

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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MEMBERS and friends of the National Secular Society who visit Hyde Park and other public speaking grounds will, no doubt, be familiar with the various platforms devoted to the advocacy of what they are pleased to describe as "Christian Evidence." There are, in particular, two of these platforms, "The Catholic Truth Society," run exclusively, as its title implies, in the interests of the Roman Catholic Church, and the "Christian Evidence Society," a more heterogeneous platform recruited both from the Church of England and from the various Nonconformist Churches of the Protestant persuasion. In addition to the above professional pillars of the Truth, there are a number of platforms advocating what we may, perhaps, describe as "freak" religions, such as Mormonism, and inter-confessional bodies, such as the "Protestant Alliance," which actually appears to be more concerned with fighting the errors of Rome, of the "Scarlet Woman," than in broadcasting the essential truths of Christianity.

A Question about Billy Graham

Perhaps our hard-pressed friends of the "Christian Evidence Society" were hoping for some divinely-inspired visitor like Dr. Billy Graham, of Transatlantic fame, but, if so, they were denied any assistance from this celebrated evangelist. The not-so-learned Doctor *did* speak in Hyde Park, but not about the Truth of the Gospel: he just took that for granted! *Some* things are *so obvious*, particularly if one gets an appropriate Trade Union "rate for the job" for preaching them (a hundred pounds a week is the Rev. Billy's!). Even the B.B.C., a body not notoriously anti-Christian (?), sorrowfully admitted that unbelievers and people sceptical about "Christian Evidence" got nothing in the way of help from the Reverend Billy. As a speaker on the *Any Questions* programme noted, Billy is a "fundamentalist"—true enough!—and expressed the hope that the mission of the Harringay soul-saver would be followed up by "a more intellectual" mission for the benefit of the benighted sceptics, who want "evidence," and not just "Christian Evidence," but plain evidence. We hope that the Church authorities will act on this advice so thoughtfully proffered by the B.B.C. Those earnest souls who "burn the midnight oil" studying modern critical views of religion would be only too pleased to encounter some *real* "evidence." For, at present, the current debates between Christians and Unbelievers have now become so monotonously one-sided as to get positively wearisome. So, if the Churches have got some *real* "evidence"—at last—let us have it by all means; as it is, since Newman, the Christian Churches in this country have not produced a single "apologist" of any real intellectual calibre, and Newman has been dead quite a while.

"Dear me, Bishop"

"Christian Evidence," or "apologetics," to give this branch of Theology its proper title, is, at best, a double-edged weapon. It is an old complaint amongst simple

believers—and are not most "believers" simple?—that arguments about the truth of Christianity raise more doubts than they set at rest. Long-winded arguments about the authenticity of the Gospels would seem to suggest, to some people at any rate, that "Truth" and "Gospel Truth" need not necessarily be one and the same thing invariably. Indeed, perhaps, the classical critique of "apologetics"

was aptly summarised in that celebrated "malapropism" of that stupid but honest "Defender of the Faith," King George the Third. We recall this pleasant incident for the benefit, in particular, of those disloyal people who actually appear a trifle surprised when Royalty speaks

anything more substantial than platitudes! Amongst the champions of the Gospel who took up their pens to "refute" Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* was one Dr. Watson, Bishop of Landaff—a diocese in Wales with which, incidentally, the worthy Bishop's association was purely financial; he lived a long way from his care of souls and merely drew the salary. (Before the Reform Bill of 1832, absentee Bishops of this type were not uncommon.) His absentee Lordship indited *An Apology for the Bible*, in reply to the criticisms of the Word of God set out in Paine's *Age of Reason*. Incidentally, the "apology" seems to have been an unusually favourable specimen of "Christian Evidence"; it was reasonably intelligent and, unlike most of Paine's Christian critics, quite polite. It even referred to the infamous "Tom" as "Mr. Paine"! The King, thereupon, sent for the learned Bishop and His Majesty went on record with this historic declaration:

"Dear me, Bishop Watson, I have read your *Apology for the Bible*. Very good! But, really, I had no idea that the Bible *needed* apologising for." *Verb sap.*

"According to the Scriptures"

So much for the value of religious "apologetics" in the eyes of, at least, one "Defender of the Faith." A more critical view of the self-same "science" was expressed, a few years later, by that brilliant sceptic, Robert Taylor, when he made the apt comment on that corner-stone of "Christian Evidence," the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: "Jesus rose on the third day—but it was according to the Scriptures"! Like "Tom" Paine's, Taylor's remarks drew many "refutations" from "Christian Evidence" experts, not all of them as polite as Dr. Watson. By the time Taylor had started writing, George the Third had gone mad, so we do not know how this *bon mot* from *The Devil's Pulpit* would have struck that royal upholder of the verbal and undiluted inspiration of "God's Holy Word."

Wanted—Evidence!

Since the now remote days of Paine and Taylor, the "higher criticism" of the Bible, which began about the same time as *The Age of Reason*, has made giant strides. Officially it remains unrecognised in the Creeds and "Articles of Belief" of the Christian Churches. In practice,

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Christian Evidence

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

however, it has profoundly influenced the beliefs of educated Christians, the kind who do *not* go to Harringay to listen to Billy Graham, but who represent the opinion, if not of to-morrow, at least, of the day after. It is this silent, but already numerous, and ever-growing audience which the B.B.C. speaker evidently had in mind when he suggested that the Churches might follow up the Harringay mission with something "rather more intellectual," and addressed specifically to the sceptical public on the way out, or

already, outside, the fold of organised Christianity. We think that this was good advice, and we urge His Grace of Canterbury, Dr. Soper, and their colleagues to, at least, think the matter over. For one thing is quite certain, if the Christian Churches have to depend for their survival solely on the illiterate morons who lapped up Billy Graham's equally illiterate verbiage, then they may last as long as Billy Graham does—but will be lucky if they last much longer!

How to Deal with Devils

By C. G. L. DUCANN

VERY few people know how to deal with devils. I am one who does. Possibly to date the only one!

This article, therefore, is of great importance to the discerning reader, and I conjure him (excuse the language of diabolism!) to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it.

There is a false impression abroad that the Christian Churches, and in particular the Roman Catholic Church, have some recondite knowledge of this subject and even some practical skill in dealing with individual devils such as Satan, Beelzebub, Mammon, and not a few other hellish characters whose names escape me for the moment.

I would not seriously dispute this so far as Mammon, the god of gold, is concerned. But though I am too good-tempered and well-mannered to denigrate my competitors, who are somewhat older-established than I as exorcists, I beg to say that these are, in my considered opinion, on the wrong track. Whereas, I (as usual) am on the right one.

The fact is (if the world will excuse my telling the truth, which I rather doubt, for the truth is the last thing anybody, especially a journalist or a politician should tell) that the Princes, the prelates, and priests of the Holy Church, are children in the art of dealing with demons. Their services of Exorcism are ineffective. No sooner do they cast out one devil (if they ever do) than seven others take his place, as Jesus Christ very truthfully said. And, as he also said, the last state of the man is worse than the first.

I very much fear that the earnest inquirer will get little more to the point on devil-dealing from the modern Christian Church than he will get from Paracelsus, or Dr. John Dee of Tudor Days, or the late Joris Karl Huysmans of France in his first phase, or the late Aleister Crowley, of Britain (the last a most admirable, but little recognised, poet, by the way). Besides, it is terribly tedious to have to read books like *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin*, *The Book of Thoth*, or *An Ixiii Sol in Capricornus*, the literary equivalent of a walk through barbed wire entanglements.

Personally, I eschew such reading.

No! Holy water and prayers, the Church method, are useless. Black Masses, necromancy, Eleusinian Mysteries, and the ritualistic practices of a Crowley, are equally useless, for not by Satan do you cast out Satan, as Jesus again very truthfully said in one of his more pungent remarks.

Of course, I can well understand people thinking that exercises in abracadabra, pentagrams, horoscopes, and all that hocus-pocus might cause devils to flee. When I was a small boy and a perfect little devil myself, such obscenities as Quadratic Equations, and the Binomial Theorem, put *me* to flight. What indeed can be more disgusting than a Logarithm in its native indecency except the square of the Hypotenuse? Algebraic and Euclidean horrors may well raise the dead from their graves and "spirits from the vasty deep" to protest against such unsexual beastliness as they exhibit to the human mind.

Still, although they might, I doubt if they do, in spite of the late Mr. Crowley's pentagrams, equinoxes, oracles, illuminism, and all that. The *Sunday Express* called Mr.

Crowley "The Wickedest Man in the World" (temporarily forgetting the existence of other nefarious men nearer home) when he was nothing more than a depraved child trying to frighten other children. Much better if the *Sunday Express* had printed his better poems and paid well for them, which would have converted this eminent "Satanist" to conventionalism and Western Christianity at the first cheque. (It might even convert *me*, so frail is human nature—especially a poverty-stricken poet's human nature.)

As opposed to the Christian, and the Satanist's different methods of dealing with devils, I prefer my own method. This, perhaps, is natural again, you may say. But I am fully persuaded that my method on its merits is the most efficacious.

It is certainly better than Martin Luther's. Luther (you recall) saw the Devil (and instead of asking him a few questions and thereby getting some interesting and novel "copy," as any efficient author should) he threw his inkpot at the Majesty of Hell. As a writer, I do not approve of ink-wasting. Besides, Luther was guilty of the legal offence of attempted common assault as well as atrocious bad manners.

Now for my method of dealing with devils. It is quite simple. Unlike Jesus and the Christian Church, I do not take devils seriously. I merely laugh at the notion of them. I do not believe they exist. Why should an Almighty God—a jealous God at that—tolerate such inane rivalry? I am all for toleration; but tolerance can go too far, as a generation which would not tolerate Hitler and King Edward VIII but had to tolerate Stalin, will agree.

Making mysteries of the Devils or making war against them (as Saint Michael is said to have done) is a ludicrous mistake. Both Christians and Satanists are invited to try my prescription for dealing with devils—which is to disbelieve in them and to laugh at the very idea of them. They dissolve in laughter like bacilli in disinfectants. And devils in dissolution need not be feared as enemies by the Christian nor counted as friends by the Satanists.

Instead of saying "To Hell with them," in the spirit of *Retro me Sathanas*. I say, "To the Dustbin with them." in the spirit of a Vice-Chairman of a Public Health Committee of the local Borough Council.

Conflict lies in the heart of all things, and disagreement is the forerunner of every truth.—*Quondam*.

To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.—*Hazlitt*.

ROBERT TAYLOR. The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844). By H. Cutner. A detailed account of a remarkable thinker and his work. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.

The Necessary Stoicism

By G. I. BENNETT

IF I were a Christian I think that, with my probing, questioning type of mind, I should have some irresolvable conflicts with myself about the suffering, the cruelty, the evil in the world that we encounter so often and in so many places. I speak now not of the evil that man, in his inhumanity, selfishness, or ignorance, inflicts upon fellow man; but of that evil which is inherent in nature and life itself, and is largely beyond human control.

No one will dispute that medical science and sanitation have made stupendous advances in the last fifty to a hundred years. Given that the human race, equipped as it now is with swift and certain means of desolating this planet, does not destroy itself in a mad, internecine war, the medical research currently being carried on will yield yet richer fruits and make even more stupendous advances in the years ahead. But the ravages of sickness and disease of one sort and another are still very serious, and still take—as they are likely in the foreseeable future to take—a high toll in terms of human life and happiness.

Although we know much about heredity to-day, in the absence of scientific mating (which obviously raises peculiar difficulties where human beings are concerned) it still gives rise to freaks—crippled bodies and crippled minds. Even those who are born healthy are all too often broken, maimed, and crushed in the labours of the day. Some inherit insufficient strength of mind or of body to stay life's normal course.

Not long ago I felt sadness in the death from an internal cancer of a girl whom I knew well in my schooldays, and who was the mother of a young family. She might have died slowly and distressingly, but she was at least spared that. Her end came quickly after a short illness. Cruel and terrible tragedy, nonetheless! But, alas, just one of many!

If I were a Christian I fancy I should seek in vain to know why the good Lord should permit all this. His only-begotten son had assured us, had he not, that we were God's earthly children, and that he (God) loved us one and all? If the sun really did "shine on the righteous," and it was the callous, heartless, and vicious of the world who suffered the wrath of Heaven, then to me, as a believer, the situation would not be so entirely inexplicable. But in this matter there is no discrimination, divine or cosmic, between good folk and bad. More often than not, it would almost seem, those who have never done any a wrong, whose lives have in fact been good, kindly, and decent, are struck down even in the very flower of youth and fullness of life.

No, reason as I might, I don't think I could answer to my satisfaction the question, Why such evil under a benevolent Creator? In truth, to the Christian it is really an unanswerable question.

The problem of suffering and pain has troubled many earnest Christians and exercised the minds of clever theologians. How can they conscientiously resolve this difficulty? It is possible to see that the endurance of hardship and the facing of difficulties may in certain circumstances temper the character, and that temptation resisted may strengthen the moral fibre and will. Hardships, difficulties, temptations: these might conceivably be compatible with the existence of a good God. But wasting disease, chronic ill-health, and mortal sickness . . . ? These surely are a quite different thing. With much the same bitter perplexity as Jesus on the cross uttered those poignant words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", the sensitive man of faith may well cry out in anguish, "Why, Lord, do you allow these things?" His

only alternative is to resign himself to that which he cannot understand, because "God's ways are not our ways," and to take refuge in a blind trust that, as God rules all in wisdom, all is ultimately for the best. This may be a means of gaining a sort of inner peace, yet it is no settlement of a serious mental conflict—only a retreat from it.

For us without transcendental faith this baffled heartcry, "Why?" does not arise. We live in a universe that we know to be pitiless. We are aware that we are part of a scheme of things in which we have no special or favoured place. We are all of us simply members of a species that has been a notable biological success; but that in no way exempts us from the defects and ills to which all nature's creatures may be prone. To us and our works, to our noblest aspirations and most beautiful deeds, to our highest flights of creative thought and grandest achievements, nature is stolidly indifferent. Suffering, physical and mental, is evil; and if we can by our efforts redress in some measure the evil about us we shall not have lived in vain. But we have to face the fact that a final and complete redress is not possible, and never likely to be. Though much cruelty is man-made, there is an irreducible amount of suffering and heartache that we cannot in the nature of things overcome, do what we will.

In his classic *Martyrdom of Man*, Winwood Read wrote: "This life is short and its pleasures are poor. When we have obtained what we desire it is nearly time to die." He spoke as a nineteenth-century man, seeing life, which was shorter then than now, and its amenities, which were certainly fewer then than now, through nineteenth-century eyes. But what he said has, in a general way, some application still.

In face of the swift passage of the years, which inevitably brings man vis-à-vis with his last enemy, death; in face of the trials and troubles of life's uncertain course: what in wisdom can we do but live, laugh, and love while we may, and find our own happiness largely in the happiness of others? As secularists we ought never to inflict needless suffering either upon others or—by wearing sackcloth—upon ourselves; to this extent our philosophy is epicurean. I say "as secularists" advisedly, because our sense of the need for the good life, for the full and happy life, is sharpened by the conviction that this is the only life we shall know.

This is where the believer clearly differs from us. He may as a good Christian feel a moral obligation to help his fellows; but he is under no compulsion to see this life as other than a preparatory existence, a schooling in denial and discipline, to fit him for the spiritual world that he aspires to inhabit hereafter. Happiness must therefore be for him an incidental and not a vital feature of temporal existence.

But I do not think that epicureanism can be the whole of our outlook. Endowed as we are with a fleeting—though sublime—consciousness, we must realistically take life as we find it, with all its joys and sorrows, its loveliness and ugliness, its sweetness and bitterness, its kind dispensations and harsh misfortunes. With our views, we cannot complain. Willy-nilly we are impelled to stoicism in the sense of a clear-eyed acceptance of the world as it is.

In the vast panorama and fluxation of life, as individuals we are small and transitory standard-bearers of the larger unit of humanity. The Christian may think there is other and higher purpose in life than what concerns us here and now. We cannot. Our hopes, our aspirations, our faith,

(Concluded on page 221)

This Believing World

For sheer unadulterated incoherence the address on the B.B.C. for children the other day by the Rev. P. McLaughlin would take a lot of beating. He was trying to explain to them what is a "myth," and used the Garden of Eden story of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" as an illustration. But if words have any meaning, he did *not* consider the Garden of Eden or any of its contents as mythical. As far as one could understand him, it was all true for Mr. McLaughlin did not say outright that it was a myth and never happened.

But it was his business to get in Christ Jesus in some way so, of course, as Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden—it was really Eve who sinned was added as an afterthought—God had to send his Son to save Mankind. And who was this Son? Why, no one else but the "historical" Jesus Christ who came exactly as described in the Gospels. And after talking like all parsons do when they drag in Jesus as the World's Greatest Saviour, all schoolchildren should now know what is a myth. Or do they?

The truth really is that the average Christian "intellectual" has long since given up Genesis as historical. Among a host of them, here is what Bishop Gore says in his *Belief in God*: "It is certain that the accounts of Creation, Eden, the Fall, the Flood, are not historical records. . . ." And Mr. McLaughlin's attempt to show how Jesus came to save Mankind from something which is not history was ludicrous—and, being ludicrous, was completely incoherent.

Once again the Editor of "Psychic Realm" reiterates that the "spivs" and the wife-beaters and the child torturers and juvenile delinquency and crime in general are the result of Materialism headed by that arch-Materialist Darwin. It was through Darwin's theory of Evolution that "religion has retreated to a point of almost defeat"—hence "the world is torn apart by the forces of hatred and war." If it had not been for Darwin everybody would have believed in Christianity (and Spiritualism) and there would have been nothing in the world but peace and happiness.

What a lot these Spiritualists have to learn from history! The most ghastly wars the world has known have mostly been waged by Christians. Every German in World War I had a belt with "God With Us" engraved on it—and we need hardly add that the German Emperor's "Me and God" is historical. Hitler was a Roman Catholic who never ceased screaming that God Almighty was with the German people, and most of his entourage thoroughly agreed with him. And if Mr. Thompson wants us to give him details of the way in which Christians waged war in the past, as much against civilians as against soldiers, we shall be happy to oblige him. In the meantime, perhaps, he would explain why our prisons are so full of Christians with their own chaplains, while there are so few "Materialists" that the Home Office will not allow any "secular" visitors?

And our challenge still stands. We are ready to give the names of twelve prominent Spiritualists who were all caught in gross fraud, and we challenge *Psychic Realm* to give us the names of twelve prominent Materialists who were also caught in this way. Spiritualism is based on hopeless credulity and delusion, and no people are so easy to bamboozle as Spiritualists—except perhaps some of our "professors."

Although Christians have always claimed that it was they who made marriage "a sacrament," in actual fact nobody has treated marriage so contemptuously as the Christian Church backed by Jesus and Paul. Jesus, in particular, gave advice "for the kingdom of Heaven's sake" which would have, if followed, obliterated the human race in time. And here we have the present Pope begging for young people to "dedicate" themselves to the Church and insisting that "anyone counselling married life as being preferable to total consecration to God would be inverting and confounding the true order of things." In spite of such holy words, the Pope has to deplore the decrease in the number of young men who want to be priests. Which is a very good thing, anyway.

For Newcomers—1

THE Christian story of a virgin-born, miracle-working, crucified and resurrected Saviour is a re-hash of previous Pagan myths. For some centuries before the appearance of "Jesus the Christ" there were temples dedicated to gods like Apollo or Dionysus (Greek), Hercules (Roman), Mithra (Persian), Adonis and Attis (Syrian and Phrygian), Osiris, Horus and Isis (Egyptian), Baal and Astarte (Babylonian and Carthaginian). With a little change of detail here and there it was believed of all these that they were born on or near our Christmas Day of a virgin mother in a cave or underground chamber, that they taught mankind and were called Saviour, Healer, Deliverer, Mediator, etc., that they were vanquished by the Evil Power and descended into Hell or the underworld, that they rose again from the dead and ascended into the heavenly world, that they obtained communion of saints and churches, and were commemorated by the Eucharist (e.g., bread and wine).

We are really confronted, not with a number of separate myths, but with one central myth recurring in various localities around the Mediterranean. The story of Jesus is but one of them. And the myth has analogy with the course of the sun and changes in vegetation.

How, you may ask, did the early Christian Fathers explain these similarities? They "explained" them by saying it was all the work of the Devil, who, in order to confound the Christians, had caused the Pagans, centuries before, to forestall the whole Christian story and the Christian practices that were to follow. Justin Martyr describes the disciples at the Lord's Supper, "Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithra, commanding the same thing to be done." Tertullian: "The Devil, by the mysteries of his idols, imitates even the main part of the divine mysteries." St. Augustine: "We hold this (Christmas) Day holy, not like the Pagans because of the birth of the sun, but because of the birth of him who made it."

The logical curiosities of the situation are endless, and even more amusing than the factual. Why should an Almighty God, on an important mission to mankind through his son, get the whole affair so inextricably mixed up, to the confusion of his intended beneficiaries? If the life and death of Christ is to "save" mankind, what of the millions who lived and died before Christ? Moreover, what about those who were geographically removed from the scene of operations? If they are worse off as a result of not hearing about the Revelation, then God has been unjust. If they are no worse off, then what is the relevance of sending Christ? And so on.

At the level of intelligence the whole Christian story is bankrupt. It survives by the vested interests of the priests and priestly.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

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W.R.—"Spirit photographs" are notoriously easy to fake.

LEON SPAIN.—Thanks for good wishes. Letter sent on as requested.

W. J. PYE.—Thanks for interesting letter introducing us to Solomon Gessner, Swiss painter and poet.

D.E.H.—Would you be good enough to send your name and address and Mr. Morris will reply to you.

C. HARTLEY (Mrs.)—We do not "attack God"; we attack the God-idea. A direct attack on an imaginary entity would be absurd.

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

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

J. CLAYTON'S Lectures: Sunday, July 11, 7-30 p.m., Town Hall Sq., Preston.

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 week-day, 1 p.m.: **G. A. WOODCOCK.** Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture. At Deansgate Blitzed Site, 7-30 p.m.: **COLIN MCCALL,** a Lecture.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: **L. EBURY** and **H. ARTHUR.**

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

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

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, July 11, 11 a.m.: **Dr. W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "Lamarck: the Man and His Theory."**

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—July 2, 7-15 p.m., **Miss V. SINHA, "Living."**

Notes and News

With regard to the feature "For Newcomers," we ask older readers to bear with us when, from time to time, we make a brief statement of some well-known and well-established position held by freethinkers. Not all who contact *The Freethinker* for the first time are *au fait* with the secularist viewpoint and, while we would not trespass unduly on the patience of the initiated, we feel they will appreciate the importance of the brief elementary exposition in a journal which takes propaganda as one of its major aims.

We are happy to report that Mr. E. W. Shaw has made such good progress in Farnborough Hospital that he will be leaving there very shortly for a period of convalescence at Bournemouth. Mrs. Shaw, who will be accompanying him, asks us to convey their joint thanks to all who have sent

messages of sympathy with wishes for her husband's recovery. They have been too numerous for her to answer at a time when her hands are so full.

In defence of its disproportionate plugging of religion the B.B.C. regularly publishes statements saying how much this is appreciated by the aged and infirm. We have received a letter from Mrs. L. Bedborough, widow of that valiant fighter for freedom of speech and publication, George Bedborough, whose name appeared below many articles we published during the first third of this century. Although she was eighty-four this month, her writing is sprightly. "Old Father Time has made my limbs so stiff that after ten years on the first floor I have come down from the clouds to a room on the ground floor to celebrate my birthday. Among the things that help to mitigate the inconvenience of old age I have a little radio that George and I used to listen to. I wish I could hear some of you on it, but the B.B.C. is stubborn and cowardly." We are glad to present the B.B.C. with this expression of opinion from one of a class for whom it claims to be especially concerned.

The Devil's Defence

Now God and myself, as you doubtless all know,
Were chronic old bachelors long time ago.
Indeed, if I do not most sadly forget,
We are both of us chronic old bachelors yet.
I know that I am, and I cannot recall
Such fact as God's having been married at all.
And yet I suppose 'tis unknown to no one
That Jesus was this same old bachelor's son;
That Mary, betroth'd though she was to another,
Became of this bachelor's child the fond mother.
And now if indeed God was Jesus's pa,
And never was married to Jesus's ma,
Then I'm sure that I can't for the life of me see
How such a relation could possibly be,
And not be adul'trous, as surely 'tis when
Wives are now made mothers by bachelor men.
Hence God is convicted, you plainly do see,
Of adultery—not even charged against me.

Anon.

The Necessary Stoicism

(Concluded from page 219)

are grounded in humanity. In and through it alone can we express and fulfil ourselves. Our purpose is to make sure that we are worthy bearers of its standard.

"How pleasant it would be," wrote Richard Jefferies in the most remarkable of his books, *The Story of My Heart*, "each day to think: To-day I have done something that will tend to render future generations more happy. The very thought would make this hour sweeter."

Infused with that spirit, and activated by it, who does not find his own little existence, no longer empty and pointless, but in fact charged with meaning and mission? Known or unknown to the world, he is playing his part in nobly bearing aloft humanity's standard.

That life can be—and frequently is—hard and cruel none will deny. Fight as we will to make it less so, there will still be sickness and suffering and sorrow on this earth that we cannot prevent. This fact we have no alternative but to accept, and to accept with as much quiet courage and fortitude as we can muster. For life is like that: it demands an attitude of fundamental stoicism to enable us, come what may, to carry ourselves with becoming dignity; so that, even if in the labours of life we are broken in body, yet we shall remain unbroken in spirit.

Is Atheism Rare?

By H. CUTNER

ONE of the many declarations with which our Christian masters love to hug themselves is that "thorough-going Atheists are rare." This is what the Dean of St. Paul's wrote recently in the *Daily Telegraph* and he gives us the reason why. "It is," he quite confidently declares, "a difficult position to maintain both in thought and in practice."

As in so many confident declarations, I am bound to admit there is a half-truth here—but not exactly for any reason Dr. Matthews gives. He says that many Atheists are really Agnostics "who think that if God exists we know nothing about his nature"—and no doubt there are quite a number of professed Agnostics who talk like this; and he adds that many more "are in revolt against some conception of God" which they do not like. I am sure that there are Agnostics who also talk like this—and it is why I so dislike the word. But do Atheists talk in this way?

The difficulty here is that unless an Atheist has really studied Atheism, unless he really knows what he is talking about when he discusses any Deity, and unless he has some modern scientific background, it is quite possible for him to talk the arrant rubbish put into his mouth by the Dean. If he does not thoroughly understand the Atheistic position, he is really not an Atheist. And Atheism is not easy to maintain in argument with a clever debater. The Agnostic who maintains a "don't know" attitude has a much easier time, and he is almost petted by Christians.

Neither Bradlaugh nor Foote ever liked to begin their argument by an explicit *denial* of God. They both maintained that they could not deny that of which they had no conception. Tell me what you mean by the word "God," they both cried, and I will show you that, as you have landed yourself into either unintelligibility or contradiction, your God could not possibly exist. We *deny* your "defined" God; and they stoutly stuck to this position.

It has always seemed to me better to deny "God" right away without waiting for it or him or her to be defined; and after all, as their opponents were Christians, and both Bradlaugh and Foote knew perfectly well that the God they were mostly challenged to discuss was the Jewish God transformed into the father of Jesus, I never understood why they did not begin with a denial rather than waste time. Of course, there was always a metaphysical God who was hastily brought forward like a smoke screen when poor Jehovah was demolished as a Palestinian myth; but it was often my unfortunate fate, whenever he came into action, to find myself discussing evidence to show that it was *I* who was alive, that it was *I* who existed, rather than the metaphysical Deity.

Dr. Matthews insists that "the only God in whom we can believe is one who is always and everywhere present." Notice how the word "everywhere" is brought in. What does it mean? I don't know and neither does the Dean. When we say air is present, do we mean *everywhere*? If we mean only everywhere on *earth*—does the Dean mean that God is everywhere like air? And what earthly good could such a God be? Dr. Matthews himself does not believe in an "absentee" God; in fact, he says no one believes in such a God. "There is," he declares, "all the difference in the world between a philosophical proposition and a living faith." So now we have "a living faith" roped in as if it had a definite meaning. What does it mean?

My own living faith—and for that matter, conviction—is that there is no God. The Dean's is that there is, so where are we? In any case, he sadly confesses that there are "part-time Atheists." These very unlucky people really

believe in Almighty God but act very often as if he never existed. He is presumably never about; he is an absentee God who never says a thing, never does a thing, is never seen, or gives any help in a man's daily life. But he does exist, and a part-time Atheist would be as horrified as Dr. Matthews if he imagined people thought him really a blatant Atheist.

The only antidote is for the part-time Atheist to be "awake to the divine presence"—like the good Dean. I suppose; but what happens if some of us are never awake to the divine presence? Frankly, I don't know what it is, but I have found religious journals and books packed with similar phrases, all part of Christian "theology"; or rather, similar religious jargon thrown into a discussion on God simply because it is almost impossible, when talking of God, to be intelligible. And if any Christian, whether he is a Dean or a Bishop, can be made to stick to the point and be forced to explain what he is talking about, he will soon say, "Well, well, it is all a mystery. How can our finite minds ever hope to explain infinite God's mysterious purpose?"

As it is, Dr. Matthews would never be allowed in such a grave, family journal as the *Daily Telegraph* to say how little he knows of God—in truth, just as much or just as little as the average Atheist. He has to write an article which will appeal to its middle-class readers all of whom, except perhaps a small minority, are "part-time" Atheists; and his job is gently to admonish them. It is done in a more scholarly way than that used by the Rev. B. Graham recently at Harringay—for, it may be remembered, that that most un-erudite gentleman preferred to veil his own consummate ignorance by working in on all possible occasions, Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, and our Lord and Saviour. It was not exactly God who was there invited to share your lives but Jesus Christ—though it is quite in the cards that, for Dr. Matthews, one or the other or both, would equally do for him. Still it was good to find that the Dean never referred once to his Lqrd and Saviour in his article, but only to God; and so we were spared the fact that Jesus had (or was) the greatest Divine Presence that ever lived.

The Dean tells us that "the way of spiritual progress lies from part-time Atheist to full-time believer"—and obviously, if it didn't, there would be little room in the world for priest, parson, or witch-doctor. Only the full-time believer can keep the Churches going; only a genuine "spiritual awakening" can continue to fill them. And only, if the Churches can make people believe in these things, can the leaders in them hope for Christianity to survive. But the part-time Atheist is a sign of the times. It is much more likely that he will become a full-time one, rather than go back to the crass crudity and primitive credulity of what is nothing but an Oriental superstition.

NATURE'S WAY

This tradition of yours is only another word for Putrefaction. The clean way with Nature is dying and being born. Same with human institutions—only more so. How can we live unless we scrap and abolish? How can a town be clean without a dust destructor? What's your history really? Simply what's been left over from the life of yesterday.—H. G. WELLS in *The Autocracy of Mr. Parham*.

NEXT WEEK

THE "SINCERITY" OF BILLY GRAHAM
By P. V. MORRIS

Two American-Made Cults

By Dr. E. L. DWIGHT TURNER

THE two American-made cults which I shall here briefly consider are Mormonism and Christian Science.

The Rev. Solomon Spaulding wrote a novel which he titled *The Manuscript Found*. Joseph Smith got hold of this unpublished work which tried to prove that the original aborigines of America were descended from the "lost" tribes of Israel. Of course, the heads of the Mormon Church deny this, but Joseph Smith's bizarre story gives evidence of his chicanery.

Smith had very little education, and could read with difficulty. But as a religious fanatic, he had the qualities to become a "prophet" and to hold frequent conversations with God.

An "angel" told him about some "golden plates" that were buried in Western New York, and when they were dug up there was found with them what a wit has called "celestial goggles," by the aid of which Smith "translated" the strange language on these "golden plates" into English—with some fancy and miraculous trimmings added by Smith. This output became the Book of Mormon. The entire composition was put into verses, similar to Authorised Version of the Bible. The Mormons accept the Bible and the Book of Mormon as their supplementary Bible. The official name of the Mormon sect is: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Joseph Smith was bitterly attacked by his fellow Christians, and after serving some time as a "prophet" he was foully murdered.

Brigham Young succeeded him, and he whooped it up for polygamy—after the style of the Holy Bible. The men had plenty of partners, and the women had plenty of loving. This went on until the U.S. government stepped in and put a stop to this brand of "saintliness."

After Brigham Young and his followers went to Utah, he was made governor of that territory, by agreement with the U.S. government.

Notwithstanding that the Mormon Church was founded by a fanatic and was launched by a gross fraud, it has, nevertheless, become a political institution to be reckoned with in the state of Utah.

As is well known, Christian Science (a new kind of "science") was founded by Mary Baker Eddy. This thrice-married founder of C.S. died a widow. As a child she was hysterical, had frequent convulsions and tantrums, and her mental unbalance culminated in her fantastic faith called Christian Science.

She studied under a metaphysical healer named Quimby. He conferred the title of "Doctor" upon himself, without the aid of any educational institution. She appropriated very much of his stuff, but gave him no credit for it. She employed a male secretary, named Frye, who had considerable literary ability. He polished up her crude and ungrammatical writings into presentable form, and the main book, *Science and Health*, was copyrighted. This copyright has brought in millions of pounds to its owners.

All doctors know that many cases of disease get well naturally. It is in these cases—and in these cases only—that the C.S. practitioner occasionally makes a hit. And when he or she does so, it is advertised widely. But their very numerous failures—and deaths—are never publicised. A leading C.S. practitioner said to me: "We very often fail ignominiously." They surely do.

Mrs. Eddy made many extravagant claims, among which was her claim to possess the power to raise the dead; and she declared she had done it—which was, of course, an outright lie.

Notwithstanding its frauds and failures, Christian Science has developed into a multi-million dollar business, with a daily newspaper and with several other publications—mostly nonsense. The cult advertises—in patent-medicine fashion—on more than 600 expensive radio broadcasting stations.

In spite of its shady beginning, by Mrs. Eddy's cribbing of Quimby's work, without credit, and in spite of its unscientific and often dangerous teachings, it has roped into its fold many good and prosperous citizens; and its beautiful park and its fine modern buildings and equipment have become one of the objects of interest to sightseers in Boston, Mass.

The birth and prosperous existence of these two American-made sects, in modern times, prove that almost any foolishness can be put over on a lot of uncritical "believers," if only it be widely and persistently advertised and have commercial and mystical appeal.

—From *The Liberal*.

Northern Notes

By COLIN MCCALL

MANCHESTER County Magistrates were recently called upon to decide whether a Catholic girl of 19 should be allowed to marry her Protestant fiancé who refused to be married in a Catholic church. The girl's father objected to the marriage on religious grounds. Not an unfamiliar situation, but one that is not easily settled satisfactorily! The magistrates finally gave permission for the marriage. One cannot help deploring the religious set-up that causes such heart-burnings and family splits. The human suffering caused by numberless such cases as this is a terrible reproach to the Christian religion and its conflicting sects.

* * *

The rector of a Stretford (Lancs) Church, the Rev. F. L. R. Graham of St. John the Evangelist, states in the June issue of his parish magazine that bazaars and sales of work are "morally open to serious question" and "may easily become excuses for neglecting our great spiritual task." "We cannot imagine the Apostles having sales of work," he writes, "they were much too busy turning the world upside down." That sounds a little exaggerated to me, but it will no doubt be condoned in a parish magazine. Another of Mr. Graham's objections has more validity. "Can we avoid the suggestion that in selling manufactured articles we are setting up in opposition to the legitimate tradespeople, and that in the name of Christ?" he asks, and leaves the reader to answer. But, despite all moral and tactical objections, his Church is holding a bazaar later this year, reports *The Manchester Evening News*. Preparations have already been made and Mr. Graham hyperbolically thinks it would be "rather drastic" to stop it now. He should think again of those Apostles "turning the world upside down." That sounds rather drastic, doesn't it?

* * *

On June 15, Southport Town Council debated a proposal that the Corporation-controlled fun-fair known as "Pleasureland" should be opened on Sundays. When a new super bus-terminal was completed it was expected that 80 or 90 motor coaches would arrive every Sunday morning bringing far more visitors than the town could hold. "Pleasureland" might well act as a "safety valve"

it was thought, but one alderman frowned upon the idea. He was amazed at the suggestion that they must find some place where this "near rabble" could go. Alderman Sir Herbert Barber expressed the reasonable view when he said: "We are living in changing times and I believe Sunday opening has to come, whether it is now or later." When the vote was taken commonsense just won the day, 23-22.

* * *

The *North Cheshire Herald* recently revived a story that was told about Hayfield Church in a letter from Dr. James Clegg, Presbyterian minister at Chapel-en-le-Frith, to the Rev. Ebenezer Latham of Findern, in 1745. At the time it was customary to bury the dead in the Church itself, and "on the last day of August, several hundred bodies rose out of the graves in the open day in that Church, to the great astonishment and terror of several spectators. They deserted the coffins and immediated ascended towards heaven, singing in concert all along as they mounted through the air." They "had no winding sheets about them, yet did not appear quite naked." Indeed, their "vesture seemed streaked with gold, interlaced with sable and skirted with white." These sartorial details testify to Dr. Clegg's powers of observation and we must forgive his slight confusion, for the bodies moved swiftly. And although he had previously described their course as "towards heaven," the reverend reporter could give no guarantee that they had reached their destination—or precisely where that was. No mortal can tell "what is become of them or in what distant regions of this vast system they have since fixed their residence," he continues. One thing he did know: "They left a most fragrant and delicious odour behind them." This may all smell a little fishy to us, but it is interesting to imagine how the story might have been treated in a Catholic country. Instead of remaining a mere curiosity in a letter from one clergyman to another, it would have been built up on business lines and the Church would have become a place of pilgrimage.

* * *

I have had cause on the N.S.S. platform to expose an error made by the Rev. William Gowland, Methodist minister of the Albert Hall, Manchester. Speaking in Platt Fields a few weeks ago, Mr. Gowland asserted that Adolf Hitler was an atheist and not a Catholic "as the secularists state." I take this opportunity of confirming the exposure in print. Whether Hitler kept up full Catholic practices throughout the whole of his life is hard to tell and is unimportant anyway. But there can be no doubt that he was religious. He was, in fact, that most dangerous of leaders, he who believes himself to be the chosen representative of God. Let the Fuehrer speak for himself: "I am a profoundly religious man. I believe that Providence, when she has designed a man for great purposes, does not break that man before he has achieved them. I have come to know the best that is in Germany and that is the strength of the broad masses. God helps those who help themselves. It would be shameless ingratitude to Providence if we lost our nerves. Providence made us master the hopeless situation brought about by the collapse of Italy. That being so, can we despair of Providence? The Almighty might have tried us much harder. Even if from the beginning the war had come on German soil I never would have capitulated. We have faith in God's justice to keep the flag flying in foul weather. I am proud that I have been given the task to imbue my people with strength and faith, that I may say to them: 'Be calm, come what may, victory will be ours in the end.' In the last war, in spite of brilliant victories, our people became ungrateful and lost faith. Providence

scourged us, and justly so." (From the speech in the Munich Beer Cellar on November 8, 1943, as reported in *The Times* the following day.)

It is rather late, I know, to deal with Hitler's religious beliefs, as such, but it is never too late to refute clerical falsehoods. Nor can we be reminded too often of the harm caused by religious fanaticism. Beware of the man with a divine mission!

Correspondence

THE FREETHOUGHT OUTLOOK

SIR,—The question: "What should freethinkers and rationalists discuss and write about in *The Freethinker* and (presumably) other journals?" has been recently asked in your columns. Should they concentrate on attacking religious beliefs and dogma, or should they widen their field of activity?

In my view, concentrating on one aspect of human ideas and culture (religion) is very narrow: it is neither freethinking nor rational.

The world to-day is beset by a multiplicity of problems, prejudices and hatreds. For this reason most people support war. . . . Others think that people with different coloured skins or slanting eyes are inferior to the so-called white man, or that all Jews are blackguards and "twisters." Numerous other prejudices come to mind: some people are intellectual snobs—they consider that they have superior brains . . . that a few of us are cut-out to be "great" men, the captains of industry or the Napoleons of finance, whilst the rest of us—due to our so-called inherited inferiority—are destined to play pedestrian roles.

Another popular prejudice is that "You can't change human nature." Meaning that it is impossible to change *human behaviour*. Or it is argued that we are inheritantly bad, that we are basically anti-social; or to put it into religious terminology: we are cursed with original sin. Again, how many people (including some women themselves) think that women are inferior to men, that they are less intelligent; or that there is such a thing as the "female mind?"

Humanity since earliest times has, to a great extent, been governed by custom-thinking (under primitive savagery) and later by custom-thinking, Tradition and power-thinking (under property societies). In the main, to the present day, man has been irrational.

Therefore, if we as rationalists expect to influence those around us, then we must at all times combat *all* prejudices, national hatreds, religious intolerance, custom-, power- and privilege-thinking.

We must show that a world based on the ideas of co-operation, equality and universality is both desirable and obtainable. This world can only be achieved by a "mental revolution" in the minds of the majority of people *now*. Tomorrow may be too late! Tomorrow may never come!—Yours, etc.,

PETER E. NEWELL.

[The above has had to be shortened for reasons of space.—EDITOR.]

Our Bishops

Bishops voted against admitting Nonconformist to University degrees, and against removing the civil disabilities of Roman Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers. They opposed the introduction of free education, and voted against admitting women as members of London Borough Councils. None voted for the abolition of flogging women in public. They opposed the provision of seats for the use of tired shop-assistants. Scores of measures for the bettering of the condition of the working classes have been opposed by these bishops. To put forward the absurd claim that civilisation itself derives its impetus from priests' abracadabra would be laughable if it were not pitiful. Civilisation is not the product of half-wits, and never has been so bankrupt of intellectual resources as to rely on witch-doctors for guidance. For priests and witch-doctors are as much alike as the upper and lower jaws of a crocodile.

MIMNERMUS.

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