

The Freethinker

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IT is a fact often noted that the growth of astronomy and the decline of dogmatic religion have proceeded concurrently. If we may take a particular date at which the decline of supernatural religion may be said to have begun, it was from the publication, in 1543, of the Heliocentric Theory of Copernicus. That the great astronomer was himself in clerical orders added a touch of irony to this fact.

For later the heliocentric theory was put on the firm foundation of observed reality by Galileo's telescopic discoveries in the seventeenth century. The reaction of the Catholic Church to Copernicus's revolutionary discovery are too well-known to need detailed description here.

Theological Astronomy

Even professed students of Comparative Religion often fail to realise how closely the fundamental conceptions of theology were bound up with contemporary views of astronomy. This was particularly so with regard to mediaeval Christian theology before Copernicus's revolutionary theory, confirmed by the great astronomers of the next century. The mediaeval Heaven was a *place*, nor was there any doubt about its locality. It was *up*, beyond the sky, at a not too remote distance from the human habitation. Similarly, Hell was a *place* and *down*. How far down was a subject for theological speculation, but it was under the earth, as Heaven was above. Moreover, the fire of Hell was *real* fire, and fire, as taught by Christian theology, as well as materialistic science, can only burn in a *place*, and a place must have visible dimensions. Hence Heaven and Hell were places whose whereabouts could be discovered, presumably by observation, though, in the case of Hell, probably no one had a *burning* desire to do so.

Has the Virgin Mary Heard of Copernicus?

Presumably, not! For the current celestial levitations of that exalted lady still conform rigorously to pre-Copernican astronomy! Since the beginning of the second-half century (1950) the dogmatic teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is that she was "assumed" *bodily* into Heaven, that is, she went up to a *place*. Of course it can be taken for granted that the Holy Mother of God, did not go in the contrary direction! Moreover, she still "levitates" in sublime disregard of Copernicus, Galileo, and Einstein! As recently as 1917, she came *down* from Heaven to Fatima, to Portugal. Anatole France once commented on the out-of-date military equipment of the angels. It seems that the astronomical knowledge of the celestial entourage is also "more than somewhat" out of date.

"The Atheism of Astronomy"

The fact is, theology represents, essentially, pre-scientific guesswork. Early man did not *know*, and with the primitive means which alone were at his disposal could not have known, how the Earth began. So he speculated with the

aid of his imagination. The result was the entertaining fiction that one finds in *Genesis*, with the appearance, first, of scientific theory; finally, of scientific *observation*: exact knowledge replacing pre-scientific speculation. In no way was it an accident that the Greeks, initiators of scientific methodology, also produced the first atlas. In this connection it is interesting to recall that when (third century B.C.) Aristarchus of Samos—the "Copernicus of Antiquity"—first advanced the heliocentric theory as an hypothesis, he was accused by his contemporary pagan theologians of banishing the gods from the universe. This, in fact, is precisely what Galileo did when he *proved*, as the ancient

Greeks could not, for lack of appropriate instruments, the truth of the sun-circling theory, hypothetically put forward. Since Galileo, astronomy has again banished the gods—this time for ever. What the late Woolsey Teller—whose recent death deprived American Freethought of one of its ablest advocates—aptly termed, "The Atheism of Astronomy," is now an integral part of any civilised outlook familiar with modern knowledge.

Exeunt Heaven and Hell

In our modern universe "up" and "down" no longer have any meaning; Heaven and Hell no existence, no "visible means of support"! If our, perhaps, too-optimistic friends of the *Inter-Planetary Society* ever succeed in reaching the planets, or, more improbably, the stars, they will find both heat and cold in abundance, but none of the theological kind. Some of the planets of the Solar System are very hot—the atmosphere of Mercury is above that of boiling lead, nearly as hot as Hell! But the heat is *naturally* (not supernaturally) created and renewed. Nor will our celestial voyagers hear angelic harps: nor are they likely to meet the Virgin Mary on one of her periodic trips to Earth! What are they likely to find?

Life on Other Worlds

Aristotle, one of the greatest of ancient scientists, declared that the universe probably contained many higher species than Man. One could relevantly comment that it is to be hoped so! A contemporary astronomer, Dr. Spencer Jones, after a careful analysis of the conditioned pre-requisites for conscious life throughout the universe, concluded that it is a rare, but probably periodic recurring phenomenon. In a recent personal letter to the present writer the eminent Dutch astronomer, Prof. Dr. A. Pannekoek, declared: "The dream of a plurality of inhabited worlds, the dream of other men living on neighbouring kindred globes is over . . . as far as our own solar system is concerned, no other 'mankind' exists elsewhere than on earth."

No doubt this conclusion of the Amsterdam professor is correct as far as *human* beings are concerned, but why should we suppose that "life" must always resemble a "human" life, that is, the specific kind of life produced by *our* planetary conditions.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Life on Other Worlds?

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

A Secularist Approach to Astronomy

Of one thing, at least, we can be certain: "any "life" that exists *anywhere* in the universe is the natural result of its local evolution; it is *not* the result of special creation. In the present state of our knowledge, further speculations must be purely hypothetical. We can, at least, agree with

the concluding reflection of Dr. Pannekoek, which is that, before seeking to penetrate the abysses of space in order to explore other worlds, "man should make this earth the happy abode of a free mankind."

An eminently secularist approach to the universe and to human existence!

The Processes of Conversion

By GEORGE MILLER

IN one's idle moments it does not harm to ponder innocently the reasons why unsung heroes resolve to do their own thinking and adopt disreputable appellations like rationalist, freethinker or heretic. After all, most people are striving consciously to adjust their lives to accord happily with one another, thus perpetuating the myth of human love. Now if the glorious exceptions were to compose brief essays recounting their conversations to independent thought, and these were to be published collectively as a super-symposium, it may amuse archæologists when they excavate our civilisation around the year 2254, supposing a copy should survive.

Among the ridiculosesities of Voltaire—and like all the wise, he has his follies—was his insistence that "we must take sides." Must we? Affiliating oneself with discrimination to one or other of the Christian Churches is to delude oneself, for in the final analysis they are all alike. There really is a unity between the Churches, and those who seek it are welcome to it. A freethinker must not take sides; his duty is to be impartial and objective, and, since his field of contemplation is broader, must not confine himself exclusively to religion.

The day has gone by when the Freethought Movement could draw its recruits mainly from apostate priests and others in revolt against a too-religious upbringing. Most ordained priests stay ordained anyhow, whatever their subsequent doubts, and J. S. Mill's avowal that he "never threw off religious beliefs but never had them" can be quoted with greater sincerity and aptitude by many of us to-day. But an instantaneous change in one's approach to life has not happened and never will.

Probably no one ever underwent a sudden conversion, except Paul of Tarsus, whose transformation happened with the quickness of lightning flash, which by God's grace is not of long duration. On his way to town, Lux Mundi suddenly appeared in the dark heavens and by such illumination he presumably saw the error of his ways and straightway crossed over to the opposite side. Paul's rapid change of heart probably has no parallel, though the *War Cry* does print regularly a selection of names the property of dipsomaniacs whom, they very likely claim, did not tarry in coming over. These reformed worshippers of Bacchus personally vouch that they have "found Christ," with that kind of facile speediness of which many Freethinkers are, for example, totally unpossessed.

There being a high and a low to everything, it is possible that efforts to bring us to a knowledge of Jesus and his love may sometimes be on such a level as to command our admiration. But as a matter of fact, efforts of this sort are generally on the level of those of the street corner evangelists described in all their futility in Robert Tressal's realistic novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, a work which is as anti-Christian as it is anti-capitalist.

There exists quite a difference between going over to Christianity and coming over to Freethought, and those who undergo the latter process can have great fun if they pause to look back. The circumstance of being a member of the population of a Christian country and yet have it lie within one's experience to be converted to Christianity is

a situation which can logically rouse in us only deep-chested, booming laughter, the laughter being of the kind that would be better than a fortnight's holiday in Buckingham Palace. There is no special glory in such conversion.

Very different is the decision to think for oneself. It is a resolve that not only follows upon a recognition that all religious systems consist mainly, if not entirely, of a splendid mixture of twaddle and balderdash, but also results from the realisation that slavish adherence to any "ism," political or otherwise, is a dead-end. Any religion, or for that matter any political party, would, for our own good, have us all think alike whereas what the world needs is more difference of opinion, more development of the individual, more variety and more tolerance. Coming round to such a position is but to "accept the universe," for inescapable change and variation is evident throughout nature, and Man himself is the supreme example of it.

We are truly "in tune with the infinite" when we stand as far as possible from being what the Germans term a *Jabruder* (a "Yes, brother"; American "Yes-man") and do not shape our lives simply to maintain a comfortable relationship with other men.

Taking refuge in a settled faith, or losing one's individuality in a group, brings a false contentment, for it comes from a hopeless refusal to bother with any serious thought of any kind. Catholics claim that theirs is the "true faith," and add the even wilder boast that in their Church alone is unity to be found. This is attractive to philistines seeking mental peace, but a possible deterrent could be the reflection that the unity has been preserved not always by the sweet reasonableness of priests, but apparently by resorting sometimes to terrible persuaders like instruments of torture and war.

Washing Day

A lively illustrated weekly paper, the *Northampton Independent*, recently published a photograph of the scene in a local swimming bath when a group of Jehovah's Witnesses were baptised, and described the ceremony as "a one-time heathen practice." This upset a number of religious folk and letters of protest followed. The Rev. C. W. Becket, Baptist Minister, was at pains to point out that when people were immersed according to the rites of his Church, everything was very dignified, with the women dressed in white and the men in black gowns or white flannels. We congratulate the Editor for publishing a letter the following week from the Secretary of the N.S.S. It ended: "To the scientific onlooker the baptism of babes or adults, by immersion or sprinkling, clothed or naked, is a relic of primitive superstition and a reminder that we have still a long way to travel before we may claim to be truly civilised."

Persecution

To punish a man because he has committed a crime, or because he is believed, though unjustly, to have committed a crime is not persecution. To punish a man because we infer from the nature of some doctrine he holds, or from the conduct or other persons who hold the same doctrine with him, that he will commit a crime, is persecution, and is, in every case, foolish and wicked.—MACAULAY, *Essay on Hallam*.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor, M.R.S.T. Materialism stated and defended. Price 4s; postage 3d.

Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 20th Century

By F. A. RIDLEY

(Continued from page 300)

LAMENNAIS AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

THE relations of the Catholic Church with "heresy" constitute an interesting and instructive chapter. To condemn the heretic, and then to use his teaching, may be described as a frequent practice of the Catholic Church. This comes out very clearly in the relationship between Rome and the French Revolution. For Rome started by fiercely condemning "the ideas of 1789," in particular, the idea of political democracy. It is a far cry from that day to this, when we find the Vatican loudly proclaiming that the Catholic Church is the great champion of democracy against totalitarian dictatorship! Certainly, the Popes who were contemporary with the French Revolution would have been surprised at such an identification. When the great Lamennais first proclaimed the principles of "Christian Democracy" in his paper, *L'avenir* ("The Future") he was condemned by Pope Gregory XVI (1832), and his famous "Words of a Believer" was put on the Index. "Small in size, but of an immense perversity," was how the Pope described it. However, the Church which condemned Lamennais was to profit by his teaching. The ideas condemned by a still mediævalist Papacy, "Christian Democracy" and the alliance between the Church and the popular masses, were to be taken up later by the Church. Lamennais may, in fact, be described both as the prototype of "Catholic Action," and as the spiritual ancestor of the "Worker-Priests." One could even describe Lamennais as the "Forerunner" of the Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 20th century. From his tomb in Père Lachaise, his ideas rule the Church which rejected them in his lifetime.

THE IDEA OF "DEVELOPMENT"

IN his famous essay, the Protestant historian Lord Macaulay, announced his prediction of the undying Papacy, which will outlive "the broken arch of London Bridge" and "the ruins of St. Paul's"—(and, presumably, Anglicanism?). Five years later (1845), an English convert, J. H. Newman, wrote his famous *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the most important theological work of the 19th century, and the text book of the new Catholicism. Theology, proclaimed Newman, "develops" like other sciences; it faces the future as well as the past, its greatest days are yet to come. The significance of the new theory for the "development" of Catholicism in the future was not lost on, at least, one acute Protestant contemporary. In a masterly passage, the Protestant publicist, Isaac Taylor, thus summarised the "Development" theory and its probable effects on the future of Catholicism:—

"If, in this age of reason, certain dogmas or modes of worship may seem to have fulfilled their intention, and to have become encumbrances rather than aids, why may not the inherent 'development' power rescind, withdraw, remove such adjuncts? It is not easy to see what difficulty, either logical or theoretical, stands in the way, to prevent the Church's faculty of 'development' from now shifting its position, and acting as a faculty of abrogation. Once it put its right hand forth to bring from its treasury things new, henceforth it will be putting forth its left hand to withdraw these worn and faded articles from their places. In a rude age of the Church—always wise in her day—became flagrantly polytheistic; in a philosophic, or, rather, a scientific age, the same Church, equally wise, will become pantheistic."—(Ignatius Loyola—p. 326, 1848).

THE INFALLIBILITY DECREE OF 1870

Newman's theory of "Development" opened the road to change for the theory of the Catholic Church. The Decree

of Papal Infallibility carried, after stormy sessions, by the Vatican Council of 1870, similarly opened new paths of "development" for the practice, for the organisation of the Catholic Church. This fact was not, it seems, recognised by the contemporaries of the famous Council, which was regarded rather as a victory for the conservative forces in the Church. This view appears to the present writer to be superficial. We have elsewhere expressed a contrary view:—

"But in the doctrine of the 'infallibility' of the living and changing Pope, she (the Church) has an unrivalled instrument for going *forward* as well as *back*! Attention has generally been directed to the reactionary nature of this doctrine, but unless we greatly err, Rome will know how to go forward with this unrivalled instrument for 'liquidating' the 'dead hand' of the past for the 'development' of doctrine and morals; and for adjusting Romanism to tasks and problems which lay beyond the limited horizon of the Middle Ages. The Vatican Council of apparent reactionaries, who decreed this Dogma in 1870, provided the Church with a superb evolutionary weapon, equally adapted to reactionary or to progressive purposes. The Church, no longer bound by the obsolete formulæ of ancient Councils, moves forward, under the continuous leadership of a contemporary Dictator."

Pius IX was, perhaps unconsciously, Newman's best discipline. When this Pope said, "I am Tradition," he "developed" Christian Dogma with a vengeance! The Infallibility of the *present* succeeded that of the *past*!

"RERUM NOVARUM"

Pius IX (1846-78) was a reactionary who did not, probably, realise the full implications of the "Development" which, none the less, he so effectively assisted by his assumption of "Infallibility." His successor, Leo XIII (1878-1903), probably the ablest Pope since the Middle Ages, fully understood these implications: it was not for nothing that one of his first pontifical acts was to create the hitherto neglected Newman a Cardinal. Leo, to the unutterable horror of royalists and mediævalists everywhere, "recognised" the French *Republic*, and sponsored "Catholic Democracy," a name at which his predecessors would have shuddered! On May 15, 1891, Leo published his masterpiece, the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, "The Worker's Charter" as "Catholic Democrats" usually term this famous document, the most important pronouncement so far issued by the Modern Papacy.

As we have elsewhere expressed it: "With the publication of *Rerum Novarum* the Middle Ages ended officially in Rome." For in this famous Encyclical, the Pope officially adopted the ideas of "Christian Democracy" and of the "rights" of the working-classes, that Lamennais had been condemned for proclaiming earlier in the century. Lamennais had *baptized* the ideas of the French Revolution; Leo now, so to speak, gave them Papal confirmation. Further, in *Rerum Novarum*, Leo began the process of "developing" the Catholic Church beyond, not only autocracy and mediævalism but, equally, beyond the newly-arrived capitalism. For Leo severely criticised the "new slavery, little better than that of Pagan times, which a few rich men have now succeeded in imposing upon the labouring masses." Moreover, the Church now took an independent line in economics. Whilst denouncing capitalism, it also denounced "the materialistic and god-

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

Christians in general heartily dislike those true Christian texts in which Jesus advises people whose hands "offend" them to cut the beastly things off; and never, if they can help it, refer to such precious examples of the Holy Word. But throughout history there have always been Christians who take the teaching of Jesus literally. One of the latest examples is reported from Canada where a Joseph Chart-rant "hacked his left hand off in what was reported to have been an attack of religious mania." But is not such advice "religious mania"? If not, what is it?

But the cream of the report of this act of self-mutilation is that, when this fervent believer in the words of Jesus recovers, he will probably "be charged by the police under the mental Diseases Act." What are we coming to? In Catholic-ridden Canada, a man who literally obeys Christ Jesus is going to be charged as a harmful lunatic!

As is well known "harvest prayers" are generally packed with supplications for rain but, according to the *Daily Mirror*, "two Free Church ministers in a rain-drenched area have rejected farmers' pleas that they should pray for better weather." The Prayer Book says we should pray for rain, and any prayers for sunshine instead are clearly heretical and undoubtedly blasphemous. We therefore support Christ and the Prayer Book and, of course, the two ministers. As one vicar put it: "We ought to thank God for what he is giving us. God knows best." Hear, hear.

Those doughty Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses, have been holding a Conference in Walthamstow, and they are having another later in Shoreditch. Next year there will be one organised on international lines with at least 100,000 delegates from the U.S.A., Canada and Asian and European countries. It is hoped to beat the Rev. B. Graham's enormous numbers of converts—that is, if he made any converts. This should be easy. Anybody who could swallow the Rev. Billy's sermons ought to have no difficulty in swallowing everything Jehovah's Witnesses can cough up. The people who put Christianity on the map never thought, we are sure, that one day they would be responsible for these Heavenly Witnesses. And now they know. What a heavy burden to bear for evermore!

All the same, these numbers of the Witnesses pale into insignificance beside those the B.B.C. Religious Listener Research Department, which is behind a coming Radio Mission, hopes to get. They expect to make 10,000,000 people listen to their religious broadcasts and convert them into regular churchgoers. So far, these listeners are contemptuously considered to be only "armchair Christians" by the average parson, but it is hoped that soon there will be immense queues outside all Britain's Churches struggling to get in, and swallow not merely God's Precious Word, but all the Precious Words emanating from our fighting parsons. In some quarters, there will also be a house-to-house canvass. And will the Radio Mission succeed? Well, did Billy Graham's Mission succeed?

It is not only at Christian pilgrimages that God Almighty sometimes makes mistakes and kills off numerous pilgrims through accidents or disease. Islam's only God, Allah, can also fail his devoted followers. For example, 1,000 Muslim pilgrims were recently killed in one of the worst floods Persia has ever known. It occurred at the shrine of Imam Zadeh and whole families—men, women and children—were wiped out. In his wonderful mercy Allah, like our own God Jehovah, knows what is best for his

adorers, and this even includes the typhoid epidemic which is now attacking the survivors. Somehow religion, here, there and everywhere, is the same.

Whether the colour bar in South Africa is right or wrong, the truth is that, as Canon Collins declared after a two months' tour there, "the Church in South Africa is riddled with the colour bar." In other words all are *not* one in Christ. But are they in England? How many Canons or Bishops would take unto themselves a wife from the Matabele or Kaffir tribes? What would a respectable country congregation say if the young curate were proudly to bring in as wife a coloured damsel from the Solomon Islands in distinctive native costume or lack of costume? Is not the cry about a colour bar being "not of Christ" rank hypocrisy?

According to the Registrar-General more people than ever are marrying in register offices. Perhaps they are doing so because they are finding out that the only legal marriage in this country is that before a properly appointed registrar and, without such an appointment, the marriage is not legal even if it is performed by a vicar or a priest or a rabbi. They can do and say what they like at a wedding, but the only legal marriage is the *secular* one. Religious papers please copy.

Overheard in the street where some youngsters were playing with bows and arrows:—

First boy: "That's the highest. I'll bet that arrow hit God in the eye."

Second boy: "Don't be daft!"

First boy: "Bet you it did. God is everywhere." Sounds a pretty safe bet to us.

CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION

(Continued from page 307)

less" philosophy of socialism, which, indeed, Pope Pius had condemned already as early as 1846.

The learned European historian, R. Fuclop-Miller, informs us that the idea of *Rerum Novarum* was suggested to Leo by Isaac Pereire, an ex-socialist and pupil of the famous French Socialist, Henri de St. Simon. In his letter to the Pope, Pereire, repeating, no doubt, the thought of St. Simon, declared to the Pope that the Future lay with the working classes; and that the Catholic Church, by allying itself exclusively with the propertied classes, was thus mortgaging its future in the succeeding centuries, when the disinherited masses would come into their own. In this declaration, Pereire, in fact, stated what was to be, and what remains to-day, the principle dilemma of the Catholic Church in "The Century of the Common Man." Leo's political genius is amply proved by his recognition of this fact! In the 20th century, the Catholic Church must retain, or recover, the effective allegiance of the masses who, for the first time in History, are now entering the stage which they will henceforth dominate. In *Rerum Novarum*, the Pope first seriously addressed himself to that fundamental problem, with which the survival of the Church was, henceforth, bound up. One can, if one wishes to particularise, define the date of that mark in Catholic sociology, "The Workers' Charter," as the actual birthday of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in the political and social spheres, May 15, 1891. A red-letter day in the annals of "Christian Democracy"! Newman, who died only the year before its publication (1890), did not survive to witness this remarkable example of "Development" in the social sphere.

(To be continued)

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

- J. DOWDING.—Thanks for drawing our attention to the article by G. B. Shaw on Homosexuality.
- J. E. WILLIAMS.—Prior to the 17th century, cases of blasphemy came within the purview of the Ecclesiastical Courts; then came the Statute of William III, described by Lord Justice Coleridge as ferocious and inhuman.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- J. CLAYTON'S LECTURES.—Friday, September 24, 7-30 p.m., Worsthorne; Sunday, September 26, 3-15 p.m., Padiham; 7-30 p.m., Blackburn Market.
- 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.).—Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- 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. At Deansgate Blitzed Site, 7-30 p.m.: C. MCCALL.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, September 26, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, September 26, 6-30 p.m., Old Market Square: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—F. A. RIDLEY, H. ARTHUR, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD and W. J. O'NEILL. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon St., off New St.).—Sunday, September 26, 7 p.m., E. W. SHAW, "The Jesuit in Modern Society."
- Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society), Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.—Friday, September 24, 7-15 p.m.: Lecture: "The Pacifist Movement To-day."
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland St., Room 7).—Thursday, September 23, 7-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Belief, Unbelief and Make Belief."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 26, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "The Advancement of Science."
- Streatham Debating Society (White Lion Hotel, Streatham).—Friday, September 24, 7-45 p.m.: Debate: "That Secularism Includes all that Mankind Needs for Social and Moral Progress." For, P. VICTOR MORRIS; against, Rev. O. FIELDING-CLARK.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead).—Thursday, September 23, 8 p.m.: Open Meeting.

Notes and News

Billy Graham held a revival in Stockholm, Sweden, which was attended by 23,000 persons, of whom about 200 (Christians) were converted (to Christianity), not even enough to pay for expenses. A Swedish paper remarks: "Billy came, he saw, he conquered not!"

On October 5, Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann will be the Guest of Honour of the National Liberal Club in London—although not a member of the Liberal Party—and will debate the Sabbatarian question against Mr. Harold Legerton, Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society.

Mr. Du Cann will uphold the position that "the Sabbath" is made for man and not for the Lord's Day Observance Society, and that Jesus Christ, as a Sabbath-breaker, set the Society a precept and an example which they should faithfully follow.

Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

STATEMENT FROM THE HONORARY EDITORIAL COMMITTEE OF THE FREETHINKER

THE appeal printed in our pages for support of The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund to help *The Freethinker*, comes at a critical time in the history of our Movement.

For many years *The Freethinker* has stood for the championing of unpopular causes; for liberty of thought and speech. Many of the causes that we fought for have now been won, largely through the unselfish efforts of men and women who valued freedom. To-day we find that many of the liberties that we thought had been won for all time, are being slowly undermined by the growing forces of reaction. Everywhere we see intolerance and superstition, backed by huge financial interests, out to prevent truth and perpetrate error.

We have had the Harringay Circus of Mr. Billy Graham, with its hysterical emotionalism and its appeal to primitive beliefs, long since discarded by even the intelligent clergy of the Christian Churches.

Vast sums have been raised by movements such as the Dr. Frank Buchman's Oxford Group, where thousands of pounds were spent on buying a London theatre from which to put across what is called "moral rearmament." This organisation has been well and truly exposed by Sir Alan Herbert, but it seems to have made little difference to the dupes who support it. It is interesting, if even pitiful, to see the large amounts of money raised by worthless people for worthless causes.

In addition to the hysterical appeal of these movements to the emotions and not to reason, we have the much greater danger of the growing power and insolence of the Roman Catholic Church—the richest, numerically the largest, and politically the most corrupt of all the Christian bodies.

Every great war has been followed by a period of inertia, weariness and a desire to escape from realities, and the Churches take full advantage of this state of mind to put forward propaganda to prevent the people from thinking.

Now comes the Clarion Call to the Freethinkers, Secularists, Rationalists and Liberals of this land. In the words of Tom Paine "These are the times that try men's souls."

Our forefathers fought and won, to a great extent, the battle for individual freedom: we must not betray that heritage.

Everywhere we see Liberal papers fighting for their very existence—many have already crashed. It would be a tragedy to every lover of liberty if a similar fate were to befall our *Freethinker*, and it will, if substantial help is not forthcoming.

We must, therefore, have the sinews of war to win—in this case, *money*. Give us the money and we will carry on the work in the same spirit as Bradlaugh, Foote, Cohen and McCabe have done.

Coming to practical details, we want our readers, not only to support the present appeal, but we are going to ask for a guaranteed amount to be given every year. We know that many of our people are poor in pocket but rich in hope and courage. A guaranteed sum of even forty shillings per year would represent a little over 9d. per week—for smokers, the price of five cigarettes; and to make it still easier the amount could be paid in instalments.

If we had a thousand friends who would do this it would, at a minimum, bring in £2,000 a year; would help to save *The Freethinker* and rid us of this ever-present worry and heartbreak.

There is one thing we have to admit about Christians—

they do pay up to maintain their superstitions. They are also better at appealing for funds.

If The Secular Society Limited had the amount of money paid in any week in this country alone for the swindle of Masses for the Dead, we should have, instead of an 8-paged paper, one double the size, which would enable the Free-thought point of view to be read by thousands who had never even heard of it.

Why Men Persecute

By W. GLANVILLE COOK

WHEN the Christian church itself obtained the power to persecute, it exercised that power. Prof. J. B. Bury says the Church introduced into the public law of Europe a new principle, that the soveran held his crown on the condition that he should extirpate heresy. As a consequence, the heretical peoples of Albigenes and the Waldenses were virtually wiped out with wholesale burnings and hangings of men, women and children.

Later, in Spain, persecution wrought fearful havoc; thousands were burnt at the stake, and several millions of Moors and Jews were ruthlessly driven out.

In the ranks of the persecutors, we must place men like Calvin, the theocrat of Geneva, and rulers such as Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth, who persecuted the Catholics.

In our own day, after six thousand years of civilisation, we have seen one of the most advanced countries of the world given up to a blood bath such as never been seen before. Hitler and his Nazis set out with the deliberate intention of exterminating a whole people, the Jews. Wherever the Nazis had the power to do their bloody work the hapless Jew, the scapegoat for the failures of Fascism, met with torture and death. This wholesale massacre of a people was part of the deliberate policy of the German High Command.

So we ask again: "Why do men persecute?" Will it be that men must always persecute? or can we find the cause of so much horror, and remove that cause for ever? It is impossible to answer these questions in a few minutes, but we can make some stimulating comments.

First of all we consider the motive force that drives an individual to take delight in persecution. Through modern psychology we have learnt of the Sadist, the perverted individual who obtains sexual pleasure through the infliction of pain.

I think it will rarely, if ever, be found that the instigator and prime mover in cruelties and persecutions is a person leading a normal healthy sex life. The happy family man whose personality is harmonious and integrated is not likely to be a wanton persecutor.

But many people who are not sadists, can be induced to support the persecutor. This is because there is a strain of cruelty in every human being, part of our inheritance from our animal and savage ancestry. It is inseparable from the urge to self-assertion, the craving to exercise power that is in us all.

Under suitable circumstances, this element of cruelty comes to the fore. Bitter frustration will give rise to anger, cruelty and hatred. When the two most powerful urges we experience, the sex urge, and the will to power, are frustrated, there is an impulse to hurt, to inflict pain, to strike back at the more fortunate. After the First World War the German people were greatly humiliated, and this meant they could be easily led by the sadistic persecutors who led the Nazi Party. It must be remembered that deliberate cruelty is not a characteristic of great strength, but of weakness. Deliberate cruelty is the mark of men and women who feel

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their weakness and resent it. The cruel person makes a declaration of his own fears, his own feeling of insecurity.

When we turn from the psychology of the individual who persecutes to the social background of persecution, we find the same fear motive predominant.

It has been argued that when any belief is held as an absolute truth, held as a dogma with fanatical devotion, it leads to ruthless intolerance. This is so whether the belief be a political or a religious one. It is therefore suggested that the first necessity for tolerance of opposing beliefs is a measure of doubt. This is a logical argument, but does not meet all the factors in the situation. It will be found that when mass persecutions take place there is some compelling economic cause for which the intellectual beliefs in question are a cloak.

The Roman Emperors who persecuted the Christians did so because they feared the new cult. Its secret practices and its refusal to pay the customary reverence to the statues of deified Emperors seemed to mark it as treasonable, anti-social, a threat to the power and privilege of the time. It was a political danger. Therefore it was persecuted. Again it has been found that to concentrate the hatred of the people upon an unpopular minority is an easy way to get national unity. Persecution becomes a political weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous ruler, who thus imposes his will on his people.

The history of tyranny shows that when a despotic ruler feels insecure he uses pogroms and terror trials to divert the attention of his people. In this way he consolidates his hold on the people. The Czars of Russia launched pogroms against the Jews when the people began to murmur about the injustices and hardships of their lot. In the same way, Fascism persecuted the Jews so as to hide from the people the real cause of their woes.

Therefore, if we wish to remove, or at least lessen, the danger of persecutions, we should do three things.

1. Establish a sane sex ethic based on expression and fulfilment, and not on repression and inhibition. Frustrated people are a danger. There must also be a proper system of sex education for the young.

2. Establish a just society, because a privileged class will tend to persecute if it feels that it is threatened.

3. This new society must embody, in an effective way, the principles of the Atlantic Charter. There must be freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom from insecurity. (Extracted from a radio talk in Australia by the Editor of the *Rationalist*).

WAR

In the past, wars and conquests have no doubt done much to accelerate human progress by breaking up tradition-systems that threatened to become rigid and facilitating the establishment of larger and more efficient unities; but that was a phase out of which we have passed, and there can be little question now of the biological disadvantage which rests upon our species through the present preoccupation with war and war organisation.—H. G. WELLS.

A Rationalist Looks at Hymns and Hymnwriters

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

(President, N.Z. Rationalist Association)

A LONDON cablegram in our, New Zealand, paper *The Auckland Star* informs us that "official, but so far unannounced, moves are about to eventually beatify and canonize Cardinal Newman, who died in Birmingham in 1890."

To millions the name of Newman brings remembrance of his famous hymn, *Lead Kindly Light*, No. 266 in *Hymns, Ancient and Modern*. It doubtless owes not a little of its sustained popularity among church-goers to the fine tune written by the Reverend Dykes, Mus. Bac. This was certainly the opinion of Newman himself. The hymn was written in Newman's Anglican and Oxford Movement days and was not written (as I once heard expressed) "the night before he went over to Rome."

Newman's great literary gifts are acknowledged by Rationalists, as they are by members of the Church he left, but he was a man with "the mediæval mind" and held "fierce thoughts against liberals." As the virtual leader of the Oxford Movement he was fervently evangelical; later he passed through his "doubt" period, and in 1845, harbouring (so it has been said) something akin to contempt for Anglicanism, he passed over to Rome, henceforth—for him, the "one Fold of Christ."

ROCK OF AGES

One hundred and twelve years before Newman died, the writer of another famous hymn died—the Rev. Toplady, Vicar of Broadhambury, author of *Rock of Ages*, a hymn which Gladstone presumably was very fond of, as it was sung at his funeral.

Toplady was a bitter Calvinist and carried on a relentless war against John Wesley. His hymn, *Rock of Ages*, appeared in the *Gospel Magazine* of which he was editor. Toplady was a strong critic of the Budgets of those days, and said the National Debt could never be paid off. Perhaps he was right, but what would he have said of Britain's Budgets of the past decade with their fantastic rearmament figures?

Today, this country parson, if living, would certainly be described as a "religious crank." There are, of course, many of these about, but usually they are outside the fold of Anglicanism, which is still very "respectable" company (much more so than Rationalism). Toplady's mind was warped by religion, but he revelled in lugubrious mathematical exercises; his speciality was computing sins. Taking a child of ten, Toplady reckoned that the youngster had committed 315 millions and 360,000 sins. At the age of twenty the sins numbered 630 millions, plus 720,000; at thirty, 946 millions, plus 80,000. At the age of eighty, the appalling figure stood at 2,522 millions, plus 880,000. There must have been many saner people under restraint.

Of course the "blood of Jesus" could wipe out these sins, and perhaps the debt of England (if the bond-holders were willing).

As already mentioned, Toplady was bitter and narrow. The humanising of religion, the birth of the welfare state, the era of penal reform could never have come from such as the Rev. Toplady. This brings us to a central point in the history of hymnody, which is that a large percentage of those who wrote the "established" hymns came from privileged classes. They lived in good homes, wore fine clothes and did not have to budget, as did the English labourer of those days, for tea, bread, and lard for their daily tea.

PROTESTANTISM PROLIFIC CAUSE OF HYMNWRITING

Hymns and hymnsinging came as a result of Protestantism. Calvin, however, would have none of them. The "father" of English hymnwriting is perhaps Dr. Watts. Some of his hymns are sung to this day, although he died as long ago as 1748.

John and Charles Wesley both wrote a vast number of hymns, but it was the Victorian Age which witnessed the great orgy of hymnwriting. Hymn book after hymn book came off the printing press. Children and adults sang of angels, of golden harps, of "a closer walk with God," of the "Church's one foundation," "Friend for little children" (up in the sky), and so on. In city and hamlet, in the ancient cathedrals of England, far away in the new lands of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, new settlers sang lustily, *Onward, Christian Soldiers* to Sullivan's superb tune. It was "the age of hymnsinging," of poor wages and long hours.

DR. WATTS'S HYMNS ON HELL FOR CHILDREN

Earlier mention was made of Dr. Watts. He gained much repute as a hymnwriter and had a considerable output, including one hymn which Matthew Arnold has described as "the best hymn in the English language," *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. But there is another side to Watts's hymnwriting—those monstrous children's hymns designed to strike terror in the minds of tender children—the fears and visions of hell-fire. Here is one of his children's hymns; it appeared in *Divine Songs* (for the use of children) in the year 1715:

"There is a dreadful Hell
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire and chains."

Here is verse 3 of another of Watts's hymns (this one also written for children):

"There endless crowds of sinners lie
And darkness makes their chains:
Tortured with keen despair they cry,
Yet wait for fiercer pains."

Today we have Societies for the Protection of Women and Children. We need legislation making it a criminal offence to pollute the minds of children with such stuff as the pious Dr. Watts (and many who followed him) wrote for the "edification" of pure innocent minds.

SEA HYMNS

What shall we say of the hymns for those in peril on the sea? The best known, probably, is

"Eternal Father, strong to save."

Poetically, it is a good piece of writing and set to a fine tune by the Rev. Dykes. But when one calls to mind the thousands, perhaps millions, who have been drowned in icy waters, dashed and battered on rocks, eaten by sharks, died of thirst on rafts, or maddened by drinking salt water, it is surely time that people saw the futility of

"O Christ, whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word."

It is better, far better, to put trust in the captain and chief engineer.

—NEXT WEEK—

SOME NOTES ON "BLASPHEMY"

By H. CUTNER

Our Catholic Critic

By G. H. TAYLOR

WE appreciate the constant attention shown by Fr. G. M. Paris, as evidenced in his frequent and ample correspondence. He will not expect us to publish every epistle, and we shall here deal with certain verbatim extracts which condense his arguments.

(1) "Matter, as we know it, has not in itself any principle of absolute existence. But once it exists it must have been *determined* to come to being. Matter, therefore, did not come to be out of itself, because matter as such is indifferent to be or not to be. It must therefore have had its determination to be by some external other being different from, and superior to, matter. The existence of matter, therefore, presupposes something (or rather, Someone), which (Who) had brought it from non-existent to existent."

Our answers shall be similarly condensed. We do not pretend to know what matter looked like when it was non-existent. The process by which this inscrutable non-existent essence was taken hold of by an equally inscrutable Someone and made to exist, is a process unknown to science, though doubtless revealed to Fr. Paris. Incidentally, the subtle transition in the argument from "something" to "Someone," from "which" to "Who," i.e., from the impersonal to the personal, is logically unwarranted. It was the step made in *Summa Theologica* quite fortuitously ("And this all men call God"). If God made matter who made God? If everything must be brought into being *ex nihilo*, so must God. But if anything can exist *per se*, why should it not be the matter we know, instead of the God we don't know? The principle of Parsimony (Occam's "razor") rules out further retrogression.

(2) "What is the cause of, and to, itself, must be absolutely necessary. It must have existence in, and of, itself. It must *necessarily* exist. . . . On Durandus's opinion that primordial matter was God, St. Thomas commented: 'It is the most stupid thing on earth to say so'."

We are not convinced that the Durandus-Aquinas argument was particularly clever—on either side. Fr. Paris is withholding from the noumenon matter the property of self-existence and bestowing it on another noumenon (God). Arbitrarily to deny self-existence to the only noumenon of which we can form any notion, and to which science points, is to take upon himself the task of showing (a) that matter (or the substance of which matter is a primary phenomenalisation) is precluded from doing something which is done by some noumenon or other; (b) that another noumenon exists; and (c) that it is God.

(3) "Materialists do not ponder enough the distinction between *essentis* (the essence of a thing) and *existentis* (the act by which the thing actually exists). To confound these two things in one and the same thing would be to give necessity of being to matter; eternal, most perfect immutable, absolutely necessary, infinite; qualities which, of course, cannot be attributed to matter."

The argument from *essentis* was a theory *ad hoc* taken from logic and made into an ontology, whereas logic does not include ontology. The idea of a realm of essences from which ingressions are made into concrete material occasions has been out-dated by the critical realist analysis of similarity, showing there is no need to grant our concepts the status of ontological essences repeatedly instanced in matter. X is black; Y is black; the concept of blackness is reached without any factor of "blackness" having prior existence. Surely the mind can repeat the same meaning just as the organism can repeat the same action. Similarly *essentis* is subsequent to, nor prior to, *existentis*.

(4) "To say that nature is a cause of itself . . . without having any purpose, is the acme of stupidity, and to add that individuals have purpose is to deny to the Whole what one admits of its parts. Is it not an absurdity to say that the parts have a purpose and that the Whole formed by the parts has no purpose at all? Is not the Whole more important than its parts? Are not the parts intended for the Whole?"

In so far as living organisms have evolved (as an extreme rarity in time and space) and in so far as an infinitesimal few of the more complex have evolved purposive activity, then the whole contains these finite purposes. It has no purpose as a whole. Moreover, these piecemeal purposes, lodged in the heads of men, are often mutually antagonistic. There is no evidence of "cosmic purpose." There are evolved purposes. Purpose is the offspring of evolution, not its parent.

Fr. Paris (possibly a neo-Thomist?) makes frequent use of Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor is not a very stable anchor these days. His time is divided from ours by the immense strides made by science and philosophy. His logic and maths cannot be expected to stand against the knowledge of our day. For instance, the Oxford Maths course in his day only went up to the 5th Proposition of Book I (Euclid). Such was the quality of St. Thomas's mind that he would without doubt have assimilated Newton and Einstein without difficulty. But in doing so he would probably have become an atheist.

Correspondence

SECULAR EDUCATION

I would like to invite letters from your readers who have or have had children at school and have asked for them to be exempted from attending at religious worship and religious instruction to give their impressions about it. How did the children react when they found themselves singled out and what was the attitude of the teachers and the other children towards them? Also, have they been provided with proper secular work during the time usually devoted to religious instruction by their fellow pupils? I have just asked for such an exemption for my young boy, who is going to start school, and I would be very interested to know of other people's experiences.

May I draw the attention of your readers on a very interesting book by Bertrand Russell, the well-known philosopher, called "Education and the Social Order" (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., Museum Street, London, 1932-33-47), in which he criticises very severely the teachings of religion in schools. All Freethinkers should certainly read this valuable book, of which I give the following extract which concerns directly the above questions:—

"Our world contains grave evils, which can be remedied if men wish to remedy them. Those who are aware of these evils and fight against them are likely, it is true, to have less everyday happiness than those who acquiesce in the *status quo*. But in place of everyday happiness they will have something which I, for my part, value more highly, both for myself and for my children. They will have the sense of doing what lies in their power to make the world less painful. They will have a more just standard of values than is possible for the easy-going conformist. They will have the knowledge that they are among those who prevent the human race from sinking into stagnation and despair. This is something better than slothful contentment, and if a free education promotes this, parents ought not to shrink from the incidental pains which it may involve for their children."

J. TODDIE.

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