

The Freethinker

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THE Roman Catholic Church is to-day, beyond any question, the most ubiquitous and dangerous enemy of social and intellectual progress in general, and of free-thought in particular. As a world-religion, only Islam, the creed of Muhammad and the Koran, is, perhaps, equal to it in power, but Islam, so far, at least, has never displayed any comparable vitality and adaptability in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. Whilst, in the sphere of totalitarian politics, only International Communism displays a similar vitality, in which respect, however, the late Dean Inge once commented, "Red Internationals come and go; but the 'Black International,' viz., the Roman Catholic Church, remains." It is an historical judgment founded upon successive experiences.

Catholic Action

The Church of Rome, however, whilst fixed and constant in its fundamental objective, World-power, has always manifested an extreme flexibility, where its *means* were concerned. In which last sense there is, no doubt, much truth in the old critique that the Vatican has always, *in practice*, accepted the axiom, "The end justifies the means." In successive ages, Rome operates with successive tools. In the Middle Ages, she operated with the Dominicans and with the Holy Inquisition. In the changed atmosphere engendered by the Reformation, it was the Jesuits who came to the fore. Nowadays, in an age of mass-parties and of "pressure-groups," it is *Catholic Action*, which appears to represent the principal weapon of Rome in its relationships with the world beyond its boundaries.

Mass-action

"Catholic Action" is mass-action. Its distinguishing feature from early ecclesiastical movements, like the Benedictines and the Franciscans, lies in its special character as a *lay* organisation. As mass-"action" of the laity under, of course, the direction of the Catholic Hierarchy and of its Totalitarian chief, the Papacy. For "Catholic Action" represents the first mass-organisation of the laity since the Middle Ages, when the Church organised her "crusades" for the recovery, in the first instance, of Jerusalem from the rule of the Turkish "infidels." To-day, similarly, the Catholic laity are enrolled in the mass-organisation of "Catholic Action" for a modern political crusade against the currently dangerous enemies of the Church: materialism, atheism, communism, the major "heresies" of our own day. It is this character as a *mass* movement of the *laity*, under the special instructions of the Vatican, that gives present-day "Catholic Action" its special characteristic *vis-à-vis* the modern world.

Alternative Clerical Strategies

Politically, in its relationship with the non-Catholic world outside its gates, the Church of Rome has always practised *alternative* clerical strategies. These follow

according to prescribed patterns. For example, where the Catholic Church has attained its final goal of absolute supremacy over both its contemporary state and over the contemporary culture, then it seeks to reduce the whole current pattern of life to absolute submission to the Church: mediæval Europe in its "Age of Faith" represents the classic example of this clerical absolutist pattern; whilst in modern (Franco) Spain, it still closely approximates to it. In such clerically dominated societies there is not, and there cannot be, any relation between the Church and forces

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Action Against Catholic "Action"?

By F. A. RIDLEY

in society independent of its control; since in such societies there are no forces or institutions independent of the all-powerful Church. In such societies the Church orders, and the secular power obeys. For example, in *theory*, the Roman Catholic Church *never* killed anyone; it was the *secular* state which nominally committed the heretic to the flames of the Inquisition. Actually, of course, when the Church had once pronounced the heretic as guilty, the state authorities had either to kill the heretic or else to share his fate! The above, we repeat, represents the *ideal* strategy of the Church in its relations with secular society. But, like most ideal solutions, it needs ideal conditions to implement it. These ideal conditions existed, from the point of view of the Church, in the Spain of Torquemada. Outside one or two backward lands, they do *not* exist in the modern world, even the modern Catholic world. Here, changed conditions require an alternative strategy. North of the Pyrenees it is this alternative strategy which prevails to-day.

Pressure-groups

In the "democratic" lands of the modern world, with its huge electorates and innumerable "pressure-groups," it is rarely possible for any single dictatorship to last for more than, at most, a brief period. Here, accordingly, the Catholic Church, always worldly wise where its own interests are concerned, adapts itself to the given *milieu*. We are all Democrats—with a capital D—nowadays! Even the Pope, despite his totalitarian infallibility! In democratic lands the Church works, not through open dictatorships, but through secret "pressure-groups": "Christian Democracy," "The Sword of the Spirit," above all, "Catholic Action," are the political tools through which the Vatican works. Like other secular Fascist groups who learned their political strategy originally from the old firm, the Vatican uses democratic methods in order to, the more surely, prepare the way for its own eventual dictatorship.

Various Tactics

The tactics of the Vatican are as varied as is its strategy. Recent examples indicate this underlying fact. In Belgium recently, "Catholic Action" openly went into action on the streets of Brussels and of other Belgian cities; when threatened in its control of education, that cherished monopoly of the Catholic Church, "Catholic Action" demon-

strated and rioted on the streets, seeking to bring down by force, or by the threat of force, the secularly-minded government which had dared to interfere with its control of the minds of the rising generation. Simultaneously, at the other end of the world, in Australia, "Catholic Action" delves deep into the underworld of political intrigue, where it surreptitiously splits the Labour Party, in order to oust its present Protestant leader, Dr. Evatt, so as to lead a clerically-controlled Labour Party into the world drive against "atheistic Bolshevism." Whilst in England, Roman Catholic spokesmen came out openly with denunciations of the established "Church of England" as effete, divided, and on the verge of extinction. Whilst, simultaneously, Rome withdraws from collaboration with the inter-denominational "Council of Churches." Here we shall soon be seeing "Catholic Action" mobilising the Faithful against the Established Church. It is a plank in the current platform of "Catholic Action." Perhaps we shall soon see the Catholic press reprinting articles from *The Freethinker* on the desirability of Disestablishing the present Church of England! To make room, of course, eventually, for the "One True Church of Rome."

No Longer Held Sacred

By FRANK HILL (Sydney)

AGAIN, in Sydney this year, the annual show was held over Easter-week, with the gates open on Good Friday, day and evening, and everything proceeding as on weekdays—the wood-chopping competition, trotting events, and side-shows of every description. As in the past, the Good Friday attendance was between 175,000 and 200,000, and included visitors from all the other States.

For years the protest from the churches against the opening of the show on Good Friday has been led by Dr. Mowll, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, who has declared, again and again, that this is the only place in the English-speaking world where that day, so far from not being religiously observed, is given up, frankly and unabashedly, to secularism.

The public are not compelled to attend the show on Good Friday. It is entirely a matter of their voluntarily doing so. If, therefore, among these enormous gatherings there are any Christians, they could show the sincerity of their belief by not attending the show. Still, the fact is, they *do* attend. Doesn't this clearly prove one of two things—either that their Christianity is wholly a matter of lip-service, or that they defiantly reject whatever restraints that their respective churches seek to impose upon them?

At all events, the 175,000 to 200,000 attendances go to show that, by that number at least, Sydney is not a Christian community, despite the repeated clerical claims made to this effect.

Sermons on the Sunday following Good Friday, in most of the churches, consisted of a ranting denunciation of this long-established "desecration" of Good Friday. Admittedly, the day should be one of the most sacred of the year to adherents of the Christian faith, and all the more significant, for that reason, is Sydney's wide and emphatic rejection of the claims made for it. Abridged reports of many of the sermons have appeared in our daily papers, and from these a few extracts are here given, in the way of showing the fatuities to which the clergy can indulge, and the contempt with which the public are justified in regarding them.

Archbishop Mowll: "Those who believe physical death is the end are a small minority. The argument for the life beyond is derived from the consideration of the character of God. Because God is what He is, He will never allow man to perish."

Action Against "Catholic Action"?

Modern democratic communities are the happy hunting grounds of "pressure-groups." The art of "pressure-politics" is one in which the Vatican excels. In a political society like ours, where the major parties are so evenly balanced, "pressure-groups" like "Catholic Action" in its various aliases, has a field of action peculiarly suited to that talent for intrigue of which Rome has always been the past master. Unfortunately, in this country, at present, there is no political movement of an openly freethinking character which, as such, will *act* against "Catholic Action." Is it not the time and place to think seriously about creating one? Ours is a political rather than an intellectual age. The present writer, for one, would welcome a return on the part of the contemporary Freethought movement to the *political* militancy of the Bradlaugh era, when *political* action supplemented intellectual criticism. For the present world-wide activities of "Catholic Action" serve to reinforce the famous *dictum* of a French political Freethinker:

"Clericalism: there's our main enemy!"

Rev. Father E. Barrett: "If Christ could raise Himself to life why may he not raise others? If He could raise Himself from the dead, clothed in the very flesh in which He was crucified and died, why not may we, by the same omnipotence, be restored to life in those same bodies in which we are clothed during life? His power is unchangeable."

Rev. Gordon Powell: "Businessmen who made Jesus their Senior Partner found that He lifted a great load from their shoulders. The sense of His Presence kept believers up to their best. Because He kept His promise to be with us always, men would be celebrating Easter when all other human institutions had passed away."

With the experience of the Sydney Show before him, the Rev. G. Powell might well have avoided the claim he makes in his concluding sentence, for Easter—it is being shown—is by no means the revered thing in all parts of the world that he would like to make out. Nor will such vapourings as those disclosed in the above quotations do anything but further alienate the public in general from the appeals of pulpiteers of all sects.

A Secularist at Church

Mr. J. L. Shepherd, a member of the West Ham and District Branch of the N.S.S. who is always on the look-out for opportunities of advancing the movement, suggested to a member of the Discussion Group of St. Mary Woolnoth, one of the old City of London churches, that they ought to learn something of freethought. This led to their being visited by the Society's Secretary on April 28 and being told what "Atheism and Secularism" meant to one who adopted these points of view. Mr. Morris defined atheism, not as "denying the existence of God" (which he described as a religious definition), but as being without a belief in any of the gods invented by mankind and modified by society according to the knowledge and ethical ideas of the age. He agreed that atheism was a negative point of view, "as negative as slum clearance, anti-slavery and the fight against poverty and disease." Its positive aspect was to be found in Secularism, of whose history and ideas he gave a brief outline. Questions and opposition from the Vicar, the Rev. Mr. Hopkinson, and members of the Group, showed praiseworthy efforts at toleration, but the candid answers they evoked from the speaker were not calculated to soothe the rising indignation of one or two present. The Vicar thanked the visitor, for whom, he said, the Group could only be sorry, while Mr. Morris expressed his pleasure at having been allowed to sow a few seeds that might germinate in due course.

Einstein (1879-1955)

By G. H. TAYLOR

ON April 18 in New Jersey, died the most brilliant mathematician-physicist of our times, Prof. Albert Einstein. He had been an American citizen since 1940, having been driven from Germany in 1933 as an opponent of Nazism. His anti-nationalist views in 1914 had also made him unpopular in the land of his birth.

It is extremely probable that the Nazis came to regret losing such a brilliant brain, for it was Einstein's famous Equation linking mass and energy which provided the theoretical basis for the fission of uranium, resulting in the atom bomb.

In the early weeks of 1945 Hitler, in his last desperate piece of bluff, said: "May God forgive me for the last week of the war." He was no doubt hoping against hope that Germany's atomic researches would be completed in time to save the impending disaster. But in 1939 Einstein told President Roosevelt of such possibilities.

Bertrand Russell's speech at Rome, which we reported in these columns, exactly expressed the views of Einstein, who desired such a united declaration by the world's scientists. He was one of the first men of science to denounce the Bikini atoll experiments as making for insecurity. He also threw in his weight against the McCarthy heresy-hunting.

In the field of science Einstein has been the turning-point, the revolutionary. The geometry of Euclid and the physics of Newton are now seen in their proper respective, and are subsumed in the more comprehensive Einsteinian system. It was in 1905 that Einstein's theories of Relativity began to be formulated. They are the Special Theory and the General Theory, the latter very highly technical.

Naturally, the news that Newtonian physics had only a limited application was hailed with delight by the religious party, who soon twisted the news into such untruths as "Newton is exploded!" "Materialism is dead!" This, however, was not the opinion of Einstein, and it is sufficient to reply to such opponents, "*Einstein embraces, not replaces, Newton.*" They are incapable of understanding further. To be quite fair, we may exclude Bishop Barnes and a few others of the more intelligent, from our criticism here. Barnes, himself no mean mathematician, was not led into this ignorant mob of Christian apologists. "Such writers," says Bertrand Russell,

"have not grasped the great idea of successive approximations. No man who has the scientific temper asserts that what is now believed in science is *exactly* right; he asserts that it is a stage on the road towards the exact truth. When a change occurs in science, as, for example, from Newton's law of gravitation to Einstein's, what has been achieved is not overthrown, but is replaced by something slightly more accurate." (*The Scientific Outlook.*)

The Newtonian system, now sometimes called Pre-Relativity Physics, worked with an absolute Space of points and an absolute Time of instants, with particles of matter each persisting throughout all time and occupying a point at each instant. It is now more convenient to think of space-time, or the *spatiotemporal continuum*, featured not by point-instants but events, leaving the possibility, as in Russell's philosophy (Neutral Monism) of a number of events overlapping at the same point.

Einstein revolutionised our ideas of time and space as Rutherford later revolutionised our ideas of the atom. Frames of space are relative, "absolute" distance meaningless. There is no "fundamental Time"; there are only local times. That is, there is no fixed background of points in space against which motion can be measured in absolute terms, and therefore no absolute flow of time to measure

intervals against. It is, as it were, our use of measuring rods that creates the need for the concept of "space," while "time" is similarly created by clocks and planets. Einstein "makes the existence of space-time dependent on matter. Without matter the whole universe would shrink to a point." (Sullivan, *The Bases of Science*).

Einstein got rid of our absolutes. This does not mean getting rid of *invariants*—e.g., mass \times velocity = Momentum. Relativity Physics can still work with co-variants and in-variants. The universe is not, as it were, higgledy-piggledy.

"The object of all science," Einstein wrote in his *Meaning of Relativity*, "is to co-ordinate our experiences and to bring them into a logical system." The old textbook divisions of Physics are now no more than a matter of convenience; one partition after another has been broken down. Matter and energy were reduced to a common denominator, and the conditions shown under which one was converted into the other. Fifty years of Physics has profited from the work started by Einstein in 1905; light and sound find a common basis in waves; and in 1949 Einstein linked electricity, magnetism and gravitation by a mathematical theory. The end of this is the unification of all physical concepts, and the vindication of monism in science, a materialistic monism more complete and satisfying than was possible for Haeckel, and on which we may have more to say in another article.

In several other matters also, Einstein made pronouncements which support materialism. When religious newspapers were scouting round for scientists who would support Eddington's indeterminism, construed by them as "free will in the atoms," Einstein was approached. "Look here," he said to his interviewer, "that nonsense is not merely nonsense. It is objectionable nonsense."

And in his preface to Max Planck's *Where is Science Going?*, Einstein remarks that "Indeterminism is quite an illogical concept."

So far as life after death was concerned, Einstein (who refused religious rites) said he could not believe that "the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbour such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotism." (*What I Believe*; symposium.)

Asked about his belief in God, he replied: "I believe in Spinoza's God—not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings."

To which Chapman Cohen (himself a follower of Spinoza) added: "And Spinoza's God is no God at all."

Moral Truths

It has been assumed so generally by sky-pilots that some theological dogma is necessary to every system of morality that the assumption needs direct contradiction. It is put to-day by the clericals who are attacking secular education for the young that without religious teaching there is no morality possible. This inaccuracy of speech is the result of centuries of supernaturalistic bias. To maintain, says a famous historian, that Christism bestowed on the world moral truths before unknown shows either gross ignorance or intentional fraud.—BRADLAUGH.

—NEXT WEEK—

CAN MATERIALISTS CLAIM EINSTEIN?
JIMMY MAXTON—A REVIEW

This Believing World

According to our pious "Daily Mail," the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Christian part of Jerusalem "is a disgrace to Christendom." It is crumbling away—"it betrays nothing but poverty" and that, "not of the saintly kind" This is the church which contains "the rock tomb of our Saviour" and, of course, is quite as big a fake as the Turin Shroud. It is supposed to have been built by Constantine about 324 A.D., and it certainly has been destroyed and rebuilt a number of times. As for the "rock tomb"—who guarantees its authenticity? The Church of Rome?

A Roman Catholic journalist, Mr. Macdonald Hastings, agrees that its present condition is a disgrace to Christendom, and for that reason, wishes it to disappear for "it is an unholy monument to human arrogance, religious intolerance, and unspeakable bad taste." And he complains that "there is no place in the Holy Sepulchre for those who wish to go alone—and perhaps pray." But not all people are taken in by this Holy Fraud; for one correspondent insists that "it cannot mark the actual site of our Lord's crucifixion and burial." All the *Daily Mail* can answer is that "modern scholarship accepts the site." Query—how does "modern scholarship" know?

It is interesting to note that, in the *New Statesman*, that eminent novelist, playwright, and broadcaster, Mr. J. B. Priestley, considers that the "theology" of the Rev. B. Graham is "at once incredible and repulsive," and he could find nothing new in it. "Its like," he declares, "can be found on any Sunday morning in any little Bethel." Mr. Priestley compares the incomparable Billy with that almost forgotten lady evangelist, Mrs. Aimee Macpherson, whose doctrine was exactly the same, but whose "publicity was childish" in comparison with that of Billy. No wonder she was a flop. But what a pity it is that Mr. Priestley is not allowed to broadcast what he thinks of the way the Rev. B. Graham is gathering in souls for Heaven.

In Glasgow, the Great Evangelist has been cheered by the sight of about 17,000 fervent Christians every night of whom at least 400 came forward "for Christ" in spite of his "incredible and repulsive" theology; though a writer in the *Sunday Times* does not think the ineffable Billy will lead Scotland back "towards the fundamental." He thinks, however, "they may reason themselves again in that direction," as if devout Christians ever reason about Christianity. They accept it on faith—for any little "reason" in the matter surely would make them unbelievers.

Now that Einstein is dead he is being credited with a thorough belief in God—of course, the Father of Jesus, the Lord Jehovah of the Jews, and not any other God. Spinoza also can be quoted as "the God-intoxicated man" but nobody who has read him—or Einstein for that matter—can really believe his God is the Jewish old gentleman of the Bible. At the moment, the Swiss psycho-analyst, Dr. C. C. Jung, is also learnedly talking about God and the need of religion for man. But none of these God believers go into detail. What or who is this God that they all talk about? Is it (or is he) a Being in Heaven with parts and passions like a mere man, or an ethereal Spirit, or what?

The truth is that our Theistic philosophers seem nearly always to fight shy of giving us a clear description of the God they so strongly believe in. In the ultimate, it appears to be their followers who wade in with any explanations,

and then we find "God" is the God of the Bible who was later "incarnated" into (or in) Jesus Christ. And therefore, God is equated with the God of the Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Plymouth Brethren, Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Christian Scientists—in fact, with all the other 600 Theistic sects, all of whom violently disagree with each other on any conception of God. That is, if anybody, in all this welter of opinion, has any conception whatever of "God."

Leicester Log

SHOULD ratepayers foot the bill for church repairs?

"A new answer is needed to the problem of Leicestershire's crumbling churches," says the *Illustrated Chronicle*. "Clergy throughout the County are growing more and more worried as the rot of old age spreads through church timbers. . . . And now it is suggested in some quarters that an allowance for repairs should be made out of local rates. Few of the 140 churches in the Leicester diocese have escaped the ravages of woodworm and rot. Repair bills are mounting. But public response to appeals for money is declining."

The *Chronicle* published a reply from "Atheist" containing the following: "I, too, am a ratepayer, and part of the money which I pay goes towards teaching in Leicester schools the Christian Religion which I do not believe in. Now, apparently, the churches, who pay no rates, wish me to pay out more money to support the tottering edifices of a dying religion whose followers have neglected their responsibilities for hundreds of years. The Secular Hall was opened 74 years ago. Unlike the churches it has to pay rates and, thanks to the support of its members, it has never had to beg from others. Do your duty, churchgoers, as we unbelievers do ours."

The Leicester Vaughan College is running a summer course on "Morals without Religion," in connection with the W.E.A. It is hoped that Freethinkers will be well represented at these lectures. Details from *The Freethinker* office or the Secular Hall.

The padre of the *Evening Mail* excelled himself at Easter when he declared that "To-day the Christian Church proclaims a message which is unique in the world and without parallel in history." (!)

Not that it will make any difference to the padre's future announcements on the subject, but merely for the sake of truth—to which he frequently seems to be a stranger—let it be said that the Christian Easter story is *not* unique, and has many parallels in history.

The Rev. A. H. Kirkby who writes an article every week for the *Leicester Chronicle* has a few words to say about church magazines. "The late Dick Sheppard was not impressed with them at all. He said that whenever he could lay his hands on a copy he destroyed it at once before it could do *any more* harm." No doubt he felt that the following was the recipe for church magazines:

"Take three handfuls of stale news, a cupful of ditch-water; a pinch of sauce; a teaspoonful of acid gossip; and a bucketful of saccharine sentiment. Mix any old how, and place in a dish which has been liberally greased with soft soap, set in a cold vestibule or porch for an indefinite period."

FOSSE.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers.
By William Kent. Price, cloth 6s.; paper 4s. 3d.;
postage, 3d.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

- C. NEWMAN.—The story of canals on Mars was started by Schiaparelli's word *canali*; denoting cracks not man-made.
P. W. WEBSTER.—Bottomley's foolish statement was corrected by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner. He had apparently forgotten the existence of Somerset House.
L. MOORES.—The first slave ship was called *Jesus*; see Cohen's *Christianity and Slavery*.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7-30 p.m.: HAROLD DAY.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, May 15, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Wednesday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. RIDLEY, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale outside Hyde Park.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon St., off New St.).—Sunday, May 15, L. MURPHY (Aft.), V. T. MILLINGTON (Neg.). "The Welfare State is Biologically Sound and Socially Desirable."
Friday Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, May 13, 7-15 p.m.: A. MORGAN, "The Individual and the Mob."
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland St.).—Thursday, May 12, 7-30 p.m., J. Young, "Thomas Paine: Fighter for Freedom."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 15, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Seven Prime Ministers."

Notes and News

Both the *Observer* and the *New Statesman* published letters from the Secretary of the N.S.S. in reply to a "Profile," and an article by Mr. J. B. Priestley on Billy Graham. Mr. Morris had no difficulty in disposing of any claim made that the huge audiences were spontaneous evidence of a wholesale devotion to Christianity. And the fact that Mr. Morris's criticism was published in two such widely distributed journals proves that the Rev. B. Graham is by no means immune from adverse judgment. We hope readers will follow Mr. Morris and bombard their local journals wherever necessary—in the name of the National Secular Society.

We are asked to announce that the Abortion Law Reform Association will be pleased to consider applications from N.S.S. Branches and other Societies interested in hearing the case for such reform. Inquiries should be addressed to Mrs. Alice Jenkins, 53, Gloucester Terrace, London, W.2.

The support of all Freethinkers in the London area will be welcomed at the Sunday open-air meetings at Whitestone Pond, Hampstead, and at Hyde Park, where the campaign is now again in full swing. The speakers will shortly be reinforced by the return of Mr. W. J. O'Neill from South Africa. *The Freethinker* is on sale at the Park Gates.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £842 9s. 8d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; P. A. Culshaw, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Gibson, 5s.; S. Rosenthal (U.S.A.), 6s. 9d.; H. Pollard, 3s. 9d.; W. Marchant, £1. Total: £844 18s. 8d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

The Way to Attack the Churches

By G.J.F.

ON April 7 the *Manchester Guardian* informed me that someone, somewhere, had developed a theory that Mohammed had no real existence but was a myth, and I at once thought of my friend Cutner. Something that he had written a few weeks ago had stuck in my mind, and I found that on March 25 he had stated: "It took me many years to realise that the Churches were almost invulnerable so long as a belief in Jesus Christ as God Almighty Incarnate or even as a Great Man was unassailed." I conclude that means that so long as the myth theory is not plugged the Christian Churches are almost invulnerable. I thank my friend for the "almost" and can tell him that the news conveyed by the *Manchester Guardian* caused me to say to myself: "Now Cutner will be in a position to attack the Mohammedan Church."

But I wonder whether my friend means what he says. I am quite satisfied that, even if he believes that Mohammed really existed, he rejects the Mohammedan religion, and I have a sneaking feeling that if it were demonstrated tomorrow, beyond doubt, that Jesus Christ was a real man, he would remain obstinately attached to his atheistical beliefs and would not consider the Churches the least bit less vulnerable.

My own belief is that arguments about the historicity of Jesus are, from the point of view of our main objective, a waste of time. I do not know whether he really did exist, and if the question could be settled conclusively one way or the other I should remain unaffected so far as my fundamental views were concerned.

I cannot dismiss this line of attack without attempting to state my own views as to what should be our main line of assault. It *must* be the scientific one. The past has shown that it has been our most effective weapon, and I am confidently looking forward to even more scientific help in the near future.

Looking at the past, we find science has struck two most effective blows against the Churches. The first was the demonstration that the earth was not the centre of the universe and the second was the theory of evolution.

The first left the bulk of the people bewildered. They believed confidently that Heaven was above the clouds and Hell deep below ground. Initially, they were prepared to put to death those who, in defiance of scriptural authority, thought otherwise, but gradually they changed their views, with the result that you cannot now get one to hazard a guess as to the location of either place, indeed numbers have abolished Hell presumably because they cannot find a place to put it. Let us not forget, however, that it took 150 years before Newton's mathematical ideas won general acceptance.

The second blow, for which we have to thank Darwin, aimed at the destruction of the belief in a special creation. This belief was just as soundly built on scriptural authority, and the blow has yet to become fully effective. If we have to wait the full 150 years we have a further fifty years to go.

We must be patient. Bradlaugh told us that no man ever saw a religion die.

I am hoping for a third scientific blow at the Churches in the near future, and I anticipate that it will take the form of a demonstration that the concept of a soul is a superfluous hypothesis. Already there are a large proportion of doctors dealing, as specialists, with the brain who regard the mind, not as an entity, but as a function or quality of the living brain, just in the same way as wetness is a quality of water, a quality which disappears so soon as the water is split into its two gaseous constituents. Already a large number of brain surgeons have ceased to believe in a soul, but still a large proportion of medical psychologists cling to the religious idea. Once the idea of the soul is destroyed the idea that man survives death will go, and with it will go the only effective incentive to a belief in a God.

It will take a long time. Our grandchildren are not likely to live to see it, but it will come. Meanwhile, we have to

continue to attack, and my own view is that *The Freethinker* should print as much as possible to enable new readers to arrive at the atheistic conception of the universe. We need to print scientific information bearing on such things as the structure of the universe, the age of the earth and the latest theories on the origin of the universe. We need to print information on recent fossil discoveries, general biological knowledge and recent work on the production of compounds which have some resemblance of living matter.

To all this I would add such information as is available with regard to those who still retain the theistic outlook. What have they thrown over? For example, it is nice to know that some members of the Commission on Christian Doctrine appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York were inclined "to the belief that the connection made in the New Testament between the emptiness of the tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord belongs rather to the sphere of religious symbolism than to that of historical fact." I wonder what Billy Graham would say to that?

An Open Letter to Billy Graham

Dear Sir,

I do not doubt that you have a very considerable "fan mail." The boosting you have enjoyed through certain elements of the Christian churches, the Press and the radio has no doubt given the crudely credulous and fundamentalist types a grossly exaggerated idea of your powers and accomplishments. There would appear to be little doubt that there is at least one fool born every minute and that individuals like yourself and organisations such as that which uses you and your circus are at all times ready to exploit these.

Far too many smugly complacent individuals are conceited enough to believe, or to pretend to believe, that they and they alone, have the solution of human problems. Far too many individuals claim to have final, ultimate and absolute truth. Human history records innumerable instances of the harm done by those who made and acted upon such claims. It seems to me, that one of the least unifying influences is and has been, the conflicting supernatural beliefs and ideas which have encumbered the minds of superstitious men. No religion, or philosophy, supernatural, or natural, has had, or can have, either a monopoly of truth, or of human virtues. There is no shred of evidence that religious believers are better than, or superior to, non-religious believers, or that Christians are superior to non-Christians. There is surely some moral to be learned from the discovery recently made by the Archbishop of Canterbury that 95 per cent. of the population of one of the largest of H.M.s prisons are former choir boys.

Since this writer first became aware of the descent upon this country and its long suffering population of the Billy Graham Circus, sponsored and financed from America for the conversion, or reconversion of Britain, he has wondered whether the organisation and its participants were just a bunch of credulously simple, crudely superstitious and childish naive fundamentalists, or a gang of clever and astute confidence-tricksters. Is one who is regarded by the organisers of your Circus, as worth £5,000 per annum as the king-pin of an elaborate and costly retinue of professional organisers, stunt experts, performers and cheer leaders, crude enough to believe the ridiculous ideas which he puts out for public consumption? I am forcibly reminded of the biblical text "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." £5,000 per annum with its concomitant perquisites and privileges is surely some treasure.

Having this week followed your privileged outpourings

on the "Lift up Your Hearts" programme, I am satisfied that you *know* just nothing of what you have been talking about and that you have managed to get away with because you and the B.B.C. know that nobody can effectively challenge you, because you and the B.B.C. know that nobody can insist upon your dealing in front of the same audience with questions and objections about the matter you have put out. You cannot be obliged to deal with pertinent and relevant questions, such as: What exactly is the "thing" to which you refer by the name "God"? Where is it? What can it do, and how is it recognised? What are the grounds upon which you assert that the Bible is authentic and/or authoritative? What parts of it are factual veridical and historically true? What parts are fictional, legendary, mythological, allegorical, symbolical and parabolical? In what sense is it the word of god? What is value of prayer? Did you ever come across any really reliable evidence that prayers had been of any real effect? Did you ever know of any phenomenon, or event, which took place as a direct consequence of prayer, which would otherwise not have taken place? Did you, on the other hand, ever know of an event, or phenomenon, which was averted by prayer, which, but for the prayer, would have taken place? If god hears prayer, what does it hear with? If god knows anything, what does it know with? How can god have consciousness without senses? If god is conscious, in what does the consciousness inhere? If god is "spirit," or a "spirit," what then is the spirit of god? The "spirit" of "a spirit" would seem to be a trifle thin and tenuous! On what grounds do you presume, with authority and arrogance, to interpret the meaning and implications of the writer of the Beatitudes whoever such writer may have been? By what authority do you set up to be the arbiter as to the meaning behind the utterances supposing they were uttered before the author recorded them?

I wonder how many of your so called converts are, or were, really converts, how many were just backsliders who had temporarily fallen for the crude emotionalism which your circus had put across in a "created" atmosphere, and if any single one of such converts had ever really examined religion and expected its claims as intellectually untenable? How many of your converts are likely to remain converted? What proportion of them were of average intelligence? How many of them demanded any sort of evidence other than the evidence of things hoped for, not seen and not understood?

Where can I find, apart from the New Testament, any corroboration of the New Testament stories of Jesus? Where can I find any evidence to support the claims for Virgin birth, the Resurrection and the Ascension? How do you reconcile the claims of the doctrine of Foreordination and the doctrine of Vicarious Sacrifice? If Jesus was foreordained to suffer and to die for the sins of the world, how could he have averted his doom, or destiny? If Jesus was "god," was he the whole of "god," or a part of "god"? If the coming of the Saviour was foretold, why was there no reception committee around to record the date, time and circumstances of his advent here?

Is any single one of your theological dogmas and pronouncements susceptible of being proven? Is it not the fact that not a single one of your propositions can stand up to objective criticism, examination and analysis and that "faith" in its strictly religious connotation is neither more nor less than blind credulity, wishful thinking and the capacity to delude oneself into accepting what intelligence prompts us to reject?

I assert that you *know* nothing at all about gods, or devils, about angels, or fairies, about heaven, or hell, or eternity, or life after death. I assert that you are the mental descendants of the medicine-men, the witch doctors and the totem fakers of savage time.

Why do you not, with your influential backing and your "cachet" with Press and Radio, throw out a challenge to unbelievers to meet you in fair and open debate and discussion? It has surely occurred to you that if the truth is on your side, you have all to gain and nothing to lose. If your claims can stand up against challenge and criticism and can be upheld in debate, then you rebut, repudiate and confound the unbelievers and you make your position secure and unassailable. Of course, if your case were so established there would be no need for professional revivalists.

As a final question, may I ask how you reconcile your position as a highly paid leader of an expensive "circus" careering around the world and living sumptuously and comfortably, with that of a disinterested and faithful follower and disciple of a Master, who carried neither purse nor scrip and had nowhere to lay his head? Whatever the 50,000 odd parsons already in the business in this country may be thinking about you and your stipend, I cannot know, but I think it high time that you and your sponsors were exposed and unmasked as humbugs exploiting the simple and ignorant masses.

Very sincerely yours, H. DAY.

The Cow's Tail

By GEORGE MILLER

FROM time immemorial it has been the divinely ordained predestination of cows' tails to be always behind, God in his wisdom having foreseen how ridiculous they would look performing the functions of the other end in chewing the cud and staring at staring bipeds as they walk by.

The Church is a cow's tail, if not indeed the entire mooing animal, stupidly gazing at the world as it hurries by. Certain it is that, down the centuries from its inception to the present time, Christianity has been somewhat behindhand in laying hold of the fact that progress happens and as a consequence is rather backward in moving forward. Instance upon instance proves this.

Just at a time when the pagan world was throwing off ignorance and superstition, a group of Palestinian "proles," primordially true to character, decided that ignorance and superstition are lovely things and worthy of handing down to ages unborn.

Take their principal tale from their collection of folk tales—the story of Jesus Christ. There was nothing new in it even in the time of Christ, yet his earliest followers seem to have been greatly impressed by its beautiful originality. Both by accident and design, generation after generation of sturdy Englishmen have been brought up to wonder at the uniqueness of it. Its actual secondhandness they are not, even to-day, officially encouraged to accept.

It has been said before that it may be doubted whether there is anything in the whole catalogue of Christian beliefs that is *new*. Certainly there isn't. The ill-educated men who shaped and fashioned the Christian creed got their notions from here, there and everywhere, and illiterate converts, ignorant of the sources, were easily made to credit them as "something new beneath the sun." There are plenty of people to-day voluntarily accepting the appellation "Christian" without shuddering who swear by the divine inspiration of the creed!

But it is not only in the beliefs of Christianity but also in events in its history that the cow's tail intellect is exemplified. Men had known and admitted that women had souls, but final verification came only when some early Church fathers sat in council to thrash the matter out, eventually deciding for the first time in history, that souls *are* included in any list of female belongings. Then there was that macabre lagging behind of Deacon Sergius and his not very squeamish henchmen involving the trial of Bishop Formosus some time after he had been inserted in his grave, the Bishop making a personal appearance.

Is it not a fact that, though Christians for centuries could be heard swearing allegiance to a certain book, it was not until the 15th century that they finally got round to reading it? Admittedly, this was not their fault. It is not every day that men like Gutenberg and Caxton are possessed by the Devil and invent printing in a diabolical frenzy. The most tenable excuse is that Satan had hitherto been too busy acting as Master of Ceremonies at massacres, inquisitions, crusades and things like that.

The first printed book was the Bible, and the Church, at first flicking its tail contemptuously at the wondrous reproductive process, eventually recognised its importance sooner than anyone else, only later. One of the Church's unpleasantest traits is the resistance it shows to each new scientific discovery or invention, then, by some trick, of eventually turning them to its own advantage. Consider the violent opposition to Darwin's theory, contrasting oddly with the unconvincing notion that Evolution is the "way God works." And one Bishop at least warns us of the baneful effects of television: though for the use of this medium the Church should be downright grateful to the B.B.C.

As for the social injustices which characterised Christendom through history, the Church has a simple method of dismissing them. Like Pilate, it washes its hands of them, and one washes one's hands *after* they have become dirty, not before. A quotation from Joseph McCabe aptly illustrates this, and simultaneously demonstrates what a cow's tail the Church really is:—

"In the last years of the century . . . I sat in the lobby of the House of Commons to hear the verdict on the latest Bill for woman suffrage. . . . I seemed to be the only man in sympathy with them. I worked with them for more than ten years and during the early years never saw a parson in the movement. The Church smiled at them but not with them. And at last came a great celebration of victory in Hyde Park. I was not invited, but there was a parson on nearly every platform. That is the record of Christianity."

Quite recently the cow's tail was in full view with respect to another matter, not so important but with some degree of seriousness—horror comics! First, parents took offence,

then public spirited councillors, then newspaper editors here and there, and the matter even woke Parliament. Even George Miller knew a serious moment over them. Finally, a parson or two announced that these publications are appalling and should be banned. We all looked round and agreed. When some measure of success towards the proposed interdict had been achieved, more than one journalist praised the Church for its speedy action in exposing the evil.

It is enough to make you shave your pate and take refuge in a monastery. And some good that will do you.

Correspondence

"ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL"

I do wish God would be kinder to people who try to save things he has made. Norman Evans, the Lancashire comedian, has lost an eye after being injured when swerving his car to avoid a cat. It does seem hard that a man has to go through so much for a simple kindness to an animal.

One has only to go to Taunton market on a Saturday to see how Christians behave to animals; it is heartbreaking to watch and no one does a thing about it. I have tried but you see I am an Atheist and am told I do not understand. These things make me proud to be an Atheist.

KATHLEEN TACCH-MORRIS.

APPRECIATION

As a constant reader of the *The Freethinker* for many, many years, I believe it would not be amiss for me to express my hearty appreciation of your worthy Freethought journal and its policy of calling a spade, a spade; an ace, an ace. I am at the moment referring to Mr. H. Cutner's most able article, "Where Stands the R.P.A.?" (March 18). It is with regret that some of us "old-timers" have noted the change in *Guide* editorial policy. Militant Freethought is the answer to the superstitions of any age, especially ours. Please convey my "bravo!" to Mr. Cutner for his valuable criticism.—Yours, etc.,

New York.

JACK BENJAMIN.

FROM A FRENCH READER

I have been reading *The Freethinker* for a few months, and I find it so interesting that I intend to remain one of its regular readers. I am a State teacher, and belong to the *Syndicat National des Instituteur*. We have a monthly local review, *L'Ecole Libérée*. On the level of the national and overseas territories, we have the weekly *Ecole Liberatrice*.

As you know, we are confronted with a severe onslaught from the Catholics, whose long-termed aim is to set up a Church monopoly of schooling. Even within the Trade Union above mentioned, we have very small groups of Catholic State teachers, doing their best to "colonise the Union." (Note that they also have their Union—a Christian one, of course.)

Now, I intend to propose translations of some of your *Freethinker* articles for insertion in our two Union reviews.—Yours, etc.,

I. FOURNEL.

TOTALITARIANISM

J. Bates accuses us of confusion regarding the religious views of Hitler. It appears that Mr. Bates is the one confused. The Political creed of Totalitarian regimes is akin to religion, i.e., the Catholic acceptance of the holy word of the Pope in the Vatican, and the Communist acceptance of theirs in the Kremlin. Both of these creeds have suffered from "change of Party Line" many times, always of course faithfully adopted by their followers.

Regarding the "anti-Christian" views of either Stalin or Hitler, with the only condition of following their "Line" both have utilised and bolstered the Christian churches in order to boost their regimes.

D. J. CROWLE.

THE NOTTINGHAM DEBATE

I am inclined to agree with the clergyman who stated that ethics requires religious sanction. This I accept, for what is called Ethics is born of religion, and he who accepts the scourge of ethics accepts, by implication, a variation of religion.

To abolish religion as a humbug and fraud will be futile if another dogma arising from religion is fastened round our necks to destroy freedom and independence with a curse far worse than that of religion. The falsity of religion can easily be seen by intelligent people, but ethics is a far more subtle narcotic, numbing the brain far more than religion could ever do. The

wiser course would be to start controlling oneself, rather than striving to control others.

Since religion is failing to hold the attention of masses of people, the B.B.C. have perhaps taken a long view on methods of saving religion by daringly permitting Mrs. Knight, and possibly others, to put forward apparently dangerous doctrines. This is in no way a reflection on the integrity and sincerity of Mrs. Knight.

P. TURNER.

ELECTION QUESTIONS

There are some questions which I think ought to appeal to radical freethinkers as being worthy of priority for presentation to candidates at the General Election.

(1) The abandonment of national sovereignty to a supra-national government.

(2) The abandonment of the monarchy since the latter is a symbol of national sovereignty, which is maintained by the press-gang methods of education committees controlled by loyalists.

(3) Abandonment of racial prejudice which, next to national sovereignty, is the most dangerous divider of the biological species "homo sapiens."

All emphasis upon patriotism—insofar as it is directed to a section of mankind (e.g. a nation)—is the primal menace to the social unity of the human race. Yearly the Queen plays her "faithful" part in reiterating, and thus impressing upon the minds of the credulous and foolish people, some basic part of the Christian mythology (e.g., last Christmas she repeated the incredible story of the birth of the "Babe" in Bethlehem).

Frankly I am still suspicious of the wisdom of *The Freethinker* because it has not stated its official opposition to national sovereignty and the social symbols used to maintain that reactionary principle.

E. G. MACFARLANE.

[*The Freethinker* upholds the Principles of the N.S.S., which include opposition to hereditary privileges, this covers the Monarchy.—ED.]

RATIONALISM IN THE MEDICAL FIELD

Mr. F. A. Ridley quotes McCabe defining Rationalism as "The principle that all questions relating to religion or religious creeds must be settled by reason. . . ."

Are we then to take it that controversial questions other than religious, need not call in reason to aid in arriving at truthful conclusions?

Surely if our reasoning faculty is of any value, it must be of use in every field of inquiry, and not merely in the field of theological controversy.

Undoubtedly there are many people who have minds divided into water-tight compartments; the "Supremacy of reason" operating only in selected fields of inquiry. There are some even among those who have freed their minds from the errors of Theology, still clinging to superstition in other fields of inquiry, notably in medicine, firmly believing that health may be protected or promoted by polluting the body with the products of disease; a superstition of ancient and world-wide character, as exemplified by cowpoxing as a protection against smallpox.

T. A. ROSTRON.

MIND AND BODY

Re "Chosen Question" by G. H. Taylor (April 15), dealing with the materialist explanation of how e.g., a state of nervousness can be caused by the prospect of an examination, which has not yet taken place, the article stresses (quite rightly) the influence of the past, the examinee's unpreparedness, etc., but seems to ignore the fact that the candidate's apprehension is due to this factor *plus* the prospective test which may find him wanting. If there were no examination to be sat for, the candidate's state of knowledge might no worry him at all, so we have still to explain the feeling of nervousness in contemplating an event which has not yet occurred.

From the quotation in the last paragraph: "But the cause of these bodily effects can be found in the bodily accompaniments of the emotions." Surely "bodily accompaniments" are bodily effects, or events, and the statement as it stands does not tell us a great deal since it is not the *occurrence* of bodily events (e.g. blushing) in connection with emotions which is at issue, but what may be the *connection* between them. It is upon this that a materialistic or other explanation seems to depend.

G. W. CLARK.

[Mr. Clark says "if there were no examinations to be sat for, the candidate's state of knowledge might not worry him at all. But in that case his knowledge would not include sitting for an examination, so why should it?—ED.]