divest themselves of all the political and psychological influences acquired in their youth and middle age. There are many people credulous enough to believe that: but it is an act of faith too much for me after nearly fifty years' experience of observing past generations of judicial officers performing their functions.

The process by which a judicial officer is appointed is one of those subjects on which memoirs and reference books are silent. It is a jealously guarded secret. The Speaker will not allow questions on the subject in the Commons. The Monarch is supposed to appoint these gentlemen on the advice of the Prime Minister in the case of the Lord Chancellor, on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor in the case of the Law Lords, on the advice of the Lord Chancellor alone in the case of some judges, and on the advice of the Home Secretary in the case of stipendiary magistrates. One cannot help thinking that the principles on which these appointments are made must be curiously limited to produce the consequences set forth above.

It is interesting to notice when in Court how some judges look very askance at a witness who claims the statutory right to affirm instead of taking the ordinary oath. The ordinary oath is in these terms: "I swear by Almighty God that the evidence I shall give to the Court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The affirmation is: "I solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that the evidence which I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The Court of Criminal Appeal recently set aside a conviction owing to the adverse remarks made by the trial judge concerning the value of evidence given on affirmation as compared with that given on oath. The affirmation seems in more reasonable language and more in accord with modern thought than the prescribed oath, as surely no one can seriously believe that Almighty God has anything to

do with the criminal and civil litigation which cumber the Courts of England.

These facts should startle the sense of fairness and the conscience of the country, even though they may be regarded with equanimity by the legal monopolists who have created this totally unrepresentative condition of things.

Can any fair-minded person deny that a radical change is called for to redress the balance of equity in the appointment of the ministers of justice in the various gradations in the judicial hierarchy? Under the existing system, the minorities in the community, those who hold advanced or eccentric opinions on any subject (whether they were Liberals in the days of 1906-1910, or Socialists or Communists since the end of the war of 1914-1918), receive little sympathy at the hands of this phalanx of Conservative judicial authority. The treatment of conscientious objectors from 1916 till 1952, and of those engaged in the General Strike of 1926, and in smaller industrial conflicts, are melancholy instances of the unhappy results which can flow from making the judicial office the repository of such a narrow and carefully-selected class.

Review

A NEW APPROACH TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, by Antony Flew. Watts & Co., 1953. 10s. 6d. net.

It is a pity that Mr. Flew, who has obviously read widely, did not set out to fulfil what he claims to have done—made his book “frankly popular.” In some of the chapters he gives us many examples of “exposition” which no doubt are child’s play to advanced mathematicians and philosophical students, but which are just so much gibberish to ordinary people. What are they to make of these?—

A functional law is one stating that A varies in such and such a way with B, C, and D; and is usually expressed in an equation with A on one side and B, C, and D on the other; e.g., Boyle’s Law $Px \propto 1/V$, the pressure of a gas varies inversely with one over V the volume of that gas—or any of the inverse square laws.

With our present conception of cause, using the word “cause” as we do now, the criterion applies only to spatial or spatio-temporal clustering. . . .

The fifth point is that if we must have a model, in terms of which to think of experimental psi-gamma and to try to make it intelligible to ourselves, then the model of guessing would be a great deal better than those of perception, communication by radio, or the fabulous off-stage activities of ghostly minds, or even—if these can be called models—those of cognition (jargon for “knowing”) or thought-transference.

Again we must not panic; we must not abandon the so-called postulate of Spatio Temporal Continuity, properly construed. For this should be taken as an (invaluable) heuristic maxim, remaining sound in spite of our occasional failures (as here) to find what it bids us to seek. . . .

This chapter, “Describing and Explaining,” is packed with this kind of thing and no doubt will be warmly welcomed in many highly advanced circles; but for the average layman, does Mr. Flew contend that he will be able, after digesting it all, to explain the “scripts” of Patience Worth, or the Verrall “cross-correspondences”?

I hope I am not doing Mr. Flew an injustice, but he does not appear ever to have sat with mediums himself, or tried to explain the “phenomena” at first hand. He has gone to the file of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* and to many other books dealing with Psychical Research—and other subjects—and made a number of careful analyses of chosen cases—well worth doing, of course. But all the time one has an uneasy feeling that Mr. Flew does not care much for any outright negative result but prefers what is rightly called “hedging.” What he cannot explain is put down to “paranormal” factors; or he uses highly technical language—as I have indicated above—which can confuse any ordinary reader more in

five minutes than most other books on psychical research could in a year.

There is a clear distinction between “Psychical Research” and “Spiritualism” which all readers should remember. Psychical Research includes such things as telepathy, paranormal factors, extra-sensory perception, and so on, including Spiritualism. But what most ordinary people mean by Spiritualism is “survival.” Attempts at explaining the other things are no doubt highly necessary; but when people go to a “seance” they go because they expect proof that they do not really die but live on; and not as “disembodied” spirits either. A modern Spiritualist like Mr. Arthur Findlay insists that the other world is exactly like this one only in a different “vibration”; that substantially life is just like on this old Earth of ours—especially if one *wishes* it. The real difference is that money isn’t necessary, for one can have whatever one likes—pianos, TV sets, motor cars—anything. They are there for the asking. Mr. Flew has nothing to say of the works of Mr. Findlay or Mr. Lester where all this is carefully explained.

He prefers to go back nearly 50 years to explain such things as the “cross-correspondences” of Mrs. Verrall. It was done, we should have thought once for all, by Frank Podmore as far back as 1909—and, in any case, who cares two hoots? Nobody has since then indulged in the pastime and, after all, in these years it is just impossible to say what really happened. Mr. Flew does excellent work when he shows how it is almost impossible to describe a seance or such things as the slate-writing of a clever conjuror like S. J. Davey—but he will swallow without a grimace anything he wants to swallow. Was there no “malobservation” in the Verrall case?

Incidentally, it is rather curious that the spirits brought up by Mrs. Verrall (who knew Greek) when she was in the role of a medium, also knew Greek; but the spirits of Mrs. Piper (who did not know Greek) did not know Greek either. And in dealing with Mrs. Piper—who was certainly one of the most celebrated of all mediums—why did not Mr. Flew point out that she had the greatest contempt for all those who believed in “spirits”? She confessed, “I must truthfully say that I do not believe that spirits of the dead have spoken through me when I have been in a trance state as investigated by scientific men in Boston and Cambridge and those of the English Psychical Research Society. . . .”

The reference to the “scientific men” here is delightful for—as I have pointed out many times in these columns—few people are so easy to bamboozle as are our scientific professors—like Prof. Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Alfred Russel Wallace and a host of others. I have heard some of them speak, for example, Mr. G. N. M. Tyrrell and Prof. H. H. Price, both of whom are quoted with approval by Mr. Flew—and they both ought to join Crookes and Lodge for sheer credulity. What qualifications these people had for investigating astute mediums I was never able to discover.

Mr. Flew thinks that the book entitled *An Adventure* which described how two English ladies saw a pre-French Revolution scene exactly as it took place then, should be reprinted. Exactly why is not clear. The book was pulverised by Mr. Sturge Whiting. He would like to see J. W. Dunne’s *Experiment with Time* also reprinted. Again why? It deals with dreams, and nobody but Mr. Dunne and a few followers appear to have succeeded with the “experiment.”

The “burb” tells us that Mr. Flew’s *New Approach* is an “up-to-date” re-assessment written with “wit.” I am not quite sure about most of it being “up to date,” but in passing I noted this—“When Mr. Clifford, that hard-bitten apostle of the now old-fashioned billiards ball

materialism. . . . Is this supposed to be a "witty" smack at "old fashioned Materialism" (known also as "blatant" or "effete") and a witty attack on "Mr." Clifford who, if Professor Kingdom Clifford is meant, made a rather big reputation in his day? One is disposed to wonder if Mr. Flew will ever equal it.

For the rest, the reader will find in his book a very careful account of all kinds of psychical phenomena described and analysed with great precision; a great deal of information collected from more than 70 books which Mr. Flew gives as "references" and which show how wide must have been his reading. His conclusions are much the same as Frank Podmore's, I should say—a verdict of "Not Proven." I am not quite certain whether Mr. Flew would say clearly and unequivocally that there is no evidence whatever for "survival," though he does not appear to believe in it. For the reader who wants a highly technical analysis of some of the phenomena included in "psychical research," I strongly recommend this book.

H. CUTNER.

Correspondence

A PAGAN CHRISTMAS

SIR,—I commend to the notice of all Freethinkers who dislike Christmas the following quotation from that great and fearless Freethinker, Robert G. Ingersoll, on the spirit in which rationalists should approach the celebration of the pagan festival:—

"The good part of Christmas is not always Christian—it is generally pagan; that is to say, human, natural. . . . Christmas is a good day to forgive and forget—a good day to throw away prejudices and hatreds—a good day to fill your heart and your house, and the hearts and houses of others, with sunshine."

It is in this spirit, rather than in the attempt to be too serious, that we Freethinkers would do well to conduct ourselves over the holiday period. Let's wear funny hats and let's play party games with the families we love, as well as doing all we can for those less fortunate than we. Let us on this day dedicate ourselves anew to the tasks that lie ahead. Let us also remember the words of the wise Ingersoll, that they may guide us and inspire us to greater efforts in support of the good, the beautiful and the true. —Yours, etc.,

ALAN E. WOODFORD.

THE ASCENSION

SIR,—Rev. G. M. Paris (October 2 issue) is annoyed at Mr. Vaughan's erroneous statement about the ascent of Jesus to heaven. Why worry how he got there, who saw him and when; where, before or after? . . . The worthy reverend declares, quoting unimpeachable source, that "His resurrection was seen by the disciples 40 days and was seen by them going to heaven, etc." Here are facts, as true as the Gospels (sic!) and only a sceptic will quibble over details. However, since it appears that Rev. Paris does possess access to the real facts, I, as a doubting Thomas, ask of him in all seriousness, the following queries:—

1. When Jesus rose from the dead to ascend to heaven, how is it that only the handful of disciples in the Bible saw him? What happened to the thousands of ordinary persons who surely would have seen the unprecedented marvel of a man (and later Mary) ascending up to the clouds? Were they all temporarily blinded? There were Livy, the contemporary historian; Pliny, only a few years later, who excelled in reporting all sorts of impossible marvels and miracles; Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, all excellent writers who devoted volumes to minute descriptions of the events of the period—why are they silent?

2. Did the revived corpse rise horizontally or vertically; did he stand on a magic rug, was he provided with over-sized chicken wings, did he wear a helicopter propeller on his head, did an angel pull him up by the shoulders, or did he just float upwards? How far up is heaven, below or just above the clouds; is the region a large city or a country; is it above Palestine, above Rome, or perhaps above New York? How is it that planes, flying thousands of feet up, have never encountered this region? Is it beyond our atmosphere, in the stratosphere, ionosphere or even further away in rarefied atmosphere thousands of miles away in space? If the rising Saviour was seen by the gifted characters of the Bible exclusively, his rate of speed could not have been too fast. How long did it take Jesus to reach heaven? Minutes, hours, days, or was it in the flash of a moment, as the expression goes?

3. Would atmospheric temperature, hundreds of degrees below zero or thousands of degrees of heat, have any effect at all on

the body of the revived god? Was he a solid body when he ascended, or was he a spirit only, a puff of vapour akin to his brother the Holy Ghost, hence invisible to all but the biblical characters? Or, if his body was of flesh, were the apostles who saw him provided with special spectacles, or did they possess eyes of a special kind?

4. Why isn't heaven atop of Mt. Olympus more logical than an invisible one in the atmosphere? Pliny the Elder wrote of a tribe of men in Africa who carried their heads under their arms, and serious writers of the period and much later repeated the absurdity in full seriousness. What would they not have written about a man actually rising from the dead and floating upwards? Literally thousands of writers would have devoted hundreds of volumes in relating this miracle. Would any people witnessing such an occurrence have failed to renounce their scepticism? Would not the history of mankind have changed then and there completely?

5. Are the exploits of the Flying Yorkshireman and Peter Pan any less veracious than Jesus flying upwards? If so, please explain.—Yours, etc.,

MAX ISENBERG.

N.S.S. Executive Committee, 3rd December

Present: Mr. L. Ebury (in the chair), Messrs. Griffiths, Taylor, Hornibrook, Tiley, Woodley, Johnson, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Barker, and the Secretary. It was announced that Mr. Ridley had a bad cold and regretted his inability to be present. Twenty-three new members were admitted to the Parent, Bradford, Glasgow and West London Branches. An application from the Leicester Secular Society to be affiliated to the N.S.S. was accepted.

It was reported that Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann had accepted the Committee's invitation to attend the 1954 Annual Dinner on February 27th as the Guest of Honour.

An invitation to the Society to co-operate in a Social organised by the Humanist Council to take place at the Conway Hall on Friday, January 22, was accepted, and the Secretary was instructed to advertise details.

A resolution pressing the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to advise on changes in the law relating to homosexuality was passed for submission to the Home Secretary.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.

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