

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIV—No. 23

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

NOW that the tumult and the cheering and the hymn-singing are over, and the Great Revivalist—sent, of course, by God Almighty himself—is having a well-earned rest, we can sit back and try to assess exactly what the Rev. B. Graham has done for Christian belief in this country of ours.

But let us just be fair to this young American. He was invited to our country to undertake a Christian Revival, and he was very well paid for it. He certainly had no great oratorical abilities; he appears to have very little culture. Not for him were beautiful flights of language, or references to the great artists or writers or composers. Not for him were eulogies of the world's great *secular* reformers. He was paid to preach Jesus Christ, and he certainly did this with the utmost simplicity and sincerity. He was in fact just as simple and just as sincere as any of the humble soldiers in the camp of the Salvation Army. No more and no less.

Mr. Graham preached Jesus Christ and Christ Jesus and Our Lord and Saviour—ringing the changes on the Glorious Names to the best of his ability—as an antidote to Materialism, Secularism, and Atheism. (Sometimes it was Agnosticism.) For him, Materialism, Secularism and Atheism were the very Devil. The “people” had tried them, and they were sick of their bleakness and aridity and hopelessness. They wanted the Glorious Faith and sunshine of Jesus Christ; they wanted Christ Jesus to enter their lives, to shed the resplendent glow of his Wonderful Personality into their very being—and so on. The dear old Story, detailed in countless sermons and religious tracts, the subject of millions of primitive sermons came across Harringay Arena with enough freshness to cause hundreds of people to listen. Miracles and myths, Gods and ghosts, Devils and demons, Angels and asses were all lapped up exactly as they used to be under the more expert handling of, say, specialists like Wesley and Spurgeon. Mr. Graham has, of course, neither their eloquence nor wit, but does that matter when preaching Jesus Christ?

For me, the most interesting claim made by the Revivalist was that the “people” were sick and tired of Materialism, Secularism and Atheism. Listening to him, I could not help but wonder where he had encountered so many of these dreadfully unhappy unbelievers, all almost dying for a glimpse of Billy Graham's wonderful Heaven. Where are they? We on this journal are, perhaps, in as good a position as anybody else to judge of their existence, and somehow or other they appear to have eluded us. The number of people who openly affirm their faith in Materialism, Secularism and Atheism is astonishingly small in comparison with those who openly and unashamedly admit their belief in Hell, Devils, Miracles, and Mythical Deities of all kinds. And in any case, it would not be very difficult to prove that it is the Christian believers, that is, the all-believing Christians, who never cease to call themselves miserable sinners, and not, by any means, the

Materialists, Secularists or Atheists. In fact, far from being unhappy, we are particularly happy to shed all the infantile nonsense associated with the religion of Jesus Christ.

Whether Mr. Graham was aware of all this we do not know, but he certainly must know that throughout the ages it was always Christians who boasted of their miserable and sinful existence—it was for them, and all similar sinners, that Jesus died. He could never have died for those of us who believe that he was as mythical as Cinderella.

But Mr. Graham was not paid to preach anything so forthright as this. He has neither the knowledge nor the ability to understand anything remotely asso-

ciated with the study of such a Science as Anthropology. What could he do with a book like the *Golden Bough* or any later works studying religion in the light of modern discoveries? Could he even vaguely understand that it can be proved that religion came into being through the fear and ignorance of primeval man?

And what about the modern studies of the Bible?—the way in which this fetish book has been analysed and criticised so minutely that not a shred of its credibility remains or could remain—outside, of course, the various organised religions which are mostly huge business organisations; as, indeed, is Mr. Graham's “revival” itself. What does he know of Biblical criticism?

If he had had the least acquaintance with how the Bible was and is being disintegrated by Christians as well as by Freethinkers he could not have undertaken his Mission at all. He would have had to do without his £5,000 a year; and lots of people for that sum would not only believe in every comma in the Bible as being Divinely inspired, but would be prepared to say the same for the Koran and the Vedas and all other “sacred” literatures.

But let us waive all this for the moment. The question which everybody must ask himself is whether the huge audiences Mr. Graham achieved, together with the recognition his work brought him from our archbishops, have made any appreciable difference whatever to the amount of apathy and indifference to religion in general and Christianity in particular to be found everywhere in England? Are people, who never believed in the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, now quite convinced of their truth?

One million five hundred thousand people heard Billy Graham, and only 27,000 came forward to testify to the Lord Jesus Christ—and for this puerile result he himself worked for three months and more than £100,000 was spent. And it cannot be too strongly urged that these 27,000 were all believers before being “converted.” It reminds one of the £40,000 spent by the Society for converting Jews in one year, with the glorious result that two Jews were converted—and the Society was not quite certain about these, either. The “Churches” are going to follow up the “converts” we are told (though not very enthu-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

England's Spiritual Awakening

—By H. CUTNER—

siastically)—but why? Afraid of a teeny weeny bit of backsliding?

We can discount the tremendous "spiritual awakening" Mr. Graham prophesied for England in the next five years. By 1959, the name of Billy Graham will be dead in this country unless he "follows up" his own Mission. And it would then have to be done all over again.

To put the matter in a nutshell: the Great Revival was a Great Flop from any standpoint of true Christianity. It was a Damp Squib. Not all the Queen's horses nor all the Queen's men can ever put true Christianity back again.

Ananias and Sapphira

By D. FARMER

THERE is a story in the New Testament, Acts 5 to be exact, which may well throw some little light on the complex problem of the origins of Christianity, a problem which is deservedly arousing a great deal of contemporary interest.

The story in brief is this. Peter the Rock, who claims to have been a disciple of Jesus, and to have been intimately acquainted with the latter, during the years of his alleged ministry, is now at the head of a considerable body of Christians. The time is a few years after the supposed crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of the Master. Peter seems to be in a very powerful position, because it is stated that all those who have embraced the new faith, regard their property as belonging, no longer to themselves but to the Church. They sell the property and bring the money to the apostles, and lay it at the feet of the latter. These men divide out the money, to each of the other Church members according to his needs.

But a certain Ananias sells a possession and instead of bringing all the money to Peter he brings a part only, reserving the remainder to himself. His wife, Sapphira, knows what he has done, and approves.

Peter also knows that Ananias is holding back a portion of his own money, and demands to know the reason why. He tells Ananias that he is a liar in the sight of the Holy Ghost, whereupon poor Ananias drops down dead. Peter's young men wind up his body, take him out and bury him. Shortly afterwards Sapphira, anxious about the fate of her husband, comes to see Peter. He accuses her of being an accomplice of her husband in the matter of the money, and then he informs her that those very men who have buried her husband will now proceed to bury her. Sapphira drops down dead at once, and the young men carry her body to be buried beside that of her husband.

"And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Acts 5, vii.

We are given to understand that God killed the wicked man and wife because they deceived Peter, but we may be forgiven for assuming that Peter himself murdered them. This story seems to me to indicate that the sainted early Christian leader Peter, was a common terrorist, the head of a quasi-religious, semi-secret terrorist gang or society, which extracted money wherever it could, by threats and the application of murder, as the above story clearly shows.

To describe the early Christians as primitive communists seems to be straining the facts. Communism appears to require that land shall be owned communally and worked for the good of the community. Peter did not want land nor did he want to work it. He wanted money—a very different matter, and he forced those over whom he had any power to sell their land and bring the money to him. The fate of Ananias and his wife awaited those who did not fulfil these requirements adequately.

Shortly after this incident Peter and the other church leaders are arrested and thrown into prison. We are assured that the wicked Jews were jealous on religious grounds, but it is also possible that they wanted Peter to explain the disappearance of at least two bodies.

How many other bodies were there to be explained? We may sympathise with the authorities for not believing that the Almighty had disposed of them.

If the interpretation of the story of Ananias as here given is a correct one, then there is no difficulty in explaining why the Jewish and later the Roman authorities sought to stamp out the Christian movement with so much vigour. Religious issues were probably secondary. A ruthless criminal society probably had to be dealt with, and rough methods of doing so were no doubt used in that rough age.

It is a thought for the Faithful that Peter, the stated intimate of Jesus, the Rock of the Church, the man from whom a very long line of Popes have claimed their special powers was, in all probability, a cold-hearted, tough-minded, leader of a gang of unsavoury thugs.

Honourable Exception

When the Archbishop of Canterbury and high-up Non-conformists decided to support the Rev. Billy Graham, large sections of the Press began to pay him a new respect previously lacking from editorials. However, the following revealing letter appeared in the *Hanley Evening Sentinel* two days before the large closing meetings:—

Sir,—I am increasingly troubled by the fact that sections of the secular and religious Press are giving the impression that multitudes of adult non-churchgoers have attended Dr. Graham's meetings, and that many thousands of such have been converted to Christianity.

It has, for instance, been stated that over 60 per cent. of the inquirers "have had no previous connection with a Church." That would mean as many as 20,000 of the final total. When these alleged new Christians cannot presently be found in fellowship in our Church, the Church, and especially the ministers, will certainly and unjustly be accused of having "lost" them within a few months.

The comprehensive and detailed statistics issued by Dr. Graham's Headquarters clearly indicate that a third of the inquirers are children between five and 15, and another third are young people between 15 and 19. Most of these are Sunday school scholars and/or members of Church youth organisations who have attended the meetings in organised parties. Few of them would be Church members, yet some 40 per cent. of all inquirers are Church members, which can only mean that the majority of adult inquirers are Church members.

Those of us who, in terms of many years of heart-breaking personal experience as would-be evangelists, know the difficulty of persuading modern adult non-churchgoers to attend any kind of religious service or meeting anywhere, are glad and grateful that even a few hundred such have been won for Christianity by Dr. Graham's campaign.

In my judgment, however, deep and enduring injury will be done to our Churches, and especially to those most enthusiastically evangelistic, if the impression is permitted to persist that some 20,000 such have been so easily won, only to be so quickly lost.

H. J. BLACKMORE

(Minister, Bethesda Methodist Church, Hanley).

The Game

Football or Billy Graham.
It is all the same,
A hundred thousand crowd at Wembley
Watch a game;
Twenty-two footballers seek
To score a winning goal,
But modest Billy strives to win—
Guess what—My Soul!

B.S.

Report on a Miracle

By C. G. L. DU CANN

PEOPLE say that there were, and are, no such things as miracles. What there may have been, I, of course, do not know—except from the hearsay of books. And hearsay, as the little judge in *Pickwick* pointed out, is not evidence. But what *is*, I do know, to some extent at least. And that miracles take place nowadays, I have no doubt whatever: only the other day, an English politician talked sense in the House of Commons, and if that be not a miracle, what is?

On Easter-Day, I myself, with my own ears, heard a miracle.

And hearing it, I exclaimed at once like Queen Elizabeth the First of pious, glorious and immortal memory on hearing of the Spanish Armada's defeat: "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes"—so that she need not attribute it to the other doers like Howard of Effingham, Francis Drake and the rest, and have to reward them. Of course, it may have been that the All-Loving and All-Merciful Omnipotent Father would wreck, drown, and burn his hapless Spanish children out of pure loving-kindness. That indeed would be marvellous in the eyes that contemplated such extraordinary acts of love and kindness, provided they were English eyes in wartime.

But what the Lord did last Easter-Day rivalled the Armada marvel in miraculous quality. Let us praise the Lord—but not before I tell you exactly what he did. I am slowly—but surely—coming to that.

News of this miracle reached me by radio. Now the B.B.C. is a most admirable institution, its best feature being that you can, and do, turn it off and on—usually off so far as I am concerned, for I prefer it off—like a tap. And again like a tap, it flows on, and on, and on, if you are foolish enough to let it. People listen to the radio because other people (usually women who don't listen to it) turn it on and leave it blaring to the discomfort and discomfort of more sensitive ears. There is no punishment in English law for this criminal offence, probably because no one could think of any punishment severe enough, and this is a woman-ridden country, anyway.

Well, as I was saying (just before I digressed in order to praise the B.B.C. like a Salvationist exclaiming "Hallelujah," apropos of nothing, as Salvationists used to do before they became too respectable), the miracle *did* take place.

And what was the miracle?

What, indeed! I will not delay telling you if you are fully prepared, as you ought to be by now, for my miraculous tidings. But one ought to prepare one's hearers gradually for this sort of thing. It ought not to be blurted out in the crude way you tell a man that you have good news for him because another man has had the misfortune to run off with his wife, so that he won't have to keep her or put up with her tantrums any more. No, indeed. It ought to be led up to; gradually, but with what the late Lord Passfield called the inevitability of gradualness; and that is what I am doing now.

What, as I said before, was the miracle? Nothing more nor less than this. That His Holiness the Pope of Rome, with Cardinal Griffin (his English Sancho Panza) with the Archbishop of Canterbury (Primate of All England) and the Archbishop of York (Primate of England merely) had been converted to Christianity quite suddenly. And as I said before (see paragraph one of this Report) if that is not a miracle, what is? Unless you like to call it four miracles in one?

Do you wonder that I, unfeignedly, rejoiced? I had been trying all by myself, aided only by my pen (the pen is fiercer than the Bomb), to convert these four ecclesiastical characters to the doctrine of Jesus Christ for years and

years and years in the columns of *The Freethinker*, which periodical I have always believed to be their favourite bedside-reading. Being a Don Quixote by nature, I had imposed this task on myself as he did knight-errantry, I being the only person left who believed this miracle to be possible. But it was not I who accomplished it. At long last when I was in despair and my pen in disrepair, the Lord had compassion on us both, and did my work in the twinkling of an eye, or of a little star going twinkle-twinkle, like a diamond in the sky.

And how did the good Lord accomplish this latest miracle?

By means of the Hydrogen Bomb. (The bomb was not dropped, which would have made the miracle impossible.) Directly news of the dread effectiveness of this weapon reached the four ecclesiastical characters, they realised at once that the anti-war doctrine of Jesus was right. The bomb proved that. So on Easter-Day "with one accord" like the Apostles in the Acts, they preached sermons against War.

Their unanimity was wonderful. They might have belonged to the same religion or even the same Trade Union, for it is just not true that in such bodies the brethren tear each other to pieces like famished tigers as outsiders seem to think.

We live in terribly serious times. In the old days of Sodom and Gomorrah, things were pretty bad, as things go. But now they are worse. Indeed, much worse (so I apologise for my under-statement in the foregoing sentence). You see on the Sodomites the Lord (which was Abraham's God) only rained down fire and brimstone from Heaven; but now the Government (which is England's God) rains down from the Home Office on our sodomites a Committee of Inquiry and psychiatrists, which is worse.

But worse still for all of us is the Atom Bomb. And worse than that is the Hydrogen Bomb. And worse than that is the Cobalt Bomb. And after that who knows? No one. With luck, one of our splendid scientists may, by the grace of God, invent a bomb that will not only blow up "the Earth and all that therein is," but also the Sun, Moon and Stars, as well as Heaven, including the Lord and all his heavenly hosts, and Satan and his cohorts of the damned.

In these circumstances, it is a great comfort to me that there is a limit to what even bombs can do, and that when nothing is left, they cannot blow up that nothing.

Also for further comfort, let us joyously accept the comfortable doctrine of the Government that the bigger the bomb, the brighter the chances of its being unused. It stands to sense that small explosives are more dangerous than big explosives, and that a shot-gun is more likely to fire itself than a piece of heavy artillery, and that a lunatic with no arms but his fist is far more dangerous than one with a Sten gun pointed in your direction. Let us therefore avoid "hysteria" and "panic," and lay the flattering unction of the Government and the Press to our souls.

Besides there may be a second miracle. Just as the four prelates have been converted to Christianity so the politicians may be converted to common-sense.

Till then let us all join the Civil Defence organisation. Bring me my pike; my bow and arrows; my Boadicean chariot; and my tiny tin of vaseline, for I want to be prepared for the Hydrogen Bomb on the lines laid down by the Home Office, in case there is no second miracle. We live in serious days, as I said before. And patriots must prepare, not of course for aggression but for defence, which both capitalistic and communistic Governments say so often that there must be truth in it, even if not much.

This Believing World

It was only to be expected that newspaper men would interview the Rev. B. Graham at the close of his highly successful "revival" campaign. He proudly declared that about 1,350,000 people had packed Harringay Arena, and 27,000 had accepted Christ into their lives; and their cases were to be followed up—for there was always the fear of some "backsliding." Mr. Graham could not, naturally, avoid a little prophecy, so he prophesied that England was on the eve of a tremendous spiritual awakening, and that in five years time—but at this point we found he was a little vague. All we could gather was that in five years time lots of people would attend their respective churches a little more than at present.

What the newspaper men wanted to know was how many "unbelievers" had accepted Christ, and here again Mr. Graham was very vague. They realised that if people had been brought up to be Christians it was not much of a triumph merely to go to a revival meeting. Revivals could only be called successful if they roped in the out-and-out unbelievers—and did the popular Billy do that? We have in our midst many eminent men whose religious beliefs are nil—how many of these came forward and begged Christ to come into their lives?

The truth is that the Billy Graham Campaign provided for many people an excellent evening out—it provided an almost free entertainment with a lot of reverent emotion, and the feeling that one was being "good"; and in addition there was the singing of a lot of the old hymns when this kind of thing was taken more seriously than now except in very primitive Christian communities. It amounted in all to nearly nothing. The simple Bible beliefs held by Mr. Graham and his followers have been riddled by criticism, and very few who have once read this criticism ever go back.

We had a paragraph here the other week criticising the claim made by *Psychic Realm* that "Spiritualism is a guide to mankind on how to live here," while Materialism, we were told, was responsible "for the present troubles of the world." We pointed out that some of the greatest Spiritualists were caught and convicted of gross fraud, and we challenged *Psychic Realm* to name a similar number of Materialists caught in fraud. Naturally, *Psychic Realm* called this "a rather cheap attack on Spiritualism," and did its best to explain why.

It was a very poor explanation—and all the poorer because the writer managed very cleverly to hide the fact that the word Materialism has two definitions. We, on this journal, as he well knows, discuss Materialism as a philosophy of the Universe, and are not concerned with the kind of people who go to prison because "they have erroneously followed the path of Materialism." Stealing, lying, selfishness, torturing children and animals, and so on, are called "materialism" or "the materialistic way of life" by Christians and Spiritualists; but both sects know quite well this is not Scientific Materialism at all. The fact still remains, therefore, that many Spiritualists have been caught in deliberate fraud, while it would be very difficult to find a similar number of Materialists convicted in the same way.

It is most interesting to note that the leader writer in *Psychic Realm* declares that as he once was the chairman of a branch of the R.P.A. he speaks from experience when he declares that there is nothing in the Secular Movement to sustain "the spirit within"; and he, therefore, went bodily over to Spiritualism. It was "an earlier materialistic phase of his life." We wonder what arguments first induced

him to give up Christianity and become a Rationalist, and how he would now answer those arguments—if they were arguments?

It is most intriguing also to find that the same writer complains bitterly that some Christians actually call *Spiritualism* a "materialistic religion." It is "a selfish philosophy of life." In other words, Christians and Spiritualists between them are at loggerheads on Materialism, and we can sit back and smile at their heated quarrel, especially as neither have the least understanding of Scientific Materialism.

That forceful speaker, Mr. Shaw Desmond, who once had a debate with the late Chapman Cohen, and who confidently told us all those years ago that Materialism was fighting in the last ditch, came perilously near the awful crime of blasphemy the other day. He actually called Jehovah—"that hateful beastly thing of the Old Testament." God forgive him. And the authorities have done nothing to him. Of course, as we do not believe the "hateful thing" exists or has ever existed, we could never blaspheme against him.

But Mr. Desmond deserves to have put on record his sincere belief in fairies whom he has encountered face to face, and his insistence that Jesus Christ has come among us again. He has "advented." "Everywhere," he claims, "they are talking of the return of the Master. He is in a place which we know very well." We wish we did. Alas, that is impossible, for one has to have access "to certain esoteric occult circles." And nobody would admit us to these "esoteric" circles. How these people can be so easily fooled is one of those mysteries we have never been able to understand.

The Crusader's Wife

Monica Dickens, descendant of the great Charles, and, we think, a Roman Catholic, had an article in one of the women's periodicals about Mrs. Billy Graham, and told her readers that this good lady, who accompanied her husband to London for his "Christian Crusade," usually stays at home and minds the children. Whether she accompanies him or not, "She must share his hopes and triumphs and disappointments, and she must herself believe in his crusade, or she could never stand the pace at which he pursues it." This amazing information was padded out to fill three-quarters of a page of praise for Billy's wife, as if most wives would not be pleased to have a husband who brought in the shekels as we are told this follower of the penniless, wandering Messiah of two thousand years ago does! But would Miss Dickens's illustrious forebear have wasted his literary talents on such trivialities?

P. V. M.

7-30p.m., SUNDAY 6th JUNE

at the
DEANSGATE BLITZED SITE
MANCHESTER



Open-Air Demonstration following N.S.S. 89th Annual Conference. Speakers: F. A. Ridley, L. Ebury, H. Day, J. Clayton, C. McCall, M. Barnes, W. J. O'Neill, etc.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

THE FREETHINKER

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

To Correspondents

- C. J. LITTLE.—The N.S.S. (founded by C. Bradlaugh—the "Member for India") demands the abolition of all racial distinctions. We leave that sort of thing to Christians, like the Rev. Malan, South African Premier.
- E. MORLEY.—Bernard Shaw was not a scientist, and his Life Force carries no scientific authority. Biologists have exposed it as a myth.
- J. ASHLEY and T. HENDERSON suggest curtailing the N.S.S. practical objects so as to achieve greater agreement among members.
- R. HIGGS, JUN.—Determination, or co-variance, is as well established as ever in science. Einstein never deserted the principle.
- S. ROSCOE ventures the opinion that Billy Graham is actually doing more good to Freethought than to religion. Propaganda in reverse?
- J.B.D.—Differences among anthropologists have nothing to do with questioning the truth of evolution. The latter is their working basis. Their disagreements are domestic ones, having to do with such matters as age and classification of specimens.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- National Secular Society Open-Air Demonstration, Manchester (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Sunday, June 6, 7-30 p.m.: Speakers, F. A. RIDLEY, L. EBURY, H. DAY, J. CLAYTON, C. MCCALL, M. BARNES and W. J. O'NEILL.
- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL. From June 13, 7 p.m. only: F. ROTHWELL and J. CLAYTON.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and others.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER, E. MILLS and others.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: H. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Wednesday, June 9, 1 p.m.: Debate—Affirmative, T. M. MOSLEY; Negative, Rev. DONALD PIPE (Congregationalist): "Is Secularism Enough?"
- West London Branch N.S.S.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEILL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD, G. H. TAYLOR. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

Notes and News

In common with business premises in every large city, 41, Gray's Inn Road receives a stream of visitors whose purpose is to get rather than to give. Commercial travellers; nuns with subscription lists, and Salvation Army collectors inviting the practice of "Self-Denial" do not hesitate to knock at the door of the N.S.S. Secretary's office although in complete ignorance of the activities carried on inside. Entering, they state the reasons why they called, only to find themselves subjected to a process of unexpected enlightenment regarding the organisation they are visiting. The upshot of it all is that they invariably depart the richer for a little knowledge about freethought and a membership form to consider and discuss with their friends. May these gains console them for having failed to obtain an order or a donation!

His many friends in the movement will be sorry to learn that Mr. E. W. Shaw, Executive Committee member and a Trustee of the N.S.S., collapsed suddenly last week and is now in Farnborough Hospital suffering from coronary thrombosis. We are informed that he is comfortable there, but that his recovery is likely to be a slow process. He and Mrs. Shaw had been looking forward to attending the Conference this week-end, and they will certainly be missed, having regularly attended for a good many years.

By an error the name of the N.S.S. Conference Hotel was wrongly given last week. It is, of course, the New Millgate Hotel. Manchester Branch Committee ask us to stress that the opening function, the Reception at 7-30 p.m. Saturday, is one to which all members and friends are cordially invited.

The National Secular Society Library has just been augmented by the fine collection of freethinking, scientific and historical books of the late Mr. T. M. Richmond of Sheffield. 244 cloth-bound and 47 paper-covered works in first-class condition make up this generous gift, and the Executive Committee of the N.S.S. desires to express sincere gratitude to Miss F. Meynell Richmond for sending the volumes for the benefit of students of freethought in its many aspects.

Chapman Cohen on Science and Religion

ULTIMATELY our task is that of deciding between two opposite interpretations of man and the universe. On the one hand we have the interpretation that has come down to us from primitive times, and which we know to be utterly, completely wrong. We have, as a matter of fact, rejected the interpretation which primitive man placed upon his world. We accept in no respect his interpretation of the world or of man. But while we reject his interpretation of things we still have a religion that is based upon it. We reject his astronomy, his geology, his biology, and his ethical theories, but we retain his religion! We know him to have been wrong in his speculations concerning the world in which he was living and of the man whom he knew. But we are willing to accept him as an authority on a world in which he was not living and upon some god whom he did not know. That is one interpretation of the world, one that is enshrined in every church and in every religion on the face of the globe.

The other interpretation of the world is that given us by modern science. That is an interpretation which is ever growing in clarity and in utility. With all its shortcomings and imperfections, in spite of the "base uses" to which it may be put, it is nevertheless the only instrument with which man may cut his way through the world.

It is the one instrument that has lifted man from savagery to the degree of civilisation he has attained. It is the only instrument that can promise him victory in that warfare which man is always waging against the organic and inorganic enemies of the human race.

It is these alternatives that lie before you to-day. It is yours to make the choice. (*Foundations of Religion*).

—NEXT WEEK—

THE FUTURE OF SECULARISM

By G. H. TAYLOR

Secularism and Science

By F. A. RIDLEY

(Some critical remarks on an article entitled "Secularism and Science" by P. Victor Morris)

IN *The Freethinker* of May 14, 1954, there appeared by Mr. P. Victor Morris an article entitled "Secularism and Science," which criticises certain statements made by the present writer, in two front-page issues of *The Freethinker* entitled, respectively, *Science and Religion* and *The Prostitution of Science*. In common with, I hope, all writers in *The Freethinker*, I have no objection to accurate and constructive criticism, even, or, indeed, especially from my colleagues; but I regret to add that I do not find Mr. Morris's criticism particularly constructive, nor even accurate as statements of what was actually contained in my aforementioned article.

My critic declares that readers of *The Freethinker* "must have rubbed their eyes with astonishment" at my statements. The remark strikes one as a trifle peculiar, to put it mildly. Free thinkers don't "rub their eyes with astonishment" when they are presented with a new point of view; as believers in evolution they expect new ideas to come along, and instead of "rubbing their eyes with astonishment" when they encounter them they approach them with critical, but with open minds. That is what *Free* thought means! Any other attitude is that of the bigot, the obscurantist, the hopelessly hide-bound mentality. It is really very surprising to have to point this out to—of all people in the world!—the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

I do not propose here to occupy the long-suffering readers of *The Freethinker* with long extracts from my contested articles, which, in any case, they can read any time that they so desire. Contrarily I shall briefly summarise what were my actual contentions, as distinct from the burlesque of them which, unfortunately, fills up a good deal of Mr. P. V. Morris's article. First, however, I must correct my critic on the actual accuracy of some of his criticisms of my accuracy.

Readers are informed that my previous statement that our present civilisation is "the first scientific civilisation in history," is, "completely untrue." In no sense is it "untrue." That some scientific knowledge, mostly deductive in character and unsupported by exact technical observations in earlier civilisations it is, of course, true: no one could contest the statement. But no civilisation prior to the Industrial Revolution (c. 1750 to the present day) was, or could have been based on science. Science, at most, was a toy, a sideline for the ruling-classes, in such pre-industrial societies; all of which were based on slave (or serf) labour; "on the crude energy of men and of beast" as it has been aptly put. "All previous civilisation ran on feet, ours is the first to run on wheels." The lives of the masses in a pre-industrial society were hardly affected by science at all. If they had been, religious superstitions would not have gained so easy a victory. In our civilisation, contrarily, science and its technical inventions penetrate every aspect of life and all classes in society. I recommend a course of sociological study to our critic who challenges such elementary facts.

On the subject of religion we find similar inaccuracies. Contrarily to my critic's ill-informed opinion, religion has in certain epochs of the world's history discharged a highly progressive role. It couldn't have existed if it had not. Is not Mr. Morris aware that all early civilisations were directed by priests, e.g., Egypt, Assyria and Babylon; and was not civilisation—of any kind—progressive when it started? Or does Mr. Morris really think that the priestly architects of the pyramids, or of our own mediaeval cathedrals, were not more advanced than primitive savages

running in woods. Really! One could also point out, if space permitted us to review all his errors in a single article, that there have been periods when even Christianity was progressive. For example, the European Dark Age which followed the fall of Rome. If Mr. Morris doubts this I refer him to *The First Europe* by the late C. Delisle Burns, one of the most eminent Rationalists of his day, and whose knowledge of European history was, we should say, much superior to our critic's.

In a pre-scientific age, society can only be held together by religious myths which have, accordingly, a socially progressive character despite their mythical nature.

However, enough of this. If I continue in this strain it will become as wearisome to my readers as to me. Let me turn to what I actually did say.

In my article under discussion I advanced two fundamental conditions which I repeat here. These were: (a) no scientist, as such, is infallible; (b) society, to-day, stands in a more danger from a prostituted science than from anything else. I repeat these statements.

Mr. Morris rather naively asks when scientists have claimed infallibility. Really! Does he not know that the theories of Copernicus and Galileo were condemned in the name of the scientific infallibility of Aristotle as much as by the theological infallibility of the Church.

I have only space to quote one—I really cannot teach Mr. Morris both History and Sociology in one single article! The Aristotelian who replied to Galileo's discovery of sun-spots says:—

"I have read through Aristotle three times, and he says nothing about spots on the sun. You can be sure that either your eyesight or your glasses have deceived you."

What is this but an appeal to scientific infallibility? Aristotle was not a theologian. He was a scientist, and a very great one. But the assumption of his scientific infallibility retarded scientific progress for centuries. If Mr. Morris will read Prof. Homer Smith's recently published *Man and His Gods* he will find how bitterly Darwin was similarly denounced by eminent scientists, speaking in their capacity of scientists.

I pass on. I must be brief. Science, to-day, as never before, can make or mar, save or destroy human progress and human civilisation. It is, to-day, ridiculous to describe science as either automatically progressive or destructive. Its nature and ultimate effects depend on the social forces that wield it. Even religion to-day cannot wage its wars without the aid of the science it formerly condemned—a point, incidentally, in my article which Mr. Morris has completely misunderstood. In the hands of the Secularists endowed with a rational outlook, science can be equated with progress; can still save and renew human civilisation. Tell me, pray, where I deny this? Under the aegis of the present bunch of political and religious reactionaries, who direct contemporary society, a science prostituted in the service of militarism looks like destroying civilisation along with Freethought and, incidentally, Mr. P. Victor Morris.

It was in this sense, and only in this sense, that I queried the automatic identification of science with progress.

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Living Origins

By COLIN McCALL

THE latest issue of the Penguin *New Biology* (No. 16, April, 1954, 2s.) is a splendid one. In parts it is of necessity technical, but the layman who takes the trouble to consider it will be rewarded. Naturally, tastes and interests will differ. Not all will share my predilection for the primitive fishes, *Coelacanth*s, once thought to be extinct and recently rediscovered off the east coast of Africa: they may prefer to read about the analogous botanical case of the Dawn Redwood in China. If so, they will turn to the article by Professor F. W. Jane before that of Professor D. M. S. Watson. Concern with more immediate economic problems might lead others to Professor and Mrs. Miles's study of the Root Eelworms which are so destructive to our crops.

All of us, though, are likely to show interest in the four contributions on the *Origin of Life* which comprise the first half of the book. It is now established beyond doubt that man is a primate and, among educated people, one hears no talk of "missing links" these days. The evolution of vegetable and animal species, including man, is accepted even by Christians. Not so the emergence of animate from inanimate matter. The precise nature of this remote process has eluded us so far and has thus been seized on as a last abode for theistic beliefs. Much has been made of the so-called "gulf" between the inorganic and the organic.

Actually the gulf is less wide than many are apt to imagine—or hope! True, it has not yet been bridged and may not be in our lifetimes, but a certain amount of prospecting has been done and, though much more information is needed before the problems can be solved, there is no reason to regard them as insoluble. Certainly not inherently so.

It is understandable that J. D. Bernal—with his strong views on co-operative science—should emphasise the importance of combined work towards elucidation. "It should be clear by now," he writes, "that no one person is likely to arrive at any comprehensive solution. That can only be reached by a combined operation which will involve almost every science short of psychology." Professor Bernal, too, draws a parallel between the present controversy and that of 150 years ago culminating in the triumph of the Darwinian concept. He is obviously optimistic about the outcome of the dispute but not, I think, unduly so. "The great problem before us is the unravelling step by step of the history of the substances, structures and processes that make up present-day life. Though this may take decades or centuries, each stage, however tentatively established, marks a net gain in understanding and adds significance to the biology of organisms living to-day."

That does not sound over-optimistic to me, but if Professor Bernal should be thought to err in this direction, there is a contribution by N. W. Pirie which will act as a corrective. And for good measure there is a lively little altercation between these two writers. Professor Pirie, anxious to further linguistic clarity, has elsewhere advocated the adoption of two new words: *Biopoesis*, which he describes as "the creation of something, that some people might wish to call living, from non-living material," and *Eobiont* for "the thing created." He also indicates the difficulty of defining "life" and accuses physicists like Professor Bernal of over-simplifying biological problems. "It was my contention, and I stick to it," he writes, "that we have as yet no basis for confidence about the probiotic state." Until we reach some unanimity on the question of the origin of the earth and its primitive atmosphere "we can only speculate about the types of molecule that would have been present in the surface layers."

The two other writers, J. B. S. Haldane and J. W. S. Pringle, have different ideas on evolution. Following the dialectical materialist tradition with its conception of "leaps" in natural processes, Professor Haldane suggests that life may have originated "as a result of a very 'improbable' event, which, however, was almost certain to happen given sufficient time, and sufficient matter of suitable composition in a suitable state." For Mr. Pringle, on the other hand, the process is much more gradual. As he conceives it, "The organism as a coherent machine thus emerges from a diffuse system of chemical reactivity and its properties are added step by step by a process akin to natural selection." "Life," he concludes, "truly evolves from chaos with no moment of special creation to identify its birth."

All four contributors, then, have their differences and, furthermore, they vent them. But there is some effort towards correlation, not only in the brief Introduction by the editors (M. L. Johnson, Michael Abercrombie and G. E. Fogg) but notably also in Professor Haldane's contribution, where he writes: "I suggest, then, that in the pre-Cambrian waters of the earth, whether in the depths of the ocean as Pringle suggests, in layers adsorbed on clay, as Bernal thinks, in soil water, or in layers adsorbed at air-water interfaces (Haldane, 1929), there were enough metastable* molecules (of which glucose will serve as an example) and molecules available for growth (of which phosphate ions will serve as an example) to allow catalytically active molecules to grow, split, and increase their number." And again: "It is at least conceivable that Oparin, Bernal, Pirie, Pringle, and Haldane are all correct, as far as they go. Posterity may decide whether a single molecule of the kind suggested could legitimately be called living, or whether this term would be better reserved for a number of such molecules enclosed in a membrane."

Professor Haldane has something to say about adenosine-triphosphoric acid (ATP), the most lifelike molecule known to us at the present time, and does not agree with some later writers who frowned upon his 1929 suggestion that the molecular viruses existing to-day can be regarded as in any way resembling the first living or subvital units. "This suggestion may be correct," he remarks, "even if in fact the modern viruses are simpler than their immediate ancestors." Haldane also speculates intriguingly on the evidence that might be accumulated as a result of astronautics in the future.

Professor Bernal points out that progress in geochemistry and biochemistry relevant to the problem of the origin of life has been considerable in recent months and, whilst concentrating on the former aspect, he urges that: "The attack on the unknown needs to be pressed from both ends—geochemical and biological—and from the middle as well, wherever indeed we can secure an observational or experimental foothold." "The full area of ignorance is not mapped," he continues, "We are at present only exploring its fringes." "At the same time new methods and new ideas are emerging at an ever-increasing rate which sooner or later will find means of solving what is ultimately a finite problem."

The reader has the feeling of sharing a remarkable experience. These four contributions (and a fifth on *Organisms as Physico-Chemical Machines* by Drs. H. G. Bray and K. White) aim to put before him some of the

* "A metastable molecule means one which can liberate free energy by a transformation, but is stable enough to last a long time unless it is activated by heat, radiation, or union with a catalyst."—(Haldane).

available knowledge relating to the evolution of organic from inorganic matter. And he is treated as an adult. There is a refreshing absence of the "popular" and hopelessly inaccurate style employed notoriously by the late Professors Eddington and Jeans, but at the same time efforts are made to reach the genuinely-interested layman. I think, and hope, that these will prove successful.

The Zig-Zagging Sun

By Dr. E. L. DWIGHT TURNER

IN World War II, Hitler, backed by the might of a Nazified Europe, attacked Soviet Russia. Catholics were then urged to renew their devotions to Our Lady of Fatima. The Vatican felt sure that Russia would be defeated, and the Catholic world hoped so. We all know that Russia was victorious, marched into Berlin, followed by the downfall and death of Hitler.

Fatima, a desolate locality in Portugal, became a shrine when, in 1917, the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared repeatedly, with a momentous message, to three illiterate children. "After a few moments of brilliant sunshine, the sun became pale, three times it turned speedily on itself like a Catherine-wheel, sending forth rays of the fairest colours of the rainbow. At the end of these convulsive revolutions it seemed to jump out of its orbit and come towards the people in a zigzag course, stopped, and returned again to its normal position." This, it was said, was seen by a large group near the children, and "lasted 12 minutes."

It was reported that the Virgin Mary was very specific about what have motivated her to appear and then to make the sun "jump out of its orbit." She had done it (so it is stated) to induce the Pope to bring about "the consecration of the world" to the "immaculate heart"—to be followed by "the consecration of Russia." In the end, the Virgin promised, the Catholic Church will triumph, and "the Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me."

Yet, I have seen a photograph of Fulton Sheen "venerating" (with his hands in the position of prayer) a replica of a statue of "Our Lady of Fatima," which replica was taken on a tour of these United States of America.

Following is an official statement of the Catholic Church. On the afternoon of October 30, 1950, at 4 p.m., "the Holy Father turned his gaze from the Vatican gardens to the sun, and there was renewed for his eyes the prodigy of the Valley of Fatima." ". . . He was able to witness the life of the sun under the hand of Mary. The sun agitated, all convulsed, transformed into a picture of life; in a spectacle of celestial movements; in transmission of mute but eloquent messages to the Vicar of Christ." This occurred on three successive days, October 30, 31, and November 1, 1950.

The news of this miracle, with its "eloquent messages to the Vicar of Christ" direct from heaven, was solemnly announced on October 13, 1951, at a gathering of one million people convened at Fatima, Portugal, by a cardinal sent there by Pius XII.

Yet, masses of Catholics, the world over, profess to believe this downright nonsense!

OBITUARY

Thomas Gosling

We regret to report the death on May 26, at the age of 54, of the above-named member of the N.S.S., for a long period connected with the West Ham & District Branch. A secular service was conducted at his cremation on May 29 by the Society's General Secretary. Sympathy is extended to his widow and other members of his family.

Correspondence

THE QUEEN'S RETURN

SIR,—The one thing noticeable about the Queen's return is that her six months' absence has not made the slightest difference to the governance of Britain. This would suggest that the proposal of the President of Uruguay that the Presidency, as only representing a great waste of public time and money, should be abolished, might well be extended beyond the territories of Uruguay.—Yours, etc.,
C. H. NORMAN.

THE FREETHINKER AND THE N.S.S.

SIR,—With the union of *The Freethinker* and the N.S.S., Freethought now presents a united front to its enemy, supernaturalism. The importance of this decision to Freethinkers generally and to members of the N.S.S. in particular cannot be overstated.

It is imperative to maintain a position of strength, for as Chapman Cohen has said, if strength is not respected, weakness certainly will not be. It is also necessary to speak out strongly and unequivocally. The reason for this may be seen when we learn that men like James Frazer and Charles Darwin are quoted by religionists as being in favour of some aspects of religion. Darwin regretted the use of the word "creator," but it has been used against him in spite of his written repudiation.

The leaders of Freethought have proved by the decision to unite *The Freethinker* and the N.S.S., that they are aware of the importance of union and consolidation. They have also replied adequately to those who ask for changes in *The Freethinker*. Those who wish to be numbered among the Freethinkers must be prepared for ostracism and calumny.

Let us by this union make it known that we are prepared to speak out plainly and strongly against hypocrisy, that, in short, the Freethought outlook means what it says, and also means something to us.—Yours, etc.,
G. DICKINSON.

DRAMATIC CRITICISM

SIR,—I often agree with Peter Cotes, but not about dramatic reviews; he endures it even when in disagreement. I do not agree in any case. To me it is a waste of good space, urgently needed for better purposes. We should remember *The Freethinker* has a special job, and might perish if it attempted the impossible.

With reference to what Bradlaugh said, I heard him, and wish I could do so again now. The Hall of Science was near St. Luke's, in Old Street, E.C.—Yours, etc.,
J. LEROI.

SCIENCE FRONT

Anthropology

Great progress has been made recently in the unravelling of man's ancestry, especially through the labours of Dr. Robert Broom of South Africa. Dr. Broom died recently but his good work has been continued by his assistant, Mr. J. T. Robinson, who has himself made finds of *Telanthropus* of outstanding importance.

Telanthropus appears to bridge the gap that exists between recent remains of true men (cuhominids) and the South African "ape-men" or Australopithecines. Numerous discoveries by Broom, Dart, and Robinson have elucidated the characters of the latter or "prehominids." What is important is that it is becoming clear from this work in South Africa that no missing link is likely to connect this series with the pongids—or the group that includes the higher apes, the gorillas, chimpanzees and so on. Similarly, the Old World and the New World monkeys seem too unlinked. All these are separate groups now considered to have evolved independently from the "pro-simians," the group that contains the lemurs and the tarsiers. The last-named seem to have had their origin in an insectivore stock, but the common ancestor of monkeys, apes, and anatomically early man must all be sought in the base of the pro-simian stock, no nearer than that.

The general position therefore seems to be that while the known intermediate stages are many, complete chains of evidence connecting groups do not as yet exist. Does this invalidate the general argument? Is Watling Street a fabrication because we know only sections of it and its general direction?

Only those who know the tremendous hazards that affect fossilisation, the survival of fossils, and above all the finding of fossils by persons who know how to interpret them, can realise how great are the revelations that have been made and how inescapable is the verdict that all life is a continuum and that Evolution is the name of its pathway.—From *The Rationalist*.

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