

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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AT the close of the last century, when I was secretary of the Leicester Secular Society, a French military writer asked me to collaborate with him in writing a small work with the title *Can We Disarm?* I wrote the book; and so widespread was our belief at the time that Europe held a great Congress on it at the Hague. It endorsed our opinion that the time had come when Europe could, and must, close the long and bloody chapter of warfare. And we have since then fought the two most terrible wars in history, and we are preparing for a war which would certainly not end war, but might end us. How Mars, or his successor Jahveh, must have smiled!

Our Freethought cause had in the second half of the last century shared the general progress of science and social justice, yet in 1900 no Freethinker talked of disarming. In 1903, the greatest Pope of modern times, Leo XIII, died broken-hearted as he looked out upon the failure of his work; for I was able to write a work in which I proved that his Church had lost 50,000,000 members in 50 years. In 1904 I sat with a small group of distinguished European scientists on the platform in the old Jesuit College at Rome at our International Congress—the Roman municipal government had welcomed us and put this at our disposal—and next day 10,000 of us marched to the breach which the Piedmontese and Garibaldian troops had made in the Papal wall of Rome. In 1905 I marched with 100,000 European Freethinkers through the streets of Paris and past the shrine that crowns Montmartre, singing songs that were positively blasphemous. I translated Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, and it sold, in twenty languages, over a million copies. All Churches bemoaned heavy losses. Yet when, a few years later, my too amiable friend F. J. Gould preached that it was time for Rationalism to disarm I emphatically opposed him, and in the next ten years I carried the gospel from coast to coast in Canada and the States, from Brisbane to Perth in Australia, from Auckland to Invercargill in New Zealand. I am assured on high Spiritualist authority that I am the reincarnation of St. Paul.

Now I am told that now the time has really come to disarm, and I look round for the evidence. I find the whole Press boasting that an American hot-gospeller has got in London a larger audience than was ever drawn by men of his type in America, the classic land of these charlatans. I went once with Ingersoll's charming grand-daughter to hear "Billy" Sunday in New York and study his trickery, so Graham's success did not impress me; but it did the public; especially when the head of the austere Church of England stood beside the adventurer. In the same issue of the papers I read that the Roman Church had had the audacity to declare that that glorified peasant Pius X, the man who made honest scholarship in the Catholic Church impossible by damning Modernism, was a saint; which does not mean, as the Press represented, that he was merely an exceptionally good man but that he had, after his death, wrought at least three literal miracles, supernatural cures,

in Rome. It was an insult to the intelligence of the modern world, and the Press conveyed it with respect.

Science, once our most powerful ally, is silent. History is obsequious. Labour, which at the beginning of the century demanded at every Annual Congress that religious lessons should cease in our schools, now rejoices in the patronage of bishops. Our archbishops blandly assure us, and the Press reproduces the golden words, that the increase of crime and juvenile delinquency, which were three times as rife in the pious old days (even 100 years ago), is due to the decay of religion; and no one retorts, or is allowed by Press or publishers to retort, with so easily verifiable a

fact as that America, which has the largest proportion of churchgoers among the leading nations, has the worst record of crime and corruption, while England, with the smallest proportion of churchgoers, has the finest record in the reduction of crime and corruption. I have just published, through the United Secularists of America, a book in which I examine the official criminal statistics of 20 countries. They consistently show, whenever they give clues or formal statements, that Catholics have the worst record, Protestants the next, and Secularists or "no-religion" folk the best. We could equally vindicate the social record of Secularism along other lines.

I have always refrained from mixing party-politics and Freethought, but part from the cinema, radio, and TV, a full explanation of the recent world-change brings us to the fringe of the political world. Since 1864, when Pius IX drastically condemned Liberalism, Liberals had been the deadly enemies of Rome, especially as, outside Britain and America, their Freemasonry was definitely atheistic. And since about 1830 Liberals have in most countries of Europe and America dropped their hostility and now march under the papal banner with its new and hypocritical devices of "Popular Republican Movement," "People's Party," "Christian Democracy," and so on. This is the main explanation of the recovery of power of the Roman Church.

A Catholic paper recently boasted that the Church now rules in all the countries of Western Europe from Holland and Italy; and he could have added Latin America. Before 1930, at least since 1875, there was hardly a Catholic statesman in the world. And this abandonment of Freethought under an economic threat goes far to explain the return to insolence in every country. The Churches have not gained numerical strength, and religion is more discredited than ever in the light of science and history.

Why should we bother, many ask? We might before long have grave reason to bother. During the war the American Government, the stern guardian of freedom and democracy, suppressed the works of H. G. Wells and myself, under Catholic pressure, in the name of national unity. In Victoria the priests actually got a motion in the House, with strong support, to bring criticism of their

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Can We Disarm ?

—By Joseph McCabe—

Church under the law against obscene literature. In any case, what man who looks round upon a world in which hundreds of thousands of priests keep a half or even a quarter of the race mumbling and acting upon a creed that is, in essence, a piece of ancient folk-lore, does not feel a healthy impulse to criticise, and an elementary right to publish his criticisms? And if, in addition, he knows that real progress depends upon mental sanity and honesty, that it is in large part superstition that has kept the race

so long in the swamps of war, poverty and the other evils. he feels an urge, as well as a right, to criticise. In giving folk, as we do, scientific and historical truth instead of it we are far more constructive than most of the men who mutter that we are "merely destructive."

[*The Freethinker* gives a hearty welcome to its pages to that veteran Secularist, Joseph McCabe, whose books and articles on Freethought are known throughout the world. We are happy to announce that Mr. McCabe has promised us further contributions.]

## The Opium of the People

By F. A. RIDLEY

PERHAPS the most famous of modern definitions of religion is that of Karl Marx—often erroneously ascribed to Lenin—"Religion is the opium of the people." Actually, the famous phrase is only part of the original definition; in full, it ran: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the soul of soulless conditions, the opium of the people." No doubt the phrase owes its fame to its epigrammatic terseness, though, actually, it was not entirely original, either in thought or in expression. Its fundamental thought had already been anticipated by that shrewd bourgeois politician Napoleon. "I regard religion not as the mystery of the Incarnation, but as the mystery of the social order," whilst the "Christian Socialist," Charles Kingsley, had actually used the word "opium" to describe the use of religion by the ruthless exploiters of the early Victorian era. But neither phrase lends itself readily to quotation as does the famous aphorism of Marx.

### The Two Phases of Religion

Historically, as the present writer has sought to indicate elsewhere, religion has passed through two sequential phases, which may be described generically as the natural and social phases of religion. In the first of these, of that which appertains to the early pre-civilised phases, of human evolution, religion was motivated by fear and by ignorance of the then unknown forces of *nature*. As is well known, the pagan rites and beliefs of pre-civilised peoples centre around the personification and propitiation of the forces of nature; its gods are either the personification of the elemental forces of nature, or else the deified ghosts of primitive leaders, under whose effective guidance, man in tribal society solved "the struggle for existence." This primitive phase of prostration before *natural* forces tends to give way, as more advanced social conditions supervene, to religions of a predominantly *social* type, in particular, to the cosmopolitan religions which have grown up with the evolution of civilisation and of its more complicated *social struggles* and disharmonies.

### "Natural" and "Social" Religions

The above religious types are largely distinct. The religions of "nature" adore and fear her manifestations, their major aim is to adore and to propitiate the blind external forces of the manifest Universe. It is such natural phenomena as hunger, thirst, earthquakes, and inundations before which the man of the pre-scientific era stood in awe, and against which and their like, he needed celestial protection. In civilised communities, however, such natural forces played a very minor role. Their influence is negligible or even non-existent. What the citizens of civilised society have reason to fear, are disasters of quite another kind; man-made *socially* caused disasters; war, exploitation, poverty, unemployment, evils which are not *inherent* in nature but, rather, are the *social* effect of man-made institutions. One can relevantly add that, to-day, the degradation of atomic science for military purposes has powerfully reinforced this *social* type of religion.

### The Role of Fraud in Religion

*Primitive* religion did not *originate* in social fraud, but rather in sheer ignorance and misunderstanding of the blind forces of nature. Nor was religion always necessarily reactionary in pre-scientific society. Contrarily in the absence of positive *knowledge*, social myths based on animistic guesswork often discharged a *socially* progressive function in holding society together. It is not an accident that all the earliest civilisations were dominated by priestly castes, and it is indisputable that such early civilisations were progressive *within their own terms of reference*. However, from the moment that more advanced societies developed, founded upon *positive* knowledge, religion began to play a *consciously* reactionary role. In particular, religion acquired one entirely new characteristic, one entirely unknown in primitive pagan cults of, what we have termed above, the initial phase of *natural* religion. Thereafter, religion became a *conscious* instrument of reactionary *social* classes and interests; the long association between conscious fraud and religious beliefs and institutions had begun!

### "Sly and Crafty Men"

An ancient Greek writer, one Critias, described religion as the creation of "sly and crafty men" who *used* religion to promote their own interest. A little later, Plato, who may almost be described as the founder of religious metaphysics, and whose influence, in particular, on later Christian Theology, could hardly be over-rated, habitually equated religion with *political* reaction. Somewhat later, the Greek philosophical historian, Polybius, went out of his way to praise the Roman Republic for the skill with which it consciously used religion to promote its *own* political interests. Both Plato and Polybius, incidentally, were conservative aristocrats, bitterly opposed to the radical and democratic movements of their times. Here we have "the opium of the people" used in its authentic Marxist sense!

### Christian "Opium"

Very little is known about the origins and early history of Christianity. But that little seems to show quite clearly that Christianity *began* amongst the Jewish peasantry, and subsequently spread to the slaves and "poor whites" of the Roman Empire. Its transformation into the official religion of the great servile empire entirely destroyed its original proletarian character. It was undoubtedly a very clever move on the part of the "First Christian Emperor," Constantine. There seems little doubt that it was a *deliberate* political move, rather than a sincere act of *religious* conversion. If so, it was certainly one of the most successful frauds on record.—(cf. Jakob Burchkhardt *The Age of Constantine the Great*.)

### The Making of a New Religion

In a brilliant satirical novel, to which we have drawn attention before in this journal, *The Island Beyond Japan*,

the author, Mr. John Paris, has drawn a vivid fictional picture of the deliberate creation by the priestly caste of a new religious cult. Nor will readers of *Erewhon Revisited* soon forget Samuel Butler's caustic references to the fraudulent "Sunchild Evidence Society"—a name which has a familiar ring!—and its reverend chiefs, Prof. Hankey and Prof. Pankey. However, "Truth is stranger than fiction." In his pamphlet, *The Making of a New Religion*, Prof. B. H. Chamberlain has described the deliberate manufacture of the Japanese cult of Shinto by the modern Japanese militarists, "the religion of Imperialism," as one of them termed the creed of emperor-worship. The influence of fraud on religion does not explain *everything*, but it explains quite a lot!

**A Postscript on "Opium"**

We may relevantly cite a quotation that recently appeared in our contemporary, *The News of the World* (May 30, 1954):—

"The dinner given in Billy Graham's honour the other night by Lord Luke, the company director who was associated with the crusade, was 'a full evening dress and decorations affair.' It proved that society had acknowledged the success of the missionary from America."

Has "Society"—with a capital S!—been "converted"? We doubt it! We do not notice any rush from Mayfair to obey the evangelical precept, to "sell all thou hast and give to the poor"! Can it be that Mr. Billy Graham is also a purveyor of "opium"?

## The Christian Hell

By GEORGE ROSS

BERTRAND RUSSELL wrote:—"There is one very serious defect, to my mind, in Christ's moral character, and that is that He believed in hell. I do not myself feel that any person who is profoundly humane can believe in everlasting punishment." To this commendable confession "Churchman" comments:—"This is highly debatable, but evidently Bertrand Russell—evidently not in touch with the more representative contributions of modern theology—evidently does not know what Christ meant by 'hell.' When Christ spoke of 'Gehenna'—the word translated 'hell' in our New Testament—He was simply setting forth the certainty of retribution. Gehenna was the rubbish-heap outside the walls of Jerusalem. . . . Christ certainly never preached a material hell like that of Dante and the medieval theologians. Bertrand Russell would be well advised to read Canon Dearmer's book, "The Legend of Hell," in which it is maintained that Jesus did not believe in hell at all."

Here is confusion of claim in "highly debatable" and in "Christ certainly," and many readers might take it that the Christian hell was really of medieval origin or of medieval misinterpretation, all Christians now agreeing with Dr. Dearmer who says that the whole conception of hell is "wicked, shocking, and monstrous." Let us see.

Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner in her revealing book, *The Christian Hell* (1913), writes:—"Although a hell of punishment for sinners has been regarded as so essential a part of Christianity that Justin Martyr declared that if there was no hell there was no God, and Chrysostom said that it is because God is good that he has prepared a hell, nevertheless the Christian hell is in no sense an original conception. It is merely an intensification of the later classic hell, which was itself a graft of Eastern origin. We find the earliest traces of the idea in the account of the descent of Ishtar, the Babylonian Venus, into the land of No-return, in search of her lover Tammuz" (p. 31). The Jews and Christians took over their celestial and infernal

systems from the Babylonians and Persians, whose Mithraism was, so "Catholic Encyclopædia," II, 154-156, says, "the highest religious result to which human reason unaided by revelation can attain." "The pre-Hebraic origins of the belief in angels, immortality, heaven and hell, and the Persian derivation of the Jewish Seven Archangels" are mentioned in J. M. Robertson's "Freethought in XIXth Century" (p. 129). Mrs. Bonner writes:—"Many who reject the gross barbarism and brutality of the Old Testament accept the New with uncton. Nevertheless, the appalling doctrine of eternal punishment which is the keystone to the New Testament was unknown to the earlier Hebrews" (p. 4). "The three points in which Christianity thus stands out from other religions are (1) the doctrine of the absolute eternity of punishment, (2) the joy felt by the blessed at the sight of the torments of the damned, and (3) the damnation of infants" (p. 36). Mrs. Bonner quotes Cicero (nearly 2,000 years ago), "What old woman is so stupid now as to tremble at those tales of hell which were once so firmly believed in?" (p. IX); and J. M. Robertson refers to the "intensification of that fear of a future hell which Christianity had evolved from the slighter superstitions of pagan antiquity, and which, with other spiritual terrors, Lucretius had declared to have been conquered for instructed men by Epicurus" (p. 9). Yes, "instructed men," for the Church, like the Rev. J. Francis in 1839, regards a firm belief in hell as a certain safeguard against political agitation, and as a priestly incentive to morality. Dr. Thomas Burnet (1635-1715) confined his disbelief in eternal hell punishment to his Latin discourse, deeming it of evil design and to bad purpose to translate to, or tell, the common people the truth as they would then run into vice, not being then restrained by fear of punishment. Against Archdeacon Farrar's repudiation of everlasting punishment, Dr. E. B. Pusey (1800-1882), Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, wrote a reply, in which book he exhaustively and conclusively proved that from the first century onwards everlasting punishment had been a part of Christian belief and teaching." (Bonner, p. 8).

(To be concluded)

## The Listener

O, brother Grief, to-night I take your arm,  
 Reveal my kinship, rid my hired face  
 Of all its maskings. Here where thieving winds  
 Beg at the dark's resounding portico  
 I break the last link from my fettered state  
 And stand as I am made with stealth all gone,  
 Lone in the listening bowl that is the night,  
 Exile from sleep's still empire, I can hear  
 The snowflakes fall upon the farthest hills,  
 The stirring of the wings where eagles are,  
 The footsteps at the end of all the world,  
 The whisper at the core of all dead men.  
 O let me rest! Seal up my every sense,  
 Unbridge my mind from grievous journeying  
 Beyond the rim of space and bordered time.  
 Let me but lie walled in a little room,  
 Blanketed, espoused, untuned, secure,  
 Hedged by the ticking hours in dull serene.  
 Frail moment, pass! The watch can never end;  
 Though sleep all lives yet must the listener wake  
 Weighing the atoms of all histories  
 On ebon pavements quit of human press.  
 This is the mark engraved beyond erase.  
 O brother Grief, to-night I take your arm.

JOHN O'HARE.

## This Believing World

The "aftermath" of the Rev. B. Graham's crusade appears to be by no means as favourable as one would have thought from the way our archbishops welcomed it. For example, it seems that, according to a correspondent in the *Dundee Courier*, "many Church of Scotland ministers oppose Dr. Graham, and disagree with his methods"; though, of course, this may be due not a little to professional jealousy. After all, no wee kirk minister could ever have attracted the huge crowds who came to Harringay.

One thing shocked some enthusiastic Christians, however. It was that Mr. Graham always opened his meetings with a singing of the American National Anthem—and the question is asked: "What would Americans think if a British evangelist went to America and opened every one of his meetings by singing the British National Anthem?" If he did, it would probably kill his meetings. In any case, this revival now must centre around one thing only, and that is, have the Christian Churches received a tremendous surge of Christian belief from millions of people who, before the ineffable Billy came to our shores, were either hostile or apathetic to Christianity?

In connection with the Billy Graham Revival, we have that stalwart anti-Evolutionist, the Rev. E. K. Victor Pearce, answering the letter written by the Rev. H. J. Blackmore we gave in these columns the other week. Mr. Pearce is quite sure about what he calls "the conversion of so many churchgoers." These Christians were all "converted" to Christianity by Mr. Graham. Before the revival, it appears they were just church-going Christians "without the assurance of forgiveness through the Cross." Mr. Graham "converted" them, and now they are in the throes of a "new birth." Could one utter bigger drivel? But where are the *real* converts—the complete unbelievers who found forgiveness in the Cross? Never mind about the converted true believers—what we would like to see are the thousands of converted *Atheists*. Where are they?

A memorial to Keats and Shelley was unveiled the other day in the presence of the American Ambassador and the Poet Laureate, John Masefield, in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. And after the two gentlemen had given their tributes, the Dean of Westminster offered up a prayer to Almighty God—though he must have known quite well that the two poets, if not exactly what we these days would call Atheists, were quite without any belief in religion. Shelley called himself an Atheist for many years, while Keats almost certainly contemptuously dismissed Christianity. Both poets were "pagans," and in this they followed the plays of Shakespeare.

The Bishop of Ottawa in Canada, the Rt. Rev. R. Jefferson, is one of those happy R.C. bishops who are absolutely optimistic about the future of religion. Not for him are the lamentations of Jeremiah—how, he fervently pointed out the other week, can anyone be pessimistic when religion could bring back such a lifelong Agnostic as the late Prof. Joad? This shattering proof of God's goodness—to say nothing of his existence—was followed by the Bishop's comment that "science had not been much help to religion," a pious, if mournful, observation which even our God-forsaken scientists might admit. Still, declared the Bishop, brightening up, "even in the scientific world God did not allow Himself without a witness." What gems of striking holiness regularly drop from the mouths of our men of God!

At a meeting of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychological Study, Sir Cyril Atkinson (an ex-judge) bemoaned the "retreat from Christianity" due to Darwinian scientists, but gloried in the way Spiritualism "gave the lie to those cock-sure know-alls." There would be no unbelievers anywhere if people would only accept the fact that "on death everybody passes to another life" and, whether or not that life is to be one of happiness or misery, depends on "whether Christ is or is not rejected." Of course. The dear old threat of Hell again. Even Spiritualists have to resort to the Everlasting Fires where there will always be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In the ultimate, Christians simply *must* bring in Hell, particularly if they are Christian Spiritualists.

"Anyone who laughs at the Bible" pontifically declared Canon Tardrew of Beverley the other day, is just as if he called himself "an ignorant fool." The Bible he added, "was more important than the hydrogen bomb." And Why? It was the world's best seller, and wherever the Bible was read the State became "really great." Poor old England. It is becoming less and less "really great" because nobody these days will read the Precious Word. Nobody appears to know what Nahum or Obadiah were talking about—and we doubt even if the worthy Canon could tell us off-hand like. But hasn't Billy Graham re-introduced the Bible into millions of British homes? Or has he?

## Chapman Cohen

The President of the New Zealand Rationalist Association (Mr. Arthur O'Halloran) sends the following tribute, from New Zealand Rationalists, to the memory of Chapman Cohen: "His writings," he says, "are well known in New Zealand, and we have some idea of the immense zeal and superb enthusiasm he displayed. We salute the memory of a great freethinker."

### NEW ZEALAND HOLDS A RATIONALIST CONFERENCE

Auckland, headquarters of the Rationalist movement in New Zealand, held a two-day Rationalist Conference on April 27 and 28. The Conference made Freethought history in New Zealand as no Rationalist Conference has previously been held in Auckland and there are no records of a conference elsewhere in the Dominion. There were three business sessions and the conference concluded with a Dinner at which seventy people sat down.

Among the toasts honoured were the following: "The International Freethought Movement," "Pioneers of Freethought," and "Madame Curie."

As was fitting, mention was made of a number of the great figures in the history of Freethought—particularly British Freethought—Bradlaugh, Paine, Carlile, Taylor, Foote, Cohen and others.

The present writer, who was chairman at the conference, reminded the gathering that Charles Southwell, who started the *Oracle of Reason*, and suffered imprisonment, lies buried in an Auckland cemetery (Southwell died in New Zealand in 1860).

The conference created much interest and it is hoped will be the forerunner of many more—possibly annual functions.

**THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)  
**MATERIALISM RESTATED.** Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

S. TRENT.—Thanks for amusing letter. It is a chastening thought that we may meet other Jesuses on space-travel, one Saviour for each inhabited planet!

Mr. and Mrs. E. H. GROUT.—Thanks for your appreciation of *The Freethinker's* "sound statement of policy."

CHARLES LAMBERT.—Thanks for information re Mimnermus.

WALTER CUNLIFFE (St. Helens).—Your nearest N.S.S. Branch is the Merseyside one. Write to the Branch Secretary, Mr. W. C. Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool, 8.

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

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.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon St., off New St.).—Sunday, June 27, 7 p.m. Brains Trust.

### OUTDOOR

J. Clayton's Lectures: Friday, June 25, 7-30 p.m., Worsthorne.

Saturday, June 26, 6-30 p.m., Blackpool (near Central Pier).

Sunday, June 27, 3 p.m., Blackpool (near Central Pier). Sunday, June 27, 7-30 p.m., Preston (Town Hall Square).

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.:

F. ROTHWELL.

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: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

West London Branch N.S.S.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEILL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

## McCabe joins *The Freethinker*

"This is no time for disarming. I'm fighting as vigorously as in the old days."

With these words Joseph McCabe has accepted an invitation to become a contributor to *The Freethinker*.

It is intended that his articles shall appear every few weeks. The first appears to-day on the front page.

We shall not insult older readers by telling them who McCabe is, but there are always new and young readers to consider. We quote a passage from the chronology of Secularism which has recently appeared in these columns:

"1897. Father Anthony, a young priest of 30, has come out of the monastery and pronounced himself a rationalist; as Joseph McCabe he embarks on a glorious career in the cause of Secularism and reform."

With pen and voice McCabe's contribution to free-thought and reformist literature and propaganda has been inestimable. His output has perhaps more than doubled that of any other single figure in the history of our movement, and to-day, he has just completed another work. And, as he happily retains his intellectual vigour, there are probably others "in the oven."

His powers undiminished, he is still the scourge of the papists and the hammer of the Vatican. Beyond this, his pen has travelled over a range of humanist culture seldom equalled in our century by writers inside or outside the secular movement.

"Give the people the facts and let them do their own thinking." That has been the general method of this most

brilliant and industrious of researchers. And he has frequently kept his own commentary on the facts to the bare minimum, with rare effect.

To-day we find him impatient with those who would compromise with the religious forces in society, or even throw up the sponge altogether. "Fighting as vigorously as in the old days!" Let this brave spirit find its response among the younger members of the movement, and we shall not fail.

One knows not where to look for his peer: he is the outstanding intellectual figure in the Freethought world to-day.

## Science, Religion and Reason

(Some critical comments on recent articles by Messrs. Morris and Ridley)

By G. H. TAYLOR

HE who interferes in a family quarrel usually ends up by getting belaboured by both parties. I take that risk in making these critical remarks on the issue which divides P. V. Morris and F. A. Ridley in their articles on secularism and science. Their bone of contention is really too good to allow them to share it exclusively. The dispute resolves itself into the following five items:—

(1) We can start on common ground, namely, the great danger that has come from a prostituted science. Mr. Ridley notes the effect on people's minds: "To-day science has changed its meaning in popular thought" and "it is becoming instinctively the atomic bomb," he says. Mr. Morris agrees, and wants secularists to combat this popular misconception. If scientific discoveries are used for base purposes, then, he says, "let us put the blame where it belongs, on the unscientific heritage of stupidity, credulity and fear that has come down to us through the ages. Let us not even unintentionally suggest that science is responsible."

And after all, how *can* an abstraction (science) be responsible? Responsibility pertains to men and women, not to an abstract noun. Even when the abstraction is reduced to its concretes (bombs, etc.) it is still absurd to ascribe responsibility to the instrument. To blame "science" for the misuse of science by politicians, is like blaming a knife because it has done murder.

Hence, when Mr. Ridley says "Science to-day can make or mar, save or destroy human progress," he is obviously making a false isolate of "science" and using it as an agent in his own right. He then proceeds to put it in the dock and try it for murder.

But how can the tool be accused of murder? How can the instrument do good or evil? Mr. Ridley is on safer ground when he talks of science being *misused* by society—and no one denies it.

(2) Mr. Ridley says "The scientist, as such, is no more infallible than the theologian. . . . To contrapose religion to science is merely to exchange one fallible guide for another." Mr. Ridley here institutes a comparison between scientists and theologians and seems to suggest they are equally unreliable. As a secularist I would say the scientist *is* more reliable than the theologian. The proof is that the scientist deals with given data, as against the theologian's ungiven data, and is therefore more likely to arrive at truth. (He is even more likely to improve human nature and so make atom bombs impossible.)

(3) "The antithesis to religion is not science, but man's critical reason, which is greater than either science or religion." (Ridley.) It is to be noted that here Mr. Ridley back-pedals on Chapman Cohen, who states that the antithesis to religion *is* science.

If I say, without prejudice, that Cohen was right and

Ridley wrong, I do not give it as a matter of opinion, but as a matter of sober anthropological fact. Science is the antithesis (the opposite). Science is to religion as knowledge is to ignorance; they are opposites exploring the same general territory. *Reason is common to both.* The difference is that religions were made by men *reasoning in the dark.* When primitive man created his gods he used his reasoning powers. I know of no satisfactory evidence that shows his reasoning powers were greatly inferior to ours. For him, Thunder means an angry noise, which implies an angry person, yielding belief in the god Thor. For him, too, the rushing mighty wind means the breath of a mighty being, the god of the wind (we speak to-day of a gust, or *ghost*, of wind). All this was perfectly fair reasoning inside the limitations of primitive ignorance, and it proves that reason itself is futile without knowledge as data. That knowledge comes with science. Reason can do its work properly only when it can get its teeth into facts. We see farther than primitive man, not because we are better reasoners, but because we stand on his shoulders. The great mass of accumulated knowledge that divides our age from his, means that our reasoning gives better results. In an unscientific age, with fear prevalent, reason produces religion. In an age of science it produces secularism.

Take away the great structure of science and soon you would find reason again operating in the darkness and ignorance that produces gods and ghosts. Therefore, as Draper said, as Cohen said, as others have said, science is the antithesis, Mr. Ridley notwithstanding. Mr. Ridley's own knowledge of science may be assessed from his peculiar remark about light-years some time ago.

(4) Mr. Ridley described this as the first scientific civilisation. He later defends this by showing that previous ages were *not* scientific. His battering ram here falls harmless on vacuity; Mr. Morris is just not there to receive the blow, for in fact he challenged the word "scientific," not the word "first." He did not dispute that it was the first age of its kind. To misunderstand an opponent is forgiveable. To accuse him (in the middle of misunderstanding him) of lack of learning, is perhaps less excusable. And, after all, it is not every writer who cares to make a parade of his scholarship within the confines of a short article!

(5) "Religion has in certain epochs of the world's history discharged a highly progressive role." (Ridley.)

Not so. What has happened is that priests have *taken charge* of secular advancement in order to keep it tied to their religion and so keep it in check.

Moreover, if religion has played a progressive part in the past, this implies that under similar conditions it could do so again in the future. Is that the sort of belief to be held by a body of secularists engaged in assailing religion as the "historic enemy of progress"?

#### BEAUTIFUL BISHOPS

Beauty, real beauty, ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are! Except, of course, in the Church. But then in the Church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was eighteen, and as a natural consequence he always looks delightful. —OSCAR WILDE (*Picture of Dorian Gray*).

—NEXT WEEK—

INSTEAD OF AN ARTICLE  
By BAYARD SIMMONS

## A Study in Propaganda

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

SIR DAVID MAXWELL FYFE is reputed to have sacrificed a large income at the Bar in order to serve his country as Home Secretary. His self-denial in this respect is on a par with that of the Reverend Billy Graham, whose abnegation of huge sums awaiting him as a business organiser and sound and television broadcaster has been suitably advertised by the latter's publicity department. Sir David's legal training also resembles Billy Graham's evangelical one in that it was not directed to arousing in him a passionate love of the truth. A barrister's duty, quite rightly, is to his client, and provided that both parties to an argument are adequately represented by counsel, and there is an impartial judge presiding, a biased case put forward by either side, with the glossing of awkward facts and the appeal to prejudice rather than to reason, is not likely to prevent the truth from coming out.

When, however, the Home Secretary speaks for Civil Defence, for which his department is responsible, to an audience of C.D. personnel, as he did at Bristol recently, there are no safeguards to ensure that truth and logic shall be paramount. One side has all the say, and nobody is briefed to speak for the other. Thus Sir David had no difficulty in establishing the soundness of the Government's policy on the hydrogen bomb. The *Daily Telegraph* reports that he told his audience that there were three courses that could be adopted to meet the new situation following the latest American hydrogen bomb tests:—

(1) We could declare our refusal to take part in developing the bomb and persuade our allies to adopt the same view. This would leave its development to Russia and it would only be a matter of time before we became slaves of a slave State.

(2) We could decide on a policy of deterrence. In plain terms, we must have better bombs than any possible aggressors. This would be a heart-breaking method and could only be allowed to endure until a better one was devised.

(3) We could adopt an agreed scheme for limitation of armaments. The Government was committed to this method, but there had to be a system to enforce compliance to make it effective.

It should be plain to half an eye that the Home Secretary has not here outlined three possible courses at all. Instead he has spoken to his brief in favour of number (2) only. By the final sentences of numbers (1) and (3) he has ruled these courses out as disastrous and untimely respectively; and he has tried to reconcile us to number (2) by a display of crocodile tears; while making no mention of two other obvious courses which we can call (1a) and (3a):—

(1a) We could renounce all research into atomic warfare, and (3a) we could start to reduce our armaments; in both cases leaving alleged friends and foes to follow us or not as they pleased.

It is interesting to speculate on what Sir David might have said if he had been briefed against the Government, instead of being its representative. He would first have exposed the unfairness of knocking down courses (1) and (3) and building up (2) in the process of stating them for consideration. Then, as a good barrister, he would have knocked down course (2) and built up (1a) and (3a) by his own addenda in the following fashion:—

"(2) Can only alarm and exasperate Russia, intensifying the feverish efforts there to build up increasingly dangerous stocks of modern weapons."

"(1a) Will bring about an immediate slackening of tension in Russia so that it will only be a matter of time

before that State ceases to be a threat to the peace of the world."

"(3a) Will be greeted first with amazement and then gradually with admiration by peace-hungry people everywhere, and will cut the ground from under the feet of any Government with aggressive intentions that seeks to stir up warlike feelings among its nationals."

As spokesman for a Government representing on the one hand the fears, suspicions, ignorance and intolerance bred by a narrow, superstitious nationalism, and on the other the interests of those who seek to profit by such human weakness, the Home Secretary could not put the position before his hearers as fully and fairly as this. His task was to discredit the Coventry City Councillors who had abandoned Civil Defence, and it appears that he could not do this without the sort of special pleading in which he is reputed to be an expert.

It is not the purpose of this article to argue the merits of the various courses that have been suggested herein, but to throw some light on tricks of presentation whereby an uncritical audience can be made to accept a policy as the only one possible, in the erroneous belief that all alternatives have been fully and fairly considered. How is it that adult and, in some respects, intelligent people can be put upon in this way? Surely the answer lies in the authoritarian principle that is applied throughout the education of the young the world over. This principle finds its original sanction in the realm of dogmatic religion. Its current application to international relations, political programmes and moral questions underlines the necessity of eradicating from society the religious virus that plays a large part in making a majority of the people easy game for warmongers, party politicians and quacks in a wide variety of fields.

## Christianity's Debt to Zoroaster

By HOWARD McCONNELL

JUST east of the fertile Mesopotamian valley there now lies the arid remains of a once fruitful and rich Empire. For this is the site of Ancient Persia which, in its lavish Oriental magnificence rivalled the most luxurious states of ancient times. Like most ancient nations it was a country of marked contrasts; through the streets of its cities hordes of ravenous beggars brushed elbows with fantastically rich merchants and aristocrats; an efflorescence of great art and architecture pointed up the lamentable lack of philosophy and literature. It is strangely pitiable to ponder to-day, after thousands of years, at how little, culturally, modern Iran has changed from its ancient fatherland. Having been crushed and exploited throughout its long history by tyrants domestic and foreign, it is only now partially throwing off its chains.

And yet the impress on the civilisation of the west of the distinctive Persian religion, Zoroastrianism, will undoubtedly greatly outlive that speedily dying religion itself. There are few people to-day who realise the great obligation of the three basically semitic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism to this unique ancient faith the influence of which has been incalculable on our culture. When Milton enriched English literature with his great epic, *Paradise Lost*, and his Italian predecessor penned the immortal lines of the *Divine Comedy*, they were both making use of the Zoroastrian conception of Hell bequeathed to Christianity by its parent religion Judaism at the beginning of the present era.

The ancient Hebrews, that imaginative and poetic race of wandering tribesmen, had a very gloomy view of the

after-life when such an after-life, indeed, they postulated at all! This is readily apparent when we find in the book of *Ecclesiastes* such sentiments as the following:—

"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." (*Ecclesiastes* iii, 19-20.)

The Hebrew word Sheol, "the place of departed spirits," was, like the Greek Hades, the common destination of those who had been in life virtuous, vicious and indifferent. The early Jews had no Heaven or Hell, properly speaking, but only this dismal, sombre and uninviting common receptacle of eternal gloom. Why, then, it may justly be asked, were they such a fiercely ethical people? What was the point of their rigid adherence to the Ten Commandments and the Law if it was not to gain salvation? The answer is simply that they associated their *earthly* well-being with their conduct; Jahweh would be propitiated by sacrifices and the obedience of his precepts, while disobedience would incur divine wrath and earthly punishment. Thus Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden for eating the forbidden fruit, and for disobedience of Moses the Children of Israel were made to wander about for forty years in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land. It was only after the Babylonian Captivity that Hebrew eschatology (that branch of theology dealing with the after-life) adopted the more sophisticated guise in which it is seen in modern Christianity.

The life and works of the great prophet Zoroaster are shrouded in the mists of remote antiquity; he lived in Persia some time between 1000 and 600 B.C. and elaborated a peculiar form of dualistic monotheism when the Hebrews were still sacrificing to Baal and a host of other eastern divinities. (See *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, by Grant Allen, and *The Religion of the Semites*, by Prof. Robertson Smith.) The lofty, spiritual conception of God was made manifest in Zoroastrianism in the person of Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Light, while his infernal rival, the ancestor of Satan, was Angra Mainyu, the Prince of Darkness. Man, according to Zoroaster, was gifted with free will, and this earth was a testing ground for eternity. Man, by leading a life of ascetic morality, could aid the forces of good (Ahura Mazda) to triumph over those of evil (Angra Mainyu), or if he was wicked he might throw in his lot with the devil.

At any rate, after death there would be a last judgment at which the evil and good deeds of everyone would be weighed and according to which outbalanced the other the fate of the person was decided. In one case he received excruciating torment in Hell; in the other, the inexpressible happiness in Heaven. This exactly duplicates the teaching of Christianity and it is most peculiar to note that even in the minor detail of the individual possessing a guardian angel the parallelism continues.

This all may be so, but is there any reason to suppose that the Jews actually did receive their doctrine on the after-life from these ancient Persians? The circumstantial evidence amounts almost to a certainty!

Before 586 B.C., when King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Israel in war and carried off the Flower of Jewry to Babylon, the belief in "Sheol," described above, was universally accepted. The Jews, furthermore, regarded Jahweh more or less as merely the supreme deity of a pantheon of Oriental divinities which included, amongst others, Baal and Ashtaroth. High authorities such as the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, and even many pseudo-orthodox modernist clergymen, unreservedly admit this. These latter contend that the ancient belief was merely a seed which has now bloomed into a flower. As if time alone could

transmogrify the false into the true! From the primitive religious mentality that they carried into Babylon, a seething pot of diverse nations and religions, we detect a profound change when compared with what they brought out a century later on their release from the captivity.

For they brought back to Palestine all those Zoroastrian ideas Heaven and Hell, the last judgment, guardian angels and a pure and elevated monotheism—which they came in contact with in Babylon. Instead of sending missionaries to convert the small remnant of this once huge religious group, we should send a delegation to thank them for their inestimably important contribution to our Holy Religion!

—(From *The Liberal*.)

## New Zealand Letter

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN,

President, New Zealand Rationalist Association (Inc.)

RECENTLY the Dominion was visited by the Rev. "Father" Peyton, a cleric who has made something of a reputation in crusading for a return to family-prayer—particularly of the "Rosary" pattern. His Mission was under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, but in addition it received the active support of the mayors of various New Zealand cities, and the Press of the Dominion extended favourable and sympathetic publicity. Indeed, editorial writers set themselves the task of writing small sermons in praise of prayer and of the estimable task undertaken by the Rev. "Father."

Father Peyton, whilst in New Zealand, made it clear that non-Catholics would be cordially welcomed as well as members of the "one true Church." How many "heretics" went along to his meetings we shall never know, but certainly a bold bid was made by medium of radio, press, bands, receptions, etc. The visiting cleric was fortunate in everything but the weather, which was frequently inclement and boisterous, and as the meetings were outdoor events, "Communion with God" must have been at times distinctly uncomfortable.

However, Father Peyton drew crowds—of that there is no doubt. Whether they reached the totals given out by the daily press we cannot say, but *The Nation*, a New Zealand journal, "devoted to Protestantism and loyalty," had this to say on the subject. "The proclivity of the Roman Catholic Church officials to see double when counting heads is well known. More sober realists estimated the attendances at less than half the published counts. The photographs published of the crowds in the Basin Reserve (Wellington) ridicule the figure of 20,000."

If *The Nation* is correct in its statement, here is good support for Joseph McCabe, who has on a number of occasions drawn attention to Rome's habit of magnifying the number of her adherents.

The Mayor of Auckland (incidentally a member of the Anglican Church) recently announced at a large Roman Catholic outdoor prayer-meeting (Father Peyton) that "all the problems of the world could be solved by prayer." However, in Auckland we have drainage, housing, traffic and other serious problems, so, as far as this part of the world is concerned, either the people are not praying enough, or the Mayor and the clerics are offering a fallacious remedy.

## Correspondence

HOW OLD ARE THE GOSPELS?

SIR,—There is no arguing in a circle in considering the Gospels as historical documents. "As we know them to-day (you state)

the Gospels were not known in, and to, the Church before about A.D. 150." This, your statement, is based on the "famous book" *Supernatural Religion*, by Walter Cassel. The Gospels therefore are—as we know them to-day—very old indeed, and as such should command our respect and attention. According to Cassel's opinion the Gospels were already known to, and in, the Church about one hundred and fifty years after Christ's Ascension. They should have been written much before, at least some thirty years before, so that they were acknowledged by the Church. This brings their author something like 70 years distant from Christ's time. The author's father or, at most, his grandfather, must have lived in the time of Jesus. This gives great historical authority to the author or authors of the Gospels. And who were they? You dismiss their authority on no other account than that they were Christians. Is this reasonable? Similarly, you consider Josephus's and Tacitus's mentioning of Christ and Christianity as spurious. And you ask me to quote non-Christian evidence? Who were the non-Christian writers of History of the First Century?!

But the Gospels were written and known much before A.D. 150. In fact, numerous texts from the Evangelists are quoted in the letters of Pope Clement (95 A.D.), St. Ignatius of Antioch (107 A.D.), St. Polycarp of Smyrna (120 A.D.); also in the very important work entitled *The Teaching of the Twelve* (Didake), which was written, probably, as early as 95 A.D.

St. Justin, of Samaria and Rome, who became a Christian in 130 A.D., says (*Apol.* 1, 66, 67; *Dial. cum Tryph.*, n. 103) that the Gospels were written by Apostles and disciples, and were read at the meetings of Christians on Sundays.

Papias of Phrygia, Asia Minor, disciple or associate of St. John, writing about 130 A.D., explains the circumstances in which the Gospel of St. Mark was composed, and refers to a work by St. Matthew, probably his Gospel. (See Eusebius, *Historia Ecc.* III, 39.)

Tatian wrote his *Diatesseron*, or harmony of the four Gospels, about the year 170 A.D. Since the publication of the Arabic version in 1888, the genuineness of the work is no longer in dispute.

St. Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.*, III, 1), writing about 180 A.D., says: "Matthew wrote a Gospel for the Jews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching and establishing the Church in Rome. After their departure (the Greek is uncertain, the word may mean "death"), Mark, also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed down to us in writing the information which Peter had given. And Luke, the follower of Paul, wrote out the Gospel which Paul used to preach. Later (continues Irenaeus), John, the disciple of the Lord, who had reclined on his breast, published his Gospel during his sojourn at Ephesus in Asia Minor." St. Irenaeus, a native of Asia Minor, was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who in his turn was himself a disciple of St. John.

There are similar documents which witness for the early existence of the Gospels, but these being Christians, and not Pagans, are readily dismissed by you Freethinkers as of no value. This is no mind reasoning but brain reasoning!

From an internal examination of the Gospels an impartial student can easily see that the writers were Jews and contemporaries, or in close touch with contemporaries, of the events they recorded. Besides, the Evangelists are trustworthy because they knew the facts and they were truthful. I am ready to prove this, if you will allow me more space sometime.

You incline to consider Jesus a myth simply because no pagan author of the first century speaks of him. What about St. Paul? He is not even mentioned by Josephus or Tacitus. He must have been also a myth, according to your way of arguing.

You mention the heretic Celsus (c. 200 A.D.). He said Christian Scriptures had been rewritten (not reprinted, of course!). He did not question the genuineness of the Gospels.

You say that "probably the oldest extant reference to Christianity . . . is Lucian's . . . about 170 A.D." But St. Paul says "he was a persecutor of the Church." What about Nero's persecution against the Christians? Tacitus tells us that in the year 58 the matron Pomponia Grecina was accused of "external superstition," i.e., of belonging to a religious sect not approved by the State (see Tacitus, *Annals*, 13-32). And what about the archeological documents of the first century, the Catacombs especially?

All summed up, I do not think it is a proof of scholarly genius to say that Christianity was not known before the year 170 A.D., or that its origin is "obscure" because no pagan writers of the first century mentioned it. I am really in earnest to know who these pagan authors were expected to be.—Yours, etc.,

G. M. PARIS, Editor, *The Faith* (Malta).

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