

The Freethinker

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BEYOND any doubt, one of the most important events in the post-war world has been the astonishing and rapid expansion of communism, in particular in Asia. When one compares the amazing speed at which communism has expanded with that of earlier movements of an ideological, if not religious, nature, the only one that evolved from the first with a similar speed was Islam, the religion of Mohammed, and the Koran.

In his famous *Conflict of Religion with Science*, J. W. Draper has traced the phenomenal speed at which Islam expanded in the seventh century. Future Drapers will, no doubt, indicate how, in the 20th century, the communist ideology of Marx and Lenin expanded with a similar speed? In which respect, at least, Christianity does not afford any relevant comparison: three centuries separated the earliest Christian preachers from the final triumph of their creed under Constantine, when "The Christian era" really began. But, as Draper relevantly reminded us, within a century of the traditional date of the death of Mohammed (632), the Muslim religion and empire then, and for long after, one and the same thing—stretched from India to the Pyrenees. Similarly, Karl Marx only died in 1883, and the present writer has spoken with people who knew Marx personally; yet, to-day, a third, perhaps, of the human race live in the communist dispensation founded by the then penniless scribe in the library of the British Museum, where *Das Kapital* was originally written.

Marxism versus Religion

The philosophy of Marxism, or rather of Marxist—Leninism, as it is now the fashion to term the Russian variation of Marxism, is, unquestionably, opposed to religion. Socially, Marx himself denounced religion as "the opium of the people," whilst Lenin loudly sang the praises of the early English, French and German materialists. The present governmental attitude of Lenin's disciples, the present rulers of Russia, may be said to represent, perhaps, a working compromise between the abstract philosophy of Marxism as revised by Lenin and Stalin to suit Russian conditions, and the *practical* exigencies of Russian society to-day. Such compromises, born of *political* necessities, are seldom entirely satisfactory from the standpoint of strict logic. However, there is no real evidence that, despite periodic compromises, communism has ceased to be, at bottom, hostile to religion.

Christianity in the Soviet Union

The statistical position of Christianity in the Soviet Union was indicated with a wealth of factual material in a notable article by the French Freethinker, Georges Ory, recently republished in these columns. The ultimate position that emerges from Mr. Ory's most informative article is that, at present, the Soviet rulers are pursuing a policy of concurrent compromise and of a current differentiation between Christian churches based ultimately on their present

political attitudes. The present *Public Enemy Number Two* of Russia is the Vatican—*Public Enemy Number One* is, of course, American, or Anglo-American, "Imperialism"! Whilst, however, the R.C. Church is still strong in the adjacent "People's Democracies," in Poland and Hungary, Roman Catholics are not actually numerous in the actual Soviet Union, which has not yet found it necessary to stage any political trials of Catholic leaders analogous to the *cause célèbre* of Cardinal Mindszenty in neighbouring Hungary. In fact, outside the Soviet Republic of Lithuania, forcibly annexed to Russia as recently as 1940, there is no appreciable R.C. population in the Soviet Union itself.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Communism and Religion

By F. A. RIDLEY

Vatican versus Kremlin

At present, even the briefest perusal of the Catholic press will suffice to indicate that the *present* attitude of the Vatican towards communism as a world creed is one of bitter and outspoken hostility. Will it always remain so? That is not easy to answer. Catholic *sociology* is actually a series of adaptations, some of them very unexpected ones! It would not actually be hard to prove that similar adaptations are not unknown, nor, indeed, uncommon in the long and chequered evolution of Catholic *Theology*. For example, the Roman Catholic Church was, for centuries, the major opponent of Liberal democracy at the time of the French Revolution, and even 1848. Nowadays, the Vatican loudly proclaims that it is the leading *ally* of Liberal democracy against the "Totalitarian" communist regime! What next in, say, two centuries' time, will the ancient chameleon in the Vatican be defending?

Is a Catholic-Communist Compromise possible?

In adumbrating such a, perhaps, not remote possibility as a *modus vivendi*, an, at least, *political* compromise, between the present bitter rivals, the Vatican and the Kremlin, the present writer makes no claim to originality. Rome's "back-room boys" are evidently giving much thought to the future possibility. They even express it publicly: in a debate which we had recently with Canon Fitzgerald (R.C.), our Most Reverend opponent predicted an eventual resumption of at least diplomatic relations between Rome and Moscow. One of the back-room intellectuals of the *Catholic Evidence Society*, in the course of the discussion, after our address on "Political Catholicism," agreed with our previous contention that communism represented a *fundamental* change, a social *revolution*, and that the Catholic Church would eventually have to come to terms with it, as such, just as it has had to come to terms eventually with that earlier social revolution, the bourgeois French Revolution, and the capitalist social order which had emerged from that social upheaval. So we shall see, whatever we *shall* see?

Communism and Catholic Sociology

How far is such an eventual compromise possible? Actually, from a *sociological* point of view, it does not

appear at all impossible. Historically, the ethics of Catholicism are *social*, collectivist, not competitive. It was the *Protestant* reformers who were the allies of the capitalist order in its early stages, whilst one of the most successful examples of a *collectivist* society on record was that run by the Jesuits in Paraguay in the 17th and 18th centuries. From the Catholic point of view, it is its atheism and materialism which represent the main obstacles to such an alliance. The Church may eventually canonise Karl Marx? He would not be the most peculiar saint in the Roman calendar! But, for the Vatican, at least, Voltaire's saying that "If God did not exist, one would have to invent him," is certainly true. It constitutes a pretty theological problem! There must be some severe headaches at the Vatican just now!

Communism and Russian Religion

The main form of Christianity in the Soviet Union is, of course, not Roman, but Greek Catholicism, more precisely, the Russian Orthodox Church, the age-long rival of Rome. According to Mr. Ory's well-documented survey, the relations between the communist State and the former State Church of the Tsars, have now greatly improved since the war, and are, in fact, now surprisingly cordial. Here, political compromise is evident. The Soviet State needs *religious* allies against the Vatican. In fact, it seems that, just at present, at any rate, the Russian "Orthodox" Church is even more closely allied with the communist State than its rival, Rome, is with the Anglo-American "Imperialists," the *political* rivals of communism in the secular sphere. Whether this very obvious "marriage of convenience" will outlast the present "cold war" cannot, at present, be accurately foreseen. With the Russian Non-

Conformist Christian sects the mutual relations between the State and these churches appears less friendly though this controversy appears to be conducted on the propaganda level by the State without the former intervention of the *political* police.

Marx versus Mohammed

Next to Russian "Orthodoxy" the most important religion present within the Soviet Union is Islam; there are about 20 millions of Muslims in Soviet Russia. At present a fierce "*Kulturkampf*" is raging between the two totalitarian creeds, Islam versus Communism. Our Muslim contemporary, *The Islamic Review*, is, at present, reprinting from a French periodical a very well-documented account of the present ideological conflict between the followers of Marx and those of Mohammed, by a Russian author, A. Bennigsen. This important contemporary subject is worth an article to itself and as soon as this valuable series concludes we shall hope to summarise it for the benefit of English Freethinkers. We ought not to be parochial; Christianity is not the only religion in the world!

Postscript: In the above paragraphs we have outlined the present and prospective relations between the communist regime in the Soviet Union and contemporary religion. We have not much information with regard to "Red" China.

Due to the historically close relations between Christian missions and European imperialism, from which China has suffered so much in the past, at present relations between the Chinese communist regime and Christianity are, it would appear, definitely more hostile than in present-day Russia. However, the Chinese appear to be working amicably with the Buddhist priesthood in Tibet.

The Danger of Complacency

By JAMES H. MATSON

THE recent broadcasts by Mrs. Knight have aroused much interest not merely in recognised Freethought circles but also and more markedly in that large section of the public who while being unattached to any definite organisation are none the less decidedly on the liberal side and opposed to reaction. Although this class of broadcast has not been repeated, the support expressed in the letters that managed to get printed in favour is a clear indication of the trend of opinion today.

A few years ago the Knight broadcast would have been ignored or smothered, for at that time our movement and its supporters were held in contempt as something small and powerless that did not constitute any danger. Today we are, it is true still small, but our influence extends far beyond our organised membership. Billy Graham is kept in the limelight of publicity by vested interests who know that anything which distracts the people's attention is equally useful to them in the prosecution of their anti-social projects, and in the state of the world today anything that promises luck, personal success or spiritual comfort answers their purpose. The promises are the same though the labels on the panaceas may vary—the quack psychologist, the man who will cure your inferiority complex, the cult of the occult, yoga, even the confidential column offering advice and consolation for all kinds of worries from love affairs to financial problems, which are such a feature of our popular Press, are all duplicated by the ultra-modern Billy who has his "My Answer" column in a notorious religious weekly. And what does this boil down to? Trust Jesus. Is the world in turmoil? Have you worries, personal, spiritual, financial? Do the forces of evil threaten the world with further misery and possible extinction?

Only trust Jesus, leave all to him and all will be right. He will give *you* comfort and protection.

Now all this I know only too well sounds folly and of no account. But what is behind this foully immoral teaching? Man has social duties in this socially complex world, and to ignore the real tragedies around us so long as we are comfortable and can be busy saving our own souls is not leaving all to Jesus, but to the exploiters and atom-bomb supporters. They do not ignore the real world. They get on with the job, their job, and our job is to expose the dope and the deceit, for we know that the only way to make tomorrow better is to be awake to the Truth today, and we must make sure that our movement is built on true foundations. To deny that the forthright bible smashing of the early days is no longer a necessary part of our work now is folly. Bible fundamentalism has returned during the last 15 years in ever stronger waves.

This, of course, does not mean slackening in social and political work, which is as necessary now as in the days of Bradlaugh and Besant whose names still live in both these spheres of life. The social and political were placed in front together with their freethought activities. One word more, and I speak here with considerable experience. I have seen many movements with many aims wrecked by the same error, the cry for unity. We already have real unity by supporting any group working for real public good, but to connect our Society, the only militant group that counts, with organisations whose chief aim is to be broad enough to embrace everybody, is suicide. More promising bodies have had their usefulness destroyed by their anxiety to get a large following by recruiting even those hostile to their views.

Billy Graham in Scotland

By REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

(Concluded from page 179)

NOW, an inevitable consequence of such an attitude of indifference to moral and social problems, is a naive support of the "status quo"—in other words a reactionary Conservatism. It comes therefore as no surprise to note that on the very few occasions when Billy has ventured an opinion on some of the most vital issues of our day, his utterances have been of an ultra Tory and anti-Socialist character. It is a significant fact that one of his most ardent supporters in this country is the extreme right-wing editor of the periodical *Intelligence Digest*, Mr. Kenneth de Courcy. This magazine's political philosophy is of a blatant McCarthyist nature which cheerfully brands all persons showing the slightest leanings to the Left as Communist dupes, and which never ceases to attack in the most abusive terms every movement of a Socialist or even Liberal trend. Recently there has been no stronger champion of the Graham campaign than this same journal. In fairness, it ought perhaps to be said that it is doubtful whether Billy has himself any definite political affiliations. But it is undoubtedly true that his doctrine as a whole plays into the hands of such reactionaries as De Courcy. If the whole purpose of living is, as Graham teaches, to secure one's future in the next world, it is obviously a waste of time to attempt to improve conditions in this one. In addition of course, grovelling before a Saviour whether he be Christ, the men of the Kremlin or Hitler, is exactly the kind of servile attitude which all totalitarians wish to encourage.

As a somewhat lighter footnote to the Graham doctrine, Billy's first-class "howler" while in Scotland on the question of our duty to animals might be mentioned. He began one of his "Lift up Your Hearts" broadcasts with the statement "Fish belong to the sea, beasts belong to the jungle, but man belongs to God." This of course evoked a strong condemnation from the S.P.C.A. since it implied that our dumb friends are for ever excluded from the presence of the Almighty. But Billy's supporters have been no more backward in rushing to explain away his "gaffe" on this subject than on any other. An earnest lady for example writing in the correspondence columns of a Glasgow newspaper solemnly stated that of course Billy's true meaning was that beasts should not be cooped up in cruel circuses or Zoos but allowed to roam wild in their natural haunts. Most preachers have to be saved from their disciples. Billy should hourly thank his God for his.

The Kelvin Hall services followed the familiar pattern of sheer emotional bludgeoning. Every participant made his own individual contribution to the build-up—the brash Cliff Barrows with his hearty mawkishness, George Beverley Shea crooning Gospel songs pleadingly, the close-harmony voices of the massed choir, and of course Billy himself piling on the golden promises and Satanic threats. While the organ sussurated softly in the background, Billy, speaking into the microphone in stealthy far-away tones warned his listeners that to-morrow might be too late. The coincidence between his technique and that of the average stage hypnotist is exact. Like one of Goldsmith's fools I went to the Kelvin Hall prepared to scoff but remained not to pray but to weep over the unhappy spectacle of human stupidity and gullibility thereby afforded.

As Mr. Ridley pointed out a few weeks ago, Billy with his £5,000 a year, private cars and ability to put up at the best hotels does not allow his spiritual aspirations to interfere with his material wellbeing. Fair enough!

But he ought to realise that in so doing he is flatly disobeying one of his Master's commands. "Sell all you have and give to the poor," said Jesus, and continued with the revolutionary statement that it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Can it be that after all, Billy himself will have some difficulty in squeezing through that narrow gate? Perish the thought! Yet the New Testament explicitly states that no man of worldly substance can be saved. But of course this is yet another of those embarrassing difficult passages which Billy prudently bypasses. Salvation by simply making a decision that Christ is God is much easier than salvation by discarding one's worldly goods. Billy is a fundamentalist to be sure, but where the Gospels flatly contradict themselves he finds it pleasanter to be more fundamental regarding the simpler commands. Yet one cannot help wondering if in the stillness of the nights lying in his luxurious bed in his fine hotel, Billy sometimes blanches a little, when he contrasts his comfortable condition with that of the humble carpenter of Nazareth, who it is said, unlike the foxes and birds had nowhere to lay his head.

Mr. Ridley's valuable article in *The Freethinker*, already referred to proved from statistics after the Harringay meetings last year that the vast majority of those converted by Graham were either children, adolescents or practising Church members. There is every evidence to show that the Scottish campaign has had precisely the same negative result. On the three occasions I attended the Kelvin Hall the preponderance of young people among those collected at the feet of the "master" was glaringly obvious. The appeal which Graham has for the immature was well illustrated by the "Teddy boy" who when asked by an eager reporter outside the Hall after one meeting what he had thought of the performance replied ecstatically, "Oh, he was smashing! But of course, all these Americans are good . . . Frankie Laine, Johnnie Ray, Billy Graham . . ."

The Scottish press have been on the whole desperately anxious to play down the campaign's failure. Thus, on the day after an Edinburgh rally one newspaper reported that out of 900 converts more than 400 were over the age of eighteen. To have put it that nearly 500 were *under* eighteen would have given the game away too obviously! On the other hand, a few of the more responsible newspapers have published critical letters mostly from puzzled churchmen. One such, published in *The Scotsman* of April 23 revealed that out of five "decision cards" received by one minister regarding "converts" one was in respect of a person quite definitely subnormal mentally; the second was a child with no intention of attending the congregation whose minister's name was given; the third was a young woman who was not at home on two visits and did not reply to the letter then written; the fourth was an office-bearer whose "decision" was really a re-affirmation of faith; the fifth was a church-goer steering a somewhat erratic course between various denominations. "The net result" the letter concludes "is precisely nothing."

It is clear then that all religious and non-religious liberals in Scotland can take heart. Mrs. Knight's philosophy of "morals without religion" is still being practised, albeit unconsciously by most honest citizens, while the Graham perversion of it "religion without morals" appeals to only

(Concluded next page)

This Believing World

The Vice-Chancellor of Reading University, Mr. Wolfenden, must be living in a strange world. Recently, he addressed the annual meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society bemoaning the fact that in all his railway journeys he only met one person reading the Bible. We are surprised at even that one. Why should anybody read the Bible? It is completely out of date, and its pictures of angry Deities, Devils, Miracles, Angels, together with its silly stories, have no message for the modern age, and would be laughed out of court if it were not for the wealthy and powerful Churches.

He had a marvellous remedy—one which would bring the Bible slap bang into our national life again. All that was necessary was to give more and more Bible instruction to teachers "and indeed to all lay men and women." Well, why is not this done? Why does not Mr. Wolfenden himself begin with the members of the N.S.S. and the readers of *The Freethinker*? Here is a "lay" field indeed—but we would bet our *Bible Handbook* against the best book in favour of the Bible he knows, that he and his like would never try. They prefer young children.

The "Evening News" published the other day, as one of "the World's Strangest Stories" the credulous nonsense that the spirit of the unfortunate captain of the airship R 101 gave full technical details of the disaster a day or two after it had exploded and killed him, to Mrs. Eileen Garrett, the medium then sitting with the late Harry Price. The account (written by a Spiritualist called Philip Paul) was a tissue of uncorroborated rubbish for which no authority whatever was given. We published some years ago an examination of the claims made by Spiritualists for the case, and readers will remember how thoroughly these claims were annihilated. The only "strange" part of the story as given in the *Evening News* is how completely a Fleet Street editor can be fooled.

But, exactly as in the case of a thorough Christian lie, it is extremely difficult to catch up with a Spiritualist one. It will go the rounds—just as the story that D. D. Home was a perfectly immaculate medium or that the Fox sisters never told a lie are still doing faithful duty. One cannot altogether blame even a Fleet Street journalist. Brought up to the Christian religion he will swallow its "miracles" without a tremor—and anybody who can do that will believe anything: even Spiritualist lies.

After nearly 2,000 years of Christianity, and most of the time it had to be literally forced on to the people, Christians are still arguing about it—what it is, or what it really means. They never stop arguing about the "Virgin" Mary—is she taking the place of God Almighty, do Catholics grovel before her, did she have a host of children—the brethren of Jesus as admitted in Holy Writ—and so on? It may take another 2,000 years before any of these problems are settled—though if the Roman Church swallows the English one (as looks very likely) the issues may be settled by the Pope without any further quarrels. But all these questions are heartily welcomed to fill up a lot of correspondence columns in our national and provincial newspapers.

So is the "news" when a Jehovah's Witness wants to shirk his national service by leaning upon Jesus Christ—

much to the disgust of our Protestant magistrates. These young gents are heavily fined, but appear never to pay up; and in the end, as genuine conchies, are often allowed to carry on. Better to preach the silly inanities of the late Judge Rutherford who used to insist that "millions now living will never die" (and by dying prove that he was unlucky) than no religion at all. A young "Witness" was fined the other day £25 which he refused to pay—and will perhaps be let off if he only makes use of the magic name of Jesus often and loud enough. After all, a Jesus lover must be a Christian—so why should he do his national service if he doesn't want to?

The Infallible Pope

PERHAPS the first person to deny that Jesus Christ ever existed was the very well-known and highly-cultured Renaissance Pope, Paul the Third (1534-47). The same Pope, be it noted, who assembled the famous Council of Trent. This Pope was on very bad terms with the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and the ambassador of this "most Catholic" monarch at the Vatican, Don Hurtado de Mendoza, has recorded some peculiar remarks made by this Pope which, though it is not possible to check them, have, nonetheless, received recent confirmation in the discovery of a Temple of Mithras buried beneath the Vatican gardens.

"The Holy Father," our author relates, "carried his unbelief to the point of actually stating that Christ was simply the sun, adored by the pagans as Mithras and Jupiter under the form of a lamb, or ram. He explained the myths of his incarnation and resurrection by a parallel already mentioned by St. Justin (second century) between Christ and Mithras, that both the gospels and the Persian scriptures of the Magi represent their heroes as being born at the winter solstice, that is, at the date when the sun begins to come nearer to the earth. He (Pope Paul, F.A.R.) went on to state that the Evangelical story of the adoration of the Magi was merely the Zooastrian ceremony by which the (Zooastrian) priests offered gold, incense and myrrh to their god, the solar star. He further maintained that the constellation of the Virgin (Virgo) originally, that of Isis, which presided over the winter solstice at the time when Mithras was born, had similarly been chosen as a symbol of the birth of Christ, and that this fact that affords yet further evidence that Mithras and Christ were one and the same god. He (the Pope, F.A.R.) actually had the effrontery to maintain that there was no authentic document in existence which proved the existence of a man named Jesus Christ, and that he, for one, did not believe that such a person had ever existed."

Histoire des Papes par Maurice Lachâtre—volume two, p. 447—cited by the late Prof. Prosper Alfaric in the *Bulletin of the Cercle Ernest Renan*—May issue.

F. A. R.

Billy Graham in Scotland

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an insignificant fanatical minority. The crusade has achieved one good result—it has shown that in spite of a sophisticated frontage the orthodox Christian churches share Graham's crude immoral beliefs. But their influence too is on the wane, and a thousand Billys cannot now stop the forward march of freethought in religion. Billy has not only "Told Scotland," he has bellowed, roared and screamed at our poor old country for six long weeks. But now that at last he has left us in peace, most of us can return once more to our cheerful unredeemed warp, and in a short time all traces of this baleful campaign will be obliterated we hope for ever.

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

F. P. ARNOLD.—Your points are all covered in Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will*.

MRS. CATHERINE BULL.—N.S.S. members can pursue any political, sociological, etc., policy they please, so long as it does not conflict with the principles and objects of the N.S.S.

H. McADAM.—Your vicar, like many others, apparently thinks "ungodliness" means immorality.

JAS. E. SLACK.—The Plymouth "demonstration of the Rope Trick" by Karachi (a Mr. Dalby) was exposed by Harry Price about 20 years ago.

M. G. CLARKE (S. Africa).—Thanks for valuable information.

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).—Next Sunday, June 19, 7-30 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and GEORGE COLEBROOK.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, 3 p.m., Platt Field; 7-30 p.m., St. Mary's Blitzed Site: Speakers, Messrs. McCALL, MILLS, or WOODCOCK. Every weekday, Deansgate Blitzed Site, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. Messrs. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.

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

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

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. RIDLEY, EBURY, O'NEILL and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

INDOOR

Friday Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—June 17: Theatre Visit, St. James' Theatre, "Separate Tables".

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street).—Thursday, June 23, 7-30 p.m. K. COOKE, "The Value of Marx for the Workers".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 19, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "The Cult of Austerity in Social Studies".

Combating Christianity

By H. CUTNER

IT seems that I must have expressed myself rather badly for my old friend "G.J.F." to have thought that I believed the *only* way to attack Christianity was through the Myth Theory. Actually I agree with almost everything he says, but I should like to add a few things which may perhaps clear the air—at least as to where I stand.

As far as Freethought is concerned, it does not matter two hoots whether Jesus or Muhammed or Buddha or Krishna or Siva or Mary or Venus is or is not a myth. If they lived at all, they were just human beings, and no doubt would have been glad of an aspirin to relieve a purely human headache. Freethought recognises no Gods, and therefore these people were not Deities. Thus, it is a matter of indifference to me and to other Freethinkers if it could

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

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

Previously acknowledged, £866 5s. 5d.; A. Hancock, 2s.; C. Barrie-Smith, 10s.; O. C. Diplock, 10s.; W. J. Bennett, £1 1s.; S. Jones, 5s.; T. H. Laird, £2 2s.; A. W. Harris, 2s. 6d.; J. W. (In memory of John Seibert) 10s.; Total, £871 7s. 11d.

be proved that Muhammed, for example, never existed. His followers are always careful to insist that he was not a God but a man—the last and best of all Prophets, it is true—but still only a man. The same with Buddha. There may have been a prince called Gautama, but we know very little about him, and it would not matter if we knew more. Neither Buddhism nor Muhammedanism have much chance of converting the British nation and both religions will eventually go with Christianity to the obscurity they deserve.

But please note that I use the word "religion." Against *religion* in general, we Freethinkers have the weapons of History, of Evolution and, as deadly as anything else, of Anthropology. The anthropological studies of Frazer and Tyler and other great anthropologists (even if in a little detail they can be proved wrong) have conclusively proved that religions arose in the fear, credulity, and superstition of primitive man, in their belief in magic and ghosts. You can trace these early beliefs and how gradually they have been transformed and "rationalised"—how a tribal God or Totem can become the Almighty God of the Universe in the hands of passionate and convinced Theists. But the truth remains that, however "spiritual" God becomes, he is nothing but the personified fear of the first men who could think, as it passed through generations of "savage" tribes faced with the mighty forces of the world they lived in.

Anthropology thus attacks every Theistic belief and, however long it takes, the time must inevitably come when instructed and educated people must see this. G.J.F. says that the demonstration that the earth was not the centre of the universe "left the bulk of the people bewildered." I can hardly believe he means this—literally. The bulk of the people knew nothing about it until printing was well on the way and they began to read—and by that time they were long past being bewildered. The heads of the Churches may well have seen what it meant for their religion, and they were right. But it was the rapid multiplication of books that hit the Churches for then arose the incessant demand for education, and finally the Churches could do nothing about it except introduce their censors; and even they failed.

Moreover, the Churches are always ready to use the arguments of the anthropologists and of science and even of Evolution against all the *other* religions. It is only when Christianity is attacked that they weigh in with the argument that the Bible is God's Precious Word, that Jesus Christ is God Almighty incarnated, and that you can be saved—whatever that is—only through absolute belief in Christ Jesus. Every other religion is thus false. And so wonderful is their success in getting nearly the whole of Western civilisation to accept this nonsense as "Gospel" truth, that an ignoramus like Billy Graham can utter the most incredible twaddle without our Bishops batting an eyelid.

The "fans" of this American evangelist are not in the least bewildered at the proof that this Earth of ours is not the centre of the Universe; nor do they care in the least about Evolution—in which they do not believe, anyway; for Billy Graham says it is not true. As for Anthropology,

it is doubtful if even one of his numerous "converts" has ever heard of the *Golden Bough*.

We Freethinkers have published thousands of books against the infantile beliefs which these people hold, and they appear to have had no more effect than the works of Darwin. Even eminent Christians have analysed the legendary stories with which the Bible is filled and dismissed them with contempt. In fact, for 250 years the Bible has sustained the attacks of Deists, Christians, Atheists, and Scientists, and its Fundamentalism can still draw hundreds of thousands of people all in complete belief in its history and science!

We Freethinkers must face the fact that the primitive Fundamentalism which faced Bradlaugh and Foote has come back with the B.B.C. and most of our national newspapers actively supporting it. Paine's *Age of Reason*, Foote's *Bible Romances*, might never have been written judging from the way people, who look normal, flock to hear the infantile nonsense poured out not only by many Billy Grahams, but by far better educated parsons and priests on the radio. And they can afford to ignore our little journal—the one weekly in the world which raises its small voice in protest.

For 250 years most of our best writers have attacked Christianity—but have left the figure of Jesus untouched *as far as possible*. He may not have been a God, but he was certainly a great and good Man, giving those impossible Jews of Palestine a wonderful system of ethics. I could name a dozen of our great Freethought writers who talk like that. No wonder John M. Robertson said, near the close of his career, that he had not managed to get 20 per cent. of Freethinkers to agree with him in his advocacy of the Myth Theory. I should put the figure at less than 5 per cent.

And this is what the Churches want. Fill *The Freethinker* with learned textual criticism of the Gospels; prove to your heart's content that evil did not come in with Adam; write what you like about Ice Ages and the story of antedeluvian monsters roaming the world for fifty million years. So what? Does all this touch the heart of Christianity? Not a bit. For the great Totem, the great Mascot, the great Money-Maker—as even more than one Pope recognised—is the Figure of Christ Jesus and Him Crucified. Jesus on the Cross is the Eternal Mystery—to use their own jargon—and in this I could name prominent Rationalists who fully agree.

My advocacy of the Myth Theory is *not* meant primarily for Freethinkers; they are already opposed to Christianity. It is meant for Christians—who, like so many reverent Rationalists, shrink with horror at the idea that their God is not a whit different from the other Gods we have had thrust upon us. He is a myth, and had no more real existence than Adonis or Osiris. A myth is a myth, and not a Saviour, and I submit that there is, in the ultimate, no better way to attack all the fundamental ideas on which Christianity is based than to proclaim its God a myth.

For G.J.F. and his unbelieving friends as well as for most of the readers of *The Freethinker* all this does not matter. But it does to Christians, as they would know if they read (as I did for years) Christian journals.

Let us then make Evolution and History and Science in general our weapons in our fight against religion. And let us make unbelievers with our attack on the Bible. But for the few who wish to go further, and for Christians in general, I trust I shall be allowed to advocate the Myth Theory begun in this country by Robert Taylor and continued so splendidly by that great scholar and Freethinker, John M. Robertson.

Henri Frédéric Amiel

By G. I. BENNETT

AN aura of pathos surrounds the life of Henri Frédéric Amiel. It is well expressed in the words of Renan. "With philosophical abilities of a high order," he wrote, "Amiel reached only melancholy. A perfectly sincere man, he failed to have a steadfast design in the direction of his life. Moralists and public men of a lesser order have made a greater mark than he. Writers a hundred times less learned have left deeper traces in our literary history. A multitude of mediocre natures have perhaps rendered more service to the cause of truth and goodness than this passionate lover of the ideal."

Born in 1821, Amiel was left an orphan when only 12 years old. Both his parents died quite young; and on the passing of his mother the little family was broken up, the boy being taken into the charge of one relative and his two sisters into the charge of another. He nevertheless received a fine education, which extended into his late twenties. But it was the last four years of it spent in Germany that he valued as his "intellectual phase," and this period was probably the happiest of his life. At Heidelberg and Berlin, we are told, "the world of science and speculation first opened on the dazzled eyes of the young man" and cast a spell that remained ever after.

Returning to his native Geneva in 1847, he entered into competition for, and was successful in gaining, the professorial chair in French Literature and Aesthetics at the Geneva Academy, exchanging this four years later for the chair in Moral Philosophy, which he continued to hold to the end of his life.

It might thus be thought that Amiel, so completely the scholar by nature and habit, had gained in a stride, at the

outset of his career, a position for which he was eminently suited. It so happened, however, that a couple of years before his appointment the Conservative governing class of Geneva, who represented all there was of culture in the city at the time, had been swept from power by the Radicals, and most of the old staff of the Academy who had sympathies with the old order had been dismissed. Therefore, in accepting an important situation at the Academy under the new regime, Amiel fell foul of, and in effect cut himself off from, the aristocratic elements of Geneva with whom culturally he had most in common. The isolation into which he was thus thrown, coupled with certain odd weaknesses of character, placed him in a position that had for him strangely unhappy consequences, and from which he never shook himself free.

It has been said that the world takes one at one's own valuation; and that if a man is prompted by the demon Doubt to think slightly of himself, short of his proving by solid achievement that he is a person of some weight and worth, his fellows will also tend to think slightly of him. In Amiel's case there is a story that aptly illustrates the truth of this. In the year 1882, a few months after Amiel's death, Bernard Bouvier, who 40 years later was to publish a full, definitive edition of the Geneva professor's private Journal, diffidently offered to the distinguished French critic, Edmond Scherer, an envelope containing some fragments from it. "Take those papers away, young man," cried Scherer. "I knew Amiel. He was a failure in everything. Let his memory sleep. Don't let us disturb his ashes."

Perhaps, he already knew, or had just been informed by

Bouvier, that Amiel, in day-to-day observations on men and Nature had, for a period of 30 years, kept a record, extending to nearly 17,000 pages, of his inmost thoughts. What he did *not* know is that that record revealed his late friend, to be a thinker and writer of rare quality. Long since had he, like others who knew Amiel, given up expecting anything but trivialities from the Academy teacher. How wrong they all were! A deep thinker and talented litterateur had been in their midst all the time and no one had known it. In his long introduction to the first edition of published extracts from Amiel's Journal, Scherer wrote: "The man who during his lifetime was incapable of giving us any deliberate or conscious work worthy of his powers, has now left us, after his death, a book that will not die . . ."

We read that the published Journal, which from the moment of its first appearance has been known as the *Journal Intime*, obtained for Amiel "a European reputation" and that it attracted a wide reading public, which Mrs. Humphry Ward's admirable English translation of 1885, considerably extended. That is as it may well be. But one is inclined to think that that reputation is somewhat under a cloud to-day. Some few of us here and there may treasure a copy of the work, but what do most people know or care about it? *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* claims that it is "one of the most important documents in modern introspective literature." That is indeed true. It cannot be compared with, because it is quite different from, both the *Meditations* of the saintly Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, and the *Khartoum Journals* of that arrant individualist, General Gordon. But, in its own way, it is perhaps no less remarkable.

To read the *Journal Intime*, is to enter into the mental and spiritual torments of a lonely and pathetic soul; it is also to enjoy communion with a profound yet transparently honest mind that had reached the highest degree of culture. But one does not rise gladdened from a perusal of its pages, for they are the sad and sombre outpourings of a writer who saw too clearly and too much of life's unspoken tragedy.

To be consistently happy in the philosophical sense one must needs be a little superficial. The man who thinks things out to their logical end may, in spite of a temperamental cheerfulness, find himself wondering what sort of strange drama is this life we live for three or four score years in a world in which everything changes and moves towards destruction and death. H. G. Wells must have had this in his thoughts when he wrote in one of his last books, *Time at the End of its Tether*: "The philosophical mind is not what people would call a healthy, buoyant mind. The 'healthy mind' takes life as it finds it and troubles no more about that. None of us start life as philosophers. We become philosophers sooner or later, or we die before we become philosophical . . ."

By Wells' definition, Amiel's was not a "healthy mind." His restless intelligence, his reasoning into the why and his wherefore of being, his inability to find in existence any beneficent meaning, increasingly darkened his outlook. It is doubtless true, as has been suggested, that he would have seen the world in brighter light and been a happier man had his life been enriched by love and marriage, by paternity, or by literary production. But there were two major obstacles across his path. One was his insatiable thirst for knowledge; the other was his hankering after perfection.

Amiel, said Scherer, "read everything"; "he came to his (reading and writing) desk as to an altar." Bouvier, in the edition of the *Journal Intime* he published in 1922, wrote that its author "conceived the whole movement of the universe as a matter for thought." To write a book, as

Renan observed, one must limit oneself; and Amiel, whose thought ranged boundless regions, never learnt that discipline. He had drunk too deeply at the well of knowledge; had he known less he might have achieved more. Beholding so many alternative avenues of thought, he could not finally decide on any one of them. He was too much of a synthesist and an eclectic to be intellectually fertile. And so, apart from a few scattered essays and a volume or two of indifferent poetry, he produced nothing—much to the disappointment of friends, who could not understand how a man of such great early promise should fall so far short of their expectations.

(To be concluded)

Religious Neurosis

By R. READER

CONFLICT between an overweening sense of self-importance, poor ability, and a sudden confrontation with the essentially transient nature of human existence, forms the ideal terrain for the development of religious neurosis. The individual is unable to reconcile his grandiose ideas with his obvious earthly insignificance. He therefore returns to a childhood stage of belief in wishful thinking, underlining comforting passages in the Bible and adding footnotes containing his own name. He accepts, and even derives pleasure from, a situation which is intolerable to a normal person—that of constantly playing a leading role on the stage of his own mind, at the same time sitting in the pit and applauding. His thoughts and movements become stiff and wooden. He carries plates to the altar and cups to the kitchen with equally self-conscious, ritualistic and personal gestures, and he reads, talks, prescribes and acts magic in everything—except private business. Business, in fact, saves him from sharing the fate of those unfortunates in institutions whose breaks with reality have made them a menace to themselves and others.

Between these extremes, the absurd and the tragic, there are intermediate cases—paradoxically the most dangerous of all. For religious neurosis can be contracted in the same way as contagious physical disease—by contact with an infected person. The following is an outline of such a case, the victim being a twelve-year-old girl.

This girl was born into an exceptionally happy family, where mutual trust and affection existed. Perhaps this unusual harmony made the use of mental opiates unnecessary, perhaps there was too much joy in living to worry about death, at all events one never saw this family taking part in public devotions.

One afternoon the girl passed alone near a church. The organ was being played, and a priest standing in the porch noticed her and beckoned. Confidently, she approached, and he led her into the building. They sat down and he took her hand in his. "Are you happy?" he asked.

The girl considered this, thinking of her parents, her brother, the love and esteem of her home, the simple immediate things to which a child of twelve relates its being. She replied unhesitatingly that she was happy.

He stared at her, and we can imagine his expression, the pressure on her hand, the sombre stained glass, the growling and rumbling of the organ, the reek of incense, the multiple sense impressions all tending to convince the child that the

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curtain was to be dramatically raised on an important matter. "You are NOT happy!" said the priest. "You will be happy only when you have seen God!" And he went on to explain . . .

That evening, the parents noticed a change in their daughter who was abnormally restrained. They ascribed it to a slight physical upset. In fact, however, the child was ruminating the priest's words and doing something she had never done before: keeping a secret from her parents. Only much later did the true nature of the disturbance show itself.

For that was six years ago, and the girl is now under the constant care of a psychiatrist. She has unaccountable fits of depression, during which she cries and wrings her hands. Her memory, self-confidence and physical health have all tragically deteriorated. She has several times described the incident in the church, but the psychiatrist is fighting a losing battle. "You are NOT happy!" seared its way into an impressionable child's brain six years ago, reinforced by visual, auditive, tactile and even olfactory suggestion. A long period of incubation followed, the whole of a past happy life being called up and questioned by these words, and the remainder of the delirium she had had poured into her ears. An agonizing mental conflict began and spread until she *doubted* everything, and most of all, herself.

As for the rest, the parents, broken-hearted at losing the personality of their daughter, have aged twenty years. The priest continues serenely on his way. A few tongues wag (when he is out of earshot), but he himself is certainly unaware that he has committed a crime worse than murder—one for which, in a rational society, he would immediately be interned. Religious neurosis, in fact, is communicated unconsciously, both the active and passive subject in this *folie a deux* being quite unaware of what is really taking place. One is saving a soul; the other is receiving intriguing revelations by a mature person.

Not all cases are so tragic. But milder symptoms indicate only that the conflict is less severe—i.e., that the passive subject has a predisposition to suggestion by these wretched degenerates. And this vile infection produces its most harrowing effects precisely in those individuals whose heredity and capacity are incomparably superior. It is like tender flowers opening to be drenched in a rain of filth.

Only one thing can combat this scourge: children must be kept from contact with these abominable psychopaths until sufficient mental resistance has been built up to confer immunity to infection.

Correspondence

GOD

The word God is the postulating of an idea, the reflection of a suggestion, and has no more meaning than the word Unicorn. Unicorn is the reflection of a suggested idea, and is completely unrelated to reality, yet, despite this, the idea as it were has been crystallized by pictorial illustrations of the non-existent, until large numbers of people believe that the reflected idea is a reality.

The professors of religion have been careful in these later days to avoid any attempted pictorial illustration of the meaningless term God. A mighty edifice of words and beliefs could be built upon the suggested idea Unicorn, until people would lose sight of the fact that a foundation did not exist. By a careful development of the idea, wars, murders, suicides, tortures, imprisonment, suffering, and misery could be carried on in its name to an unlimited extent, relations and friends would be separated, and it could be made a punishable offence to do, or say anything against it. Children could be taught at school to believe it as a truth.

A mighty highly-paid hierarchy could be strongly entrenched to moralise upon it. Lastly, our laws and customs could be modelled to conform with this idea of the non-existent unicorn, as though it really existed. It does not require upon reflection much intelligence to see the parallel. If anyone can show that the word God has any more relationship to reality than the word Unicorn, then that person is performing a miracle.

P. TURNER.

GERMAN PROTESTANTISM

In reply to Mr. Arthur Grant's letter I would like to say that I had no wish to suggest in my article that German Catholicism had been superior to German Protestantism in resisting Hitler. I only meant that the Protestants might have been more alive to the danger if they had not been demoralised by Barthian theology.

HIBERNICUS.

A CANON ON SEX

Canon Hunt, senior inspector of R.C. schools in the Nottingham area, wants mothers to switch off the radio if they hear comedians making jokes about sex. He says, "We cannot look on sex as something nasty," and later, "Sex is a wonderful thing, but it has been debauched and degraded and dragged down to the gutter." How true; the Catholic Church has done more debauching, degrading and dragging than anyone. Perhaps the Canon is a little rusty on his "Canon Law," which regards sex as something unclean, something to be avoided (celibacy being regarded as a higher state than matrimony).

C. H. H.

OBITUARY

Recently, I attended the cremation at Glyn Taff crematorium of Daniel Edward Evans, the last of six Welsh miners who acted as bodyguard to Mr. Chapman Cohen and Mr. J. T. Lloyd during the Evan Roberts revival of 1905.

Brave men were they, who suffered from the bigotry and hatred so prevalent during periods of religious orgies. They held their own against tremendous odds, until at last, ill health and old age overtook them, and they quietly slipped away to eternal peace.

PAUL VARNEY.

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