

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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THE Christian religion, unlike, say, such religions as Islam and Mormonism, began in almost complete obscurity. Whilst we have a good deal of information on the actual circumstances under which the religion of the Koran, or that founded by Joseph Smith, first began, this cannot be said of the creed named, rather curiously, not after Paul, who, as far as any one Founder can be predicated, appears to have actually played the leading rôle, but after the more or less mythical Jesus the Christ. Not only are Christian origins shrouded in an almost impenetrable obscurity, but there exists very little *real* information—though an enormous quantity of guess-work!—on the *real* evolution of the new religion prior to its official recognition as the State religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century of the present “Christian era.”

ment can be relied on to guarantee the veracity of the obviously supernatural events which the New Testament and, in particular, the Four Gospels, relate. Actually, an orthodox scholar who admits errors—*any* errors—in the New Testament, gives away his whole case. For it is simply untrue to say that the Biography of God, which is what we have in the Four Gospels, can be read in the same way as any other book. Critical rules framed to deal with ordinary literature cannot be upheld in relation to supernatural narratives which transcend all criticism. Incidentally, Christian scholars themselves implicitly admit this in their actual criticism of the sacred scriptures of *all* other religions except their own! What we may describe generically as the critical view of the New Testament regarded and approached “like any other literature” is held, to-day, by both Rationalist critics and by the “Modernist” upholders of what is sometimes termed “Liberal” Christianity.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Christian Origins

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

The Modernist View of Christian Origins

Actually, the difference between what we may term the “Rationalist” and “Modernist” points of view is one of degree only. Between, say, the critical views expounded in *The Rationalist Annual* and those in *The Modern Churchman*, the scholarly organ of “The Modern Churchman’s Union” in the Church of England, there are differences of degree only: both apply critical methods to the New Testament, including the Four Gospels; they only differ in their incidental result. It is true that most “Modernists” call themselves “Christians.” However, in this connection one may aptly recall the acute observation of the French political theorist, Benjamin Constant, to the effect that “a constitutional monarchy differs only in degree from a republic, but in kind from an absolute monarchy.” Similarly, “Modernism,” whilst it may—perhaps for sentimental reasons—continue to *call* itself Christian, differs in kind from orthodox Christianity, but only in degree from Rationalism! *Both* accept the critical approach.

A French Modernist on Christian Origins

In England, the “Modernist” point of view is known primarily through the writings of those recently deceased theologians, Dr. Barnes and Dr. Inge. However, there is no classic statement of the “Modernist” case in English. Neither Barnes nor Inge, despite their high culture and literary ability, were primarily New Testament scholars, nor original historians. However, such a classic approach did recently appear in France, long known for its acute research, since the time of Renan, as the home of critical study of Christian origins. *The Birth of Christianity*, by Prof. Maurice Goguel, puts the “Modernist” point of view perhaps as well as it can be put, certainly with far more exhaustive scholarship than any English “Modernist” has thus far displayed. Prof. Goguel is a New Testament scholar and critical historian of, we should say, the first

Critical Pre-Suppositions

The great historian Edward Gibbon, in his famous autobiography, remarks that “only sheer necessity would induce a man to hack his way through the impenetrable jungle of the English law.” The historians, and critics of early Christianity, however, often give the impression of people trying to “solve” a crossword puzzle! There is, also, the further disadvantage, whilst it is an elementary axiom of modern critical study, that the study of Christianity is a normal chapter in the general study of comparative religion, and that the Bible must be read like any other book, yet, actually very few critics do observe these elementary rules of the (so-called) “Higher Criticism.” They nearly always demonstrate a certain bias incompatible with the strictly impartial and objective outlook of really scientific inquiry. More usually, of course, this bias is in favour of the orthodox Christian view, but sometimes it indicates a personal bias *against* it. We must repeat that, whether pro or contra, the traditional explanation of Christian origins, all personal bias is unscientific. The rules of critical research are now well known. They should be employed impartially by all students of Christian origins who wish to be regarded as genuinely scientific in character. Let us *know* the facts before we begin to discuss their truth—or otherwise.

The Traditional View

The traditional, orthodox view of Christian origins is so well known that it is not really worth spending much time on expounding it. It assumes the literal and, it would seem, the verbal inspiration of the Four Gospels, and the, at least, substantial truth of the rest of the New Testament: since, as far as the Gospels are concerned, if one doubts or denies any single statement in them they lose their infallible and supernatural character and, if so, no certain results can be predicated of the other allegedly supernatural events which they describe. From the point of view of Christian orthodoxy, whether Catholic, Protestant, or “Orthodox,” only an “inspired” and “infallible” docu-

rank. The profound scholarship which he indicates in his critical approach to the origins of Christianity is not to be dismissed merely by silly sneers at him because he accepts *part*, though by no means all, of the orthodox tradition.

Jesus and Paul

The fundamental difficulty of all Christian scholars who apply critical methods to the New Testament is to explain the obvious fact that stares any critic in the face, that most of the writers in the New Testament know little, if anything at all, about the Gospels or the "Jesus of the Gospels." This strange, on the Christian view, omission is particularly evident with regard to the "Pauline" Epistles, which make up most of our New Testament and which, in their original form, do not appear to know anything about the Gospel Jesus at all. (Even in their present "edited" form they know very little. "Paul" only quotes Jesus once, and the quotation is *not* in *our* Gospels!) Prof. Goguel is too good a scholar not to know this, and he endeavours to bridge the gap with, we should say, more courage than success. "Christianity," he tells us, "is not the religion preached or taught by Jesus. It has for its content the drama of redemption accomplished by his death and resurrection. It depends, therefore, upon a sacred history culminating in the fact of the resurrection." Elsewhere, M. Goguel tells us that Jesus "did not foresee the Church." This makes "Paul" and his colleagues the real founders of Christianity as we know it, doctrine *about* Jesus, *not* the teaching of Jesus himself. Yet "Paul" repeatedly verbally identifies Jesus with God. As has been aptly remarked, this is pretty strong language to have been used by one Jew about one of his own historical contemporaries!

The "Ebionite" Jesus

One of Prof. Goguel's most interesting chapters deals with the evolution of the Jewish-Christian Church of Jerusalem, later denounced and described by Trinitarian orthodoxy as the "Ebionite" Church, which was Unitarian, rejected *our* Gospels and continued to observe the Jewish law. Have we here, as Prof. Goguel contends, the original Church of "The Jesus of History," a Jewish heretic who claimed to be the Messiah, but not God? Such a Church undoubtedly existed and was actually described by the later Christian orthodoxy as the Church of the "Ebionites" (that is, in Hebrew, the "poor men") and as having been founded by an heresiarch by the name of "Ebion." Was "Ebion," as M. Goguel supposes, "The Jesus of History"? The problem, as he poses it, is an interesting one and cannot, in our opinion, be definitely answered in view of our present knowledge. It seems fairly clear that such an undoubtedly historical sect must have had an actual Founder. Could this have been the Maccabaeans "Jesus-ben-Pandira" or, perhaps, even John the Baptist or, perhaps, as the great scholar, Turmel, suggested, the messianic claimant, Judas the Gaulonite, and have we here *one* of the elements of the Gospel story?

Jesus a Composite Figure

It may, however, be pointed out that, even if we accept M. Goguel's claim that the "Ebionite" sect was founded by a Jesus, it obviously was *not* founded by *our* Jesus, the Jesus of *our* Gospels. For the "Ebionites" rejected the Virgin Birth and knew nothing of the Divinity of Jesus which, as expressed by "Paul" and in our Gospels, they, like all good Jews, rejected as heresy and blasphemy. In our opinion, there probably was an historical Jewish would-be Messiah at the start of the "Ebionite" sect. Popular movements follow *people*, not solar myths! It is, also, probable that *our* Jesus is a composite character, consisting partly of pure myths and partly of actual reminiscences of historical characters, one, or perhaps more than

one, of whom may have been called Jesus. Jewish preachers named Jesus were then probably nearly as common as Welsh preachers called Jones are to-day.

"Modernism" and Christianity

Such a point of view is not, perhaps, very remote from that advanced with such encyclopaedic scholarship by Prof. Goguel in *The Birth of Christianity*, which makes it an obligatory text-book for all students of Christian origins who, whatever their conclusions, wish to *know* the *facts*. We must confess, however, that we do not understand why Dr. Goguel continues to call himself a Christian. It is obvious that he does not believe in the Trinitarian dogma; he demonstrates quite lucidly its spurious character; nor does he believe, apparently, in the Virgin Birth or in the physical Resurrection. Why, then, do he and his fellow-Modernists claim to be Christians? If he believes in an historic Jesus, so did Renan and Loisy, and so does Joseph MacCabe! We hope that such "Modernist" scholars will soon line up with the Rationalist movement, to which they already essentially belong and whose critical methods they unreservedly accept already, and will employ their often profound learning and critical ability in elucidating what is on any showing one of the most important and difficult historical problems: the actual origin of the most powerful of recorded religions to have appeared upon this planet.

[*The Birth of Christianity*, by Maurice Goguel, English translation by H. C. Snape, M.A., published by Allen and Unwin, 42s.]

Report of Meeting on 7th March at Glasgow

Sunday in Glasgow can be a most dismal place at any time during winter, but Sunday, March 7, was wet, windy and altogether a day to stay indoors at home. A fairly large audience, however, turned out to hear Mr. F. A. Ridley lecture on "The Menace of Rome" in the McLellan Galleries on Sunday.

Mr. Ridley was in excellent form and his occasional witty sallies brought a ready response from an appreciative audience.

Perhaps the subject was one which appeals to a Glasgow audience and is of a topical nature, and it was apparent that the lecturer held his listeners' interest throughout the time taken for delivery.

A notable feature at question time was the manner in which the questions were put. No one deviated or rambled away from the subject of the lecture. Mr. Ridley obviously satisfied his audience. A good sale of literature was recorded.

The Chairman, R. M. Hamilton, in his opening remarks, made reference to the loss sustained by the recent death of Mr. Chapman Cohen.

R. M. H.

Latest Wills

Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, died worth £20,946; and, if the Bible is true that "a rich man cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven," this Bishop is in the other place—HELL!
W.A.V.

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Billy Graham's Circus

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

IN case readers may be feeling any great concern about the lavishly advertised show that the "Greater London Evangelical Crusade" is conducting at the Harringay Arena, I can assure them that it is the crudest sort of confidence trick, played upon the ignorant and the mentally unbalanced. I attended as an observer at the opening meeting held on Monday evening, March 1. Of business organisation, showmanship and exploitation of human weakness there were plenty; but of genuine conviction and signs of results in the form of conversion I saw absolutely none.

True, there was an audience of 11,000, and it was said that this was evidence of God's blessing on the enterprise. I could not help thinking that this was a poor compliment to all the advertising by Press and poster and to all the free boosting that Billy Graham received just prior to the occasion. Even if the advertising had packed the Arena with visitors drawn by curiosity, it would have been nothing out of the way. However, our revival merchant put his trust in neither God nor advertising. Instead, he has struck a bargain with any church or chapel prepared to co-operate in the campaign, and the audiences he gets are largely composed of organised groups from such sources.

There is nothing secret about the bargain. We are told that the aim of the Crusade is to get the people of London back to Church on Sundays. Accordingly, Billy Graham's Circus will only open on weekdays. Now nobody questions that the parsons are in the direst need of larger congregations, and it is clear that many of them are desperately keen to get a bite at the carrot that Billy Graham is dangling before their noses. For a time it will be a matter of the greatest ease to get no more than five or six hundred neglected places of worship to send a score of visitors each, and thus fill the available accommodation.

Still, I had no difficulty in gaining admission a quarter of an hour before the start of the first performance. In the outer corridor I asked if I could get a seat if I went to the refreshment buffet first, and was assured I could. The girl at the counter did not seem particularly impressed by the occasion, and enjoyed my comment as I paid for a sausage roll and a cup of tea that it was a pity that only the spiritual sustenance was provided gratis.

The proceedings in the Arena must have been very depressing to the better type of Christians present. Spotlights and the continual flashing of cameras made the atmosphere very similar to that associated with a big fight. Notabilities on the platform were introduced to the audience, who for the most part obediently applauded the two American Senators, the retired General and the prominent Baptist pastor, when invited to do so. "Ordered" would perhaps be a better word, because Billy Graham leaves very little freedom of choice to those he addresses. It is "Stand up" one moment, "Sit down" the next, "I want complete silence and no moving about in the gangways," "Now let everyone bow the head and let all eyes be closed"; these commands he issues without any qualification. Most of those present respond readily, and, therefore, cannot observe how few put up their hands when he implores those who feel the power of Christ working within them to do so.

Billy Graham knows quite well that there is every chance that, God helping or not, attendances at his meetings will fall drastically after the first novelty has worn off. He pleads with those present to turn up *every* night, promising fresh attractions all the time. No doubt he counts on the effects of a Christian education to prevent his hearers from realising that, if the same eleven thousand *do* turn up

regularly, all chances of his saving any considerable number of London's teeming millions will be destroyed.

At the end of the Crusade's first week he pronounced himself as satisfied. With the exception of the second night, when 1,500 seats were vacant, the Arena had been filled, and people had even been turned away, it is said. It is rather rough luck on a sinner seeking salvation to find the "House Full" notice up, due to the packing of the place by means of special excursions bringing those already saved to London from outlying mental backwoods!

Billy Graham's "message" is undiluted fundamentalism, and his mission is therefore the reverse of a threat to the cause of Secularism. Those who attend no doubt enjoy listening to a baritone soloist, with a truly splendid voice, singing "I'd rather have Jesus than riches untold," and they join lustily in the hymn-singing, just as a crowd at a football match will do. Nevertheless, when the great spell-binder promises that "Before you leave this building to-night you can find the greatest peace and joy and inward satisfaction you have ever known" to those who will come forward for guidance, only a small fraction do so, their bearing clearly revealing them to be mentally ill-balanced and emotionally overwrought. Such exploitation, which to the Secularist is a scandal, cannot fail to arouse concern, if not disgust, in the minds of the average member of the public.

This normal, healthy reaction of modern men and women, who are not particularly interested in religion one way or the other, is the rock upon which Billy Graham's ambitious enterprise in revivalism in this country will come to grief. There is an entire absence of any useful social purpose (unless it be to distract attention from problems that really matter) in his visit. On the whole, the Press is reflecting the critical attitude of responsible people, and before long those closely associated with the Crusade, the 1,000-strong choir and the supporting churches and chapels, will be as disillusioned as the poor specimens persuaded to come forward nightly as "converts." Then the soul-saver who came to our shores to be greeted with a fanfare of trumpets will doubtless make a far less spectacular departure.

God's Creation—Darwin's Friend

A worm upon an asphalt path!
 Poor worm, I watch you go;
 Watch painfully that painful progress slow
 To softness and protection—whither I don't know.
 Within that twisted body, much distress,
 But, helped by sudden rain, slowly you progress.
 I cannot stay to watch your journey's end,
 Nor will I assist, although your friend;
 God speed you, as you go,
 His creation meek,
 And save you (if He will—I doubt it) from the sharp,
 cruel beak

Of that black menace, the hovering crow.

—BAYARD SIMMONS.

POMPOSITITY

I do not like the pompous man; I do not wish him for a friend; he's built on such a gorgeous plan, that he can only condescend; and when he bows, his neck is sprained; he walks as if he owned the earth—as though his vest and shirt contained all that there is of sterling worth. With sacred joy I see him tread, upon a stray banana rind, and slide a furlong on his head and leave a trail of smoke behind.—WALT MASON.

This Believing World

Of all the dreary, depressing and deplorable items our TV manages to stage, about the worst recently was a kind of discussion in which a Sceptic, a Seeker and a Believer asked a number of questions to which the Rev. D. Read, armed with a pipe and a Bible, was supposed to give adequate answers from a Christian standpoint. The Sceptic appeared to be the only one who had something worth listening to. The Seeker was almost wholly unintelligible, having the greatest difficulty in uttering a coherent word, while the Believer seemed to have stepped right out of an infant Sunday-school class. And the less said of Mr. Read's "answers," the better. Still, we hope that this will not be the first of similar programmes. After all—it was "true" Christianity.

Extraordinary how Royalty and Religion appear to attract the same kind of mass hysteria. Perhaps there is some excuse for a young and beautiful Queen—but why 4,000 women "mob hot-gospeller," as one newspaper headlined the Rev. B. Graham's reception on arriving in London, is surely something to gasp about. Mr. Graham has a job to do; he gets £5,000 a year to do it, and if the people who pay him such a huge sum think he's worth it, why go hysterical? He has about as much chance of putting all England on its knees as an African Hottentot. Masses of women are easily converted, and they will roll up for Jesus in their thousands so long as Mr. Graham gives them plenty of God, Jesus and the Bible.

We note that Mr. Graham's favourite hymn is "And can it be that I should gain?"—rather ironical when it comes to a guaranteed salary—and, of course, it was lustily sung by the reception crowd, and was followed by "I will sing of my Redeemer"—though, no doubt, some of the frenzied ladies must have thought the reverend gentleman was their Redeemer.

We were delighted at one thing, however. Mr. Graham got hopelessly mixed up as to which was the enemy—Socialism or Secularism, and much to the delight and gratitude of some eminent Labour M.P.s, he plumped eventually for Secularism. He is quite right. Secularism, as Charles Bradlaugh understood it, the Secularism of the National Secular Society, is without the slightest doubt the enemy—and we hope Mr. Graham will find that out in full measure before he returns home.

The latest example of "astral" projection was detailed to *Psychic News* by a gentleman who claims that, closing his eyes while on holiday, he projected himself astrally into his own kitchen and turned on his wireless, hearing distinctly the "click." This raises up alarming possibilities. What if he entered a friend's house and "pinched" the week's housekeeping money, distinctly hearing the "clink" of the coins as they rattled in his astral pockets? Query? Would the swag be there on his return? And if the answer is in the affirmative, what would the police do if he was found out—arrest him, or his "astral projection"?

Football pools and, in fact, all lotteries where people can win a heck of a sum of money will always be looked upon with disfavour by the Churches who much prefer that all "workers" should be content with whatever "lot" the good Lord graciously allows them to have so long as there is very little money in it. And most Members of Parliament humbly follow the Churches. But whatever the Government may say in public, in private the Postmaster-

General must thank God for the huge profits made from the sale of postal orders and stamps for pools, and which he certainly is not going to relinquish, Churches or pious M.P.s notwithstanding. And, after all, pool winners heartily endorse the Government.

As usual, for God's own Mysterious Reasons, his own Church came out badly in the recent earthquake in Australia. Perhaps God objects to some of the Church's decisions, or to the new translations of the Bible, or is aghast at the slow progress in converting Russia or China. Whatever the cause, among other buildings damaged was a Roman Catholic Church from which tumbled the heavy Cross on the spire. And the worst of it is no one in Protestant England seems surprised. Had a pub been destroyed, or a synagogue, one could have understood God Almighty—but why, in Heaven's name single out an R.C. Church? As usual, we give it up.

In his final talk to children on the radio, the Bishop of Bristol had no difficulty in proving that even if not complete, or even if unable to give all the answers to scientists, Christianity was the only satisfying religion. It assured everybody that God created the Universe, and his Son, Jesus Christ, was there ready to save everybody. Except that the Bishop admitted he didn't know all the answers, his sermon could have come from the most ignorant of Christian sects. There wasn't an original thought in it. It followed all the dear old Christian lines. But, Dr. Cockin did not seem quite so certain as of yore. Is he "deviating?"

Correspondence

THE MONARCHY

SIR,—Mr. G. H. Holmes prefers a "good" monarchy, "as we find it in England," to a "bad" republic (*The Freethinker*, February 5, 1954). This is not flattering to our monarchy. But a better monarchy is preferable to a good one. The British monarchy is more expensive than the monarchies of Continental Europe taken all together; and these monarchies are very much more democratic. In Sweden, Norway or Denmark, the monarch has a job that is not wholly make-believe; he can appear in public without causing widespread dislocation of traffic and general chaos; his children may attend, with other people's children, ordinary schools; he can ride a bicycle in the streets of the capital—even the Queen of Holland has been known to do this. These monarchs recently dispensed with Coronation ceremonies to obviate useless expense to public funds; they are respected for their personal qualities and for their high official positions in government, but there is no foolish idolatry of their persons. Monarchs, however, have courts; courts have nobles; nobles bring class distinctions and monarchy thus becomes the fount of snobbery.

A good republic avoids the enormous expense of a monarch and his, or her, relations; the foolishness of hereditary privileges and the other imbecilities inseparable from royalty. The Swiss Republic with its Federal Assembly, consisting of two Houses, and its Federal Executive of seven members, was described by Lord Bryce as the most businesslike legislative body in the world. One of the members of the Federal Executive is elected President annually, but this great honour adds little to his importance. The President is responsible for his departmental duties and has also ceremonial responsibilities; he costs the Swiss people probably less than the cost of a single Cabinet Minister to the British people. The supporter of monarchy often says that the monarch keeps the Commonwealth together, but forgets India, Burma, Pakistan, Eire, the republicanism of South Africa and the ties of flesh and blood relations of our families in the Dominions. To this I would like to reply with Salvador de Madariaga's words: "In the midst of a Europe in which the conflicting characters and ambitions of Germans, French and Italians are a constant source of irritation and warmongery, Switzerland has become a haven of peace composed precisely of Germans, Frenchmen and Italians who have decided to build up a Commonwealth across their differences, as if to show the world that it can be done and how."—Yours, etc.,

WM. KEANE.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

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Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.
Glasgow R.P.A. (Central Halls, 25, Bath Street).—Sunday, March 21, 3 p.m.: Dr. STARK MURRAY, "Medicine—Science in Art."
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.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 21, 6-45 p.m.: T. TOWNSEND, "Social Science."
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 23, 7 p.m. Conway Memorial Lecture (Large Hall): Dr. J. BRONOWSKI, "The Fulfilment of Man."
Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, March 19, 7-15 p.m.: R. S. W. POLLARD, "The Art of Conferring."
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 21, 6-30 p.m.: Prof. L. T. RUSSELL, "Belief and Action."
Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Cross Street Chapel).—Saturday, March 20, 3 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Position and Prospects of the Humanist Movement."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, March 21, 2-30 p.m.: IAN WINTERBOTTOM, M.P., v. F. BARTON (I.L.P.), "Is Conscription Necessary?"
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, March 21, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Some Verdicts of History."
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 21, 7-15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY (President, N.S.S.), "Problems of International Freethought."
West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead).—Thursday, March 25, 8 p.m.: Open Meeting.

Notes and News

The current religious sensation is Mr. Billy Graham, the American Evangelist, whose meetings are dealt with elsewhere in this issue. Mr. Graham's outfit is organised with a slick business efficiency that rivals that of the previous circuses of Messrs. Mills, Arnold, etc., which have recently finished their winter sessions. Mr. Graham is not, of course, the first of his kind to visit our shores. Before him were Messrs. Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, and other Bible-banging heroes of the evangelical past. The fact, the initial fact that Mr. Graham's presence here is still necessary in this Year of Grace, 1954, affords a clear indication of how far these pious immigrants from "God's own Country" succeeded—or otherwise—in their pious mission! However, though the Graham barrage of prayer for our salvation is organised with the slick efficiency

characteristic of American Big Business, it seems, so far, to have failed to "set the Thames on fire." The following apt citations from our esteemed contemporary, *The North London Observer*, appear to express a widespread feeling.

Under the self-explanatory title of "*Billy is so slick—but so ordinary*"—our contemporary goes on to comment on Billy Graham in the following unflattering terms:

"Billy Graham's slick salesmanship of the Christian message at Harringay Arena this week is undoubtedly a seven days' wonder. Whether he will survive three months as a talking point is debatable.

Many local churches left it open for their congregations to attend if they wished, but local clergy were conspicuous by their absence.

Judging by the opening performance on Monday, Mr. Graham and his team have a lot to learn."

Our contemporary concludes its pungent reference with the caustic reflection: "But where, O where was his brilliant oratory? Perhaps it would be charitable to assume that Mr. Graham was nervous; perhaps his magic failed to survive the Atlantic crossing.

Certainly there was nothing here to show why such fantastic acclaim has been lavished on a very ordinary young man.

"I wish I were more Christ-like," said Mr. Graham modestly. I suggest he re-reads his New Testament." (*North London Observer*, March 5, 1954). However, this "ordinary young man" draws £5,000 a year!

The Rev. Alexander Stewart is, as his prefix indicates, a Protestant clergyman, an "anti-Papist" of a type that was more common a century ago than it is now. In *The World Menace of Catholic Action*, he gives a thoroughly documented and extremely valuable survey of the machinations of "Catholic Action" in all parts of our contemporary globe; here, we observe in concise form, the whole worldwide plot of political Catholicism in its current drive to world power. "Catholic Actions" makes use of many methods, Democracy here, Fascism there; but, as the author convincingly shows, the fundamental aims behind all these machinations remains the same: the restoration of "The Age of Faith," when "all roads led to Rome"; the worldwide ascendancy of the Papacy. To this supreme end, all other personalities and "isms" remain subordinate: McCarthy, Franco, Adenauer, *et al!* Even though we may not agree with the learned author that the Pope is "anti-Christ," he is certainly anti-Freethought! "Catholic Action" is, to-day, certainly our major foe and all shades of progressive opinion should unite against the common enemy of all, if only on the time-honoured adage that "if we don't hang together we shall all be hanged separately"! We hope that Mr. Stewart's timely pamphlet will have as wide a sale amongst Freethinkers as amongst Protestants. (*The World Menace of Catholic Action* by the Rev. Alexander Stewart, published by "The National Union of Protestants, at 55, Gloucester Road, Kensington, London, S.W.7, price one shilling).

As summer—at last!—draws near, the National Secular Society, after a strenuous indoor session of lectures, is now preparing for an equally strenuous outdoor session of propaganda. Last year a notable feature was represented by the N.S.S. platform in Hyde Park, on which speakers from both headquarters and from other branches of the N.S.S. co-operated. The result, we think that we may say, was an outstanding success. We hope that last year's success will be repeated in Hyde Park. We have often noted that the people who sneer at Hyde Park and decry the value of free speech in this world-famous speaking ground, are usually those who take every opportunity to sneer at Democracy.

BOOK REVIEW

Two Critics

By H. CUTNER

AS most readers are aware, the Rev. B. Graham is attracting huge crowds to hear him "preach the Gospel"—and incidentally, attack "secularism and materialism" as the great enemies of mankind. It is therefore of particular interest to read Mr. Douglas Morgan proclaim again, in strident tones, "I still say that Materialism is a Myth!" Mr. Graham has a guaranteed salary of £5,000 a year, he employs hundreds of people singing hymns or playing trombones or announcing Divine Messages—all against a Myth! I find this situation really funny.

I am expected to "answer" or "explain" Wordsworth, Keats, Mozart, Raphael, and Einstein; I fail to answer "if Materialism is consistent with Ethics, Logic, and æsthetics." With ringing contempt, Mr. Morgan asks if I can tell him the difference between a scientist and a poet? Can I answer his question as to "the richness and diversity of life?" Can Materialism answer? And Mr. Morgan is in such a hurry to answer his own questions that he very nearly falls over himself to reply "No!" There is now need to wait for *my* answer, of course.

I have not the slightest intention of replying to the childish "arguments" of such a naive gentleman. Hundreds of articles on Materialism have been written for this journal, elementary and advanced; but I cannot remember one which had to deal with Mr. Morgan's infant-school type of "questions." How little he has read can be seen in his last paragraph. "If you talk about Christianity," he yells, "keep to the Four Gospels of Christ and NOT the morals of priesthood. The Church is NOT always Christianity, is it?" And this to *The Freethinker*, a journal which is in its 74th volume!

Let me turn—with a little relief, though not much—to Mr. Clive-Ross who criticised me for failing to hold his own views on Spiritualism or on Evolution or on Hinduism or on Buddhism. Mr. Clive-Ross has a perfect right to think what he likes about all these and hundreds of other subjects, just as he has the right to criticise me; and I have the same right to criticise him.

And in the first place, my difficulty is that he and I appear to use the same words but with different meanings. When I say that someone is "dead," I mean, of course, what most people mean by the word "dead." If I say that Shakespeare is dead I mean that he is dead. Shakespeare is no more. But this will not do for Mr. Clive-Ross who proceeds to tell me that "surely my knowledge of science should have taught me that nothing dies." Just before this, with a remarkable plethora of words (or inky argument), he proclaimed to the world that he had not been convinced that Spiritualism has proved that there was a life after death—but when I said this, that was a different matter. I should have been convinced, of course—but there was no need for *him* to be convinced.

Let me add also that I do not say that all mediums are huge frauds as he appears to think. I am quite certain that a number of them, when they go into a trance, have not the least idea of what they are saying. But I do claim that those Spiritualists who insist that the incoherent rubbish which most mediums utter through Indian or Chinese "guides" prove survival, are fraudulent—whatever Mr. Clive-Ross thinks.

And may I add that I am a little tired of the kind of general criticism he and his like indulge in. In dealing with Mr. Findlay, I took a number of the *concrete* cases he gives as proof of survival, and if Mr. Clive-Ross feels

that I was wrong, he should have shown me where. Mr. Findlay was quite unable to do so, and I suspect so was Mr. Clive-Ross.

Freethinkers, he thinks, "give one the impression of 'knowing it all'"—which is rather curious for that is exactly the impression I got of him after reading his two letters. Here is a gentleman, I thought, who has an answer for everything—and is even anxious to let everybody know that he is such a profound student, that he can throw overboard Hume and Berkeley "and other Western philosophers" (the whole lot?) and implores me to do the same. And why? Well, "one Hindu student" described them as "suitable for an eight-year-old." And that, of course, should settle it. My own feeling is that this particular student must be insane.

It appears also that I stated, as a thorough believer in Evolution, that this Earth of ours had been at one time a "gaseous mass without any life," and Mr. Clive-Ross angrily denounces this as "dogmatic." How do I know there was no life on the gaseous mass? Am I really expected to deal with this kind of "argument"? If Mr. Clive-Ross says that there was, or that there might have been, let him produce the proof. I say, basing what I say on what I have read by eminent astronomers, that there certainly was *no* life on the gaseous mass; and I shall shed no tears if Mr. Clive-Ross gets angrier and angrier.

According to his own "know-all" state of mind, it seems that after all "mind" does not depend on a "body" (matter) but can go off on its own "as witness the remarkable findings of such men as Prof. Jung with regard to the Sub-conscious Mind." Well, as far as I have read Prof. Jung I have not come across a single line where there is a "Sub-conscious Mind" away from a body. Would Mr. Clive-Ross give me the exact references? I want the passages where the Professor is dealing with an "entity." Mind, away altogether from a Body.

Finally, in return for sending me to a book by Rene Guenon, I have pleasure in sending Mr. Clive-Ross to two—*The System of Nature*, by d'Holbach, and *Force and Matter*, by Buchner. When Mr. Clive-Ross or his "Indian Student" can answer these two books, it will be a time to consider what has always seemed to me the hopeless twaddle of Hindu Mysticism.

What is Freethought?

By R. H. BROWN

I THINK that C. H. Norman's advocacy of extending freethinking to politics, economics, and other fields, does not take sufficient account of the different aspects of freethought.

I would suggest that freethought can be roughly classified under two headings—the "secular" type and the "freedom of thought" type. An advocate of the former type I would define as one who holds with the pre-eminence of reason, humanity and freedom of thought, and in the light of which, subjects religious beliefs and practices to critical examination.

The second type I will attempt to define as one who is representative of the view that the principle of freedom of thought (and opinion) is vital, and in the light of which, subjects all beliefs and practices involving censorship of thought and opinion to a critical examination.

The similarity between the two is that both uphold the

importance of the freedom of thought and both must therefore adopt a critical attitude towards religion.

The difference between the two is a little more complex. The traditional type of freethinker, as defined in the former of the above definitions, is a specialist in the intellectual field. It also follows from that definition that in demonstrating religion as illogical and unnecessary he must advance certain general theories concerning the alternative attitudes of life to be adopted that are in keeping with the principles upon which the assault upon religion is based. He has the twin responsibilities of getting rid of the religious disease and familiarising people with the idea of a rational, humanistic and free approach to life. This is a specialist job and of no mean order.

Now the type of freethinker referred to in the latter of the above definitions is he who not only attacks the screen of taboo and censorship laid down by religious bodies, but also flails the same bogey in other fields. This is the type to which C. H. Norman's remarks would apply. Here is not one who specialises in a struggle against a single group such as the religious one. He is the watchdog against all those factions who openly or in a more subtle way try to draw a shutter over the human mind. He has many irons in the fire and has plenty to do. But the traditional freethinker, on the other hand, has only one iron in the fire, although it is a very hot iron in very hot though rather diminishing hell fire.

Of course, it is very obvious that a lot of freethinkers are a combination of both the aspects that I have tried to distinguish.

Another point in making this rather theoretical distinction is that the traditional type of freethinkers are more or less *organised* as well as specialised in fighting religion by reason of being members of the N.S.S. or supporting it. It thus seems silly to dissipate their forces by also engaging economic and political opposition of a non-religious nature. Let those who are both anti-religious *and* against censorship in secular fields by all means assist some other body *as well* if they wish to join in the activities of those whose activities are directed towards the more literal interpretation of the word "freethought." The main thing is that the organised and specialist form of secular freethought is left intact. Again, there exists quite a number of people who passionately defend freedom of thought and opinion but are not of an irreligious nature. Obviously these cannot be expected to mix their views with atheist propaganda.

All this leaves us very much as it is now. The secular ranks have a formidable enemy; let us meet him as a united and active body, and not as a sub-section of something else, which, although perhaps covering a wider field, would also be far less effective.

My One Confession

By VALENTINA MANOUSSO

(Concluded from page 87)

The fatal Thursday of Passion Week evening had come, when I was escorted to the Cathedral in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. It was a most "posh" church near our flat. From Palm Sunday I was on a strict lenten fare, starving my body and preparing my mind for the great event, the Communion, by going to church twice a day. Actually I was hungry and racked my brains to find ways to have tasty food, instead of the cabbage and potatoes prescribed by my religion and given to me. The only alleviation of that thin time was that I was entitled to eat as many mushrooms as my soul desired, and I adored mushrooms; especially cooked in oil for dinner and pickled for supper. Also that I had not to exercise my scales on the piano. My mind, I fear, was pre-occupied with terrestrial affairs, not heeding the prospect of becoming

almost an angel, or a saint, for a couple of hours between the partaking of Christ's blood and the committing of my next sin.

The day arrived, and, behold, I was arrayed in sober clothing to go to church to confess my sins. Nurse was waiting for me, in her long black cloak. Escape there was none.

Suddenly Mother asked me: "Did you ask people to forgive your sins?"

"Whom have I to ask? I am asking you now if you wish. Forgive me, Mummy. . . ."

"That is not enough. . . . You must ask . . . not only the family . . . strangers. . . ." Mother was herself vague.

"Ask forgiveness of your future brother-in-law."

"What? The doctor?" I had to do what I was told. I did. The doctor, sedate and silent, was in Mother's study, deep in some medical magazine. I produced my *Spiel*, and we both—the serious doctor, and the little girl—were embarrassed and awkward. And probably the doctor was more confused than the child. After some hesitation he gave me his hand, and murmured some formal dismissal. Then I was hurried off to the Church.

In the carriage I went over in my mind my Mother's instructions. What have I to say to the priest? Something; say, I took some chocolate from Mother's room when she was out. But, Mother, I have never done such a thing. . . . Well, if you tell him this, it will be a lie, and you *will* be a sinner. . . . I admit that it was an ingenious twist of my mother's brain that gave me much pleasure and reassurance. "Anyhow," Mother continued, "here is three roubles and twenty copeks. You buy a candle with the copeks and give the candle and the three roubles to the priest. When he sees the green of the banknote he will give you absolution at once. Most people pay him only one rouble. . . ."

It was about six in the evening and the church was dark and quiet, in spite of a hundred or so of people, mostly soldiers of the fortress garrison, who were queuing up for Confession. Here and there a dark screen was placed hiding the priest, a reading desk with the Bible (the New Testament) and a cross on it, and a separate small table where the money was placed on a salver as well as the candles. I noticed that on the salver only silver donations were visible. More substantial sums, if offered, the holyman probably pocketed for safety.

The priest behaved precisely as my mother had forecast. I just repeated like a parrot: "I am a sinner, father . . . I am a sinner. . . ." He at once told me to kneel, not insisting that I describe my crimes. When I kneeled, as ordered, he put his stole (a kind of narrow apron) over my head and said a brief Absolution. I only hoped that the cloth was clean, and was not inhabited by certain small animals. . . . How many heads had the holy father covered during the seven weeks of Lent. And the stole being of black velvet, was it ever washed? . . . When safely at home I shared my doubts with mother. She only sighed, and ordered me to bed at once, as I was not supposed to eat anything till the morrow, after the Communion. Dear God! I was weary. . . .

Next day, in my best white dress, hungry and miserable, I went to Mass. After three hours of standing, dizzy, with aching feet and an empty tummy, which was protesting loudly, I received the blood and the flesh of our God. Was I becoming a cannibal, I wondered. . . . A repulsive thought.

I recalled Mother's instructions: "Try to get your portion before the soldiers, just as soon as possible. . . ." And her talking to our governess: "I do not fancy my child having to put in her mouth the same spoon unwashed, as hundreds of soldiers . . . and others. . . . No wonder we

have such a lot of epidemics. And the napkin . . . that red velvet with which they dry the lips of the communicant. . . . Altogether a nasty business. . . . If it were not for that certificate. . . ." I shared my mother's disgust, the entire ceremony being repulsive to a clean little person. But I liked the sweet wine the priest gave me on a golden spoon, and especially the *extra* wine I got at a small table at the altar. The ladle was of silver and everybody drank from it . . . of course. Some of the men were making quite a nice little breakfast out of it; small pieces of God's flesh were also provided.

And that is the story of the first and only time I went to Confession. Soon after this I left that pious school for another, where fortunately the rules were not so strict, and where none asked testimonials of a priest that a pupil had partaken of the Body and Blood of Our Lord. Once was quite enough for me, thank you.

Correspondence

CHAPMAN COHEN

SIR,—As one of the older Merseyside Freethinkers I should like to pay my tribute of esteem and affection to the memory of Mr. Chapman Cohen. I was privileged to know him for nigh-on fifty years.

"Few hearts like his, with virtue warmed;
Few heads with knowledge so informed."

Chapman Cohen was a great man: we owe him much.—
Yours, etc.,

W. J. MCKELVIE.

SIR,—I do not think I can pay a greater tribute to the memory of Chapman Cohen than to send you an extract from a letter I received from him after my only son, a fine boy of fourteen years of age, was killed in 1948.

"First I wish to say how much my wife and I feel for yourself and your wife in your suffering. We, ourselves, have gone through the same ordeal, and appreciate how much grief you have both suffered. But also many of us know that in time the pain weakens, and memory and love transforms the bitterness and pain to a deeper and never-dying love. Time may take many things out of memory, but there are other phrases that turn life into everlasting beauty. Nothing can take from us the memory of a child. Death may be forgotten: Love lasts for ever."—
Yours, etc.,

ERNEST CHIDLEY.

A SHORT REPLY TO MR. TAYLOR

SIR,—The only reply that I can give to Mr. Taylor is that he did not answer my question. Like Mr. Cutner, he writes a lot about a lot, but nothing on something. Here is the question again: As a Materialist you refute the concept of Immortality and the existence of each individual in some other world after physical death. Please give reason for your answer.

Now this is a straightforward question which *does not* entail a discussion of the Church, the Priesthood, Christianity, or any formal institutional religion. Too often does the Materialist attack Christianity or any of the world's religions.

Just one more point. Mr. Taylor should know that although I do not claim a knowledge of "Truth," and that I would be the first to recognise my weakness in the pursuit of knowledge, I am not exactly a country bumpkin. I have done some reading in philosophy and perhaps unlike Mr. Taylor I have read enough to know that I am very ignorant.

Do not worry about my English, Mr. Taylor. It was good enough for university examiners and, of course, them chaps knows a lot, they does!—Yours, etc.,

DOUGLAS V. MORGAN.

WHO IS STUPID?

SIR,—I was amazed to read in your editorial "The Saint of the Vatican" (*The Freethinker*, January 29)—after you exposed (fairly well, to your credit!) the rigid process of the Church in the canonisation of Saints—that Pius X, already approved to be canonised in May, was "the most stupid of modern Popes," and added: "Once again, as so often in the annals of the Church, it is demonstrated (sic!) that stupidity is no bar to sanctity." When I read these words I said to myself: Is this Mr. Ridley who writes such offensive nonsense?

In using such an offensive language you didn't mind contradicting yourself most evidently. In fact, you say that, in order to

be canonised, one (a) must have been orthodox in doctrine; (b) must have lived a holy life (you should have said: in a heroic degree); and (c) proved his intercession before God by two miracles (approved miracles, after the hearing of the verdict of competent scientific men). To pretend to reconcile these prerogatives with stupidity, I dare say, it is the acme of stupidity itself; the more so when such a pretension is not corroborated with at least *an attempt* to a proof by facts or arguments or both.

You say: Pius X was the most stupid of modern Popes. It means that also the other modern Popes were stupid. Here is another contradiction. For the qualities you mentioned of the other Popes, starting with Leo XIII, were not those of stupid men. Far from it.

You label the holiest of modern Popes the most stupid, because he condemned and gave the *coup de grâce* to Modernism. Could he have done otherwise without failing in his duty? How could one imagine a Pope doing his duty by tolerating the unorthodox doctrine and the heresies of Modernism? He would have been either a traitor or the real stupid Pope you have imagined.

You said also that Cardinal Rampolla was *already elected* Pope. This is untrue. Rampolla was still far from securing the number of votes required, though he was at the top of the list when the veto on behalf of the Austrian Emperor was mentioned in the Conclave. And you should have added for truth's sake that the first official act of Pius X was to abolish the right to veto or any other interference in the liberty of vote in Papal elections, and this on penalty of ex-communication.

In fine, in regard to "Stupidity and Holiness," by which you ended your diatribe, one is reminded of the *foolishness of the Cross*, about which St. Paul speaks so eloquently in I Corinthians, i. 17-31. But it is hard for you unbelievers to understand these things, having limited your mind to material and sensual things only.—Yours, etc.,

G. M. PARIS,

Editor, *The Faith* (Malta).

[Papal Conclaves, being the reverse of democratic, are shrouded in secrecy. However, most authorities hold that Cardinal Rampolla would have been elected in 1903 had it not been for the Austrian veto. As far as Modernism is concerned, even Catholic scholars, e.g., Dom Butler, in a recent issue of the *Manchester Guardian*, admitted that Pius condemned all modern knowledge.—EDITOR.]

DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—Re the Graham-Cutner debate.

Dialectical Materialism is the Communists' Athanasian Creed. To quote Dwight Macdonald in a recent review in *The New Yorker*, "Diamat doesn't explain things at all; in fact most of the time it is in head-on collision with reality, or would be did it not, at the moment of impact, make a little hop upward on to the 'dialectical' plane and continue on its undeviating course." More crudely expressed, it blinds you with science.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. NICHOLSON.

GIVE RELIGION A REST

SIR,—Referring to Mr. C. H. Norman's letter in the March 5 issue of *The Freethinker*, I agree most emphatically with this gentleman's opinion.

Give religion a rest! After all, we who read your paper are convinced, or should be by this time, that religion is a lot of "ballyhoo." Surely, as Mr. Norman suggests, there are other fields where a little enlightenment would be interesting and beneficial.—Yours, etc.,

S. WILSON.

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

Present: Mr. Ridley (in the Chair), Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Griffiths, Ebury, Taylor, Hornibrook, Tiley, Woodley, Johnson, Corstorphine, Barker, King and the Secretary.

Seven new members were admitted to the parent and North London branches. The Secretary reported on the work of the office during the six months since an assistant had been engaged. The increases in membership and financial support were considered to have justified Miss Warner's employment, and it was decided that it should be continued.

Merseyside Branch submitted details of a plan to arouse greater local interest in the movement, and it was decided that Headquarters should defray the cost of circularising. A Worthing member had called a meeting to see if a local branch could be formed, and it was agreed that the Secretary should attend and assist. North London Branch submitted an Annual Financial Statement and was congratulated on having maintained the progress that it had steadily made for many years.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.