

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ONE of the most significant features of current religious activity is to be found in its Fundamentalist, theologically primitive, character. Time was, not so long ago, when religion appeared to be assuming a new look. Earlier in the present century Modernism was quite the fashionable intellectual pastime of the clergy. Aspiring young theologians sought to reconcile theology with modern science and with ascertained results of Biblical criticism. Such relatively advanced religious thinkers as the late Dean Inge and Bishop Barnes got the headlines in the popular press and, whatever one may think of their personal sincerity or of their particular theological compromises, neither of these eminent prelates could be fairly accused of being either morons or Fundamentalists. Liberal ideas were then in the air, and in the works of distinguished continental scholars such as Harnack or Schweitzer, were widely emulated. Even in professional clerical circles and in theological colleges a generation ago, it rather looked as if Modernism was the coming thing, with Christianity due to shed its mediaeval notions and become quietly metamorphosed into a non-dogmatic form of easy-going Theism. Even the intransigent R.C. Church was having trouble with its own modernists, and as the late Joseph McCabe found, from personal experience during his twelve years in a monastery, liberal ideas were actually circulating *sub rosa* inside the sequestered cloisters of monasteries and seminaries.

Back to the Bible

However, all this nowadays appears to belong to the past. Much water has since flowed under the bridges of Canterbury and Lambeth. Today the current slogans both in the popular pulpit and in professorial theological chairs, not to mention those providential auxiliaries the Radio and TV, are, it would appear, "Back to the Bible" or "Back to the Church." Fundamentalism is in the air at present; literally so, thanks to the pundits of Broadcasting House. All the major manifestations of religion nowadays are of what theologians a generation ago would have considered to have been of an ultra-reactionary character. In the Church of Rome the once widely spread modernist movement appears to have been completely eliminated, while even in the more traditionally liberal Church of England Barnes and Inge appear to have left no successors of comparable stature, and modernism is, at present, making heavy weather and only subsists precariously on the margin. Even in Protestant theological circles the neo-Calvinist, ultra-conservative theology of Karl Barth has now completely superseded the more liberal German theologians such as Harnack and Wellhausen of a generation ago. Anglo-Catholicism, with its glorification of ritualistic practices and its insistence on the traditional authority of the Church, now appears to be the dominant faction. Even in what we might term the more respectable Churches liberal ideas and modern scholarship appear to be at a discount.

The underlying reasons for this depressing change are many and varied in character. To discuss them fully would take us far beyond the confines of theology, into strange and controversial fields. Undoubtedly, some of the causes for the present backward-looking retreat from reason appertain to the social sphere, and form part of the general crisis of our epoch, of which atomic war and communism form more sensational aspects. However, from the point of view of current religious propaganda, such inventions as TV and the radio have undoubtedly proved providential auxiliaries. The current prostitution of advanced scientific technique to the service of primitive religious superstition affords a

timely reminder that science in neither a metaphysical Deity nor an automatically progressive factor, as even some self-styled Freethinkers appear to imagine, but is a social tool which current society can use or abuse for its own purposes. Certainly such products of modern science as the TV and the radio can hardly be regarded as anything but allies of present-day religion.

Billy Strikes a New Level

A startling example of the descent of contemporary religion to the levels of Fundamentalism has been afforded by the recent evangelical tours of the American tub-thumper, Billy Graham. There was not, of course, anything new in either the Graham circus itself or in its religious content. American evangelists of perhaps more commanding stature and even greater verbosity visited these shores long before the Rev. Billy saw the light. The present writer, when a child, was ushered into the august presence of Dr. Torrey, the Billy Graham of his now remote day. However, two new, and to Freethinkers disquieting, features attended the Graham propaganda, both of which were entirely absent from that of his predecessors, whether homegrown or transatlantic imports. The first, the radio appearances of the American hot gospeller, was not available to Moody and Sankey, Alexander, Torrey or Gypsy Smith, though, in the then prevailing intellectual climate, it is doubtful if they would have had access to the microphone. The second is disquieting as well as novel. Both the official Churches, for the first time as far as we know, as well as the Monarchy and "High" Society, officially endorsed not only the Graham mission but apparently the extreme brand of Fundamentalism, verbal inspiration, Hell fire and Blood of the Lamb that Graham and Co. handed out. Billy preached before the Queen, spoke in "Lift up your Hearts," had the Archbishop of Canterbury on his platform and was entertained to dinner by the Mayfair aristocracy. The official recognition of such a primitive version of Christianity by the heads of his Church must have made the late Bishop of Birmingham, for one, turn in his grave. It is a sign of the times, a most disquieting one for which the causes are not wholly to be sought in the religious sphere. The old Fundamentalism that a generation ago appeared to be on the way out has taken on a new lease of life, and of respectability.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

From Billy Graham to Jehovah

By F. A. RIDLEY

Depths Below Depths

However, there are proverbially "depths below depths." Since the departure of Billy Graham we have experienced another transatlantic invasion of an even more primitive character. Compared with Jehovah's Witnesses, who recently assembled in convention in Twickenham to the number of some forty thousand, even Billy Graham is rational and almost civilised. Jehovah's new Witnesses appear to be about the most primitive of all forms of Christianity. If the New Testament Christians were to return here they might find congenial company and a sect as primitive as their own. On the eve of the convention we witnessed the rather humorous spectacle of a group of Witnesses, all wearing labels, clustered round a mummy in the British Museum. Could the mummy have awakened at

this juncture he would surely have felt at home among contemporaries.

In his *History of Freedom of Thought* Bury expressed the confident opinion that today the recurrence of a new Age of Faith was impossible. Would he be so optimistic today? The social crisis which eventually dissolved Roman society led, in Gibbon's phrase, to "the triumph of barbarism and of religion." What will the eventual outcome of our social crisis be? Be that as it may, religion nowadays is descending a vicious spiral from Bishop Barnes to Billy Graham, from Billy Graham to Jehovah's Witnesses. It is a melancholy spectacle and gives one furiously to think. Is religion really on the way out, or is human reason and the critical faculty of mankind? Whatever the answer, the present omens are hardly propitious.

A Biography of Mark Rutherford

By VICTOR E. NEUBURG

Does anybody read them now? Those black cloth volumes of the collected edition gather dust, one fancies, upon the shelves of many owners, and it is sadly probable that many went for salvage during the war. The taste and temper of our own age would seem to suggest that William Hale White, or "Mark Rutherford" as he is better known, finds but few readers to-day. As a novelist he was concerned with the dignity of man, and the twentieth century, with its mass and brash mediocrity, seems for the most part to be content with bright lights and the "telly." This, of course, is too precarious a generalisation to bear much examination, but it contains a germ or two of truth, and may indicate why this particular novelist has gone out of fashion. One by one his novels have gone out of print.

Some months ago a biography of this writer was published: (*Mark Rutherford*. A biography of William Hale White, by Catherine MacDonal MacLean. Macdonald, 25s.) It is likely to remain the standard "Life" for more than a few decades. Dr. MacLean has had access to the family papers, and received assistance from Mark Rutherford's widow. The result is a thoroughly workmanlike book which is interesting and complete. It might perhaps be argued that the six novels themselves received too scant attention, and one would have wished for a fuller analysis of them.

In all there were six novels: *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, *dissenting Minister*; *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*; *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*; *Miriam's Schooling*; *Catherine Furze*; *Clara Hopgood*. In addition there were three volumes of *Pages from a Journal*, published between 1900 and 1915; the last one appeared posthumously. There was also a tiny volume of reminiscences, *The Early Life of Mark Rutherford*, which came out in 1913. This represents by no means all White's output. His first pamphlet, *An Argument for the Extension of the Franchise* (1866), was written in response to a suggestion from his friend G. J. Holyoake. The titles mentioned above, however, form the greater part of his creative work, and it is by them that he must be judged as a literary artist.

Any such judgement must take into account the uniquely intimate relationship between the life and art of Mark Rutherford. Dr. MacLean wisely eschews any such critical evaluation, and there is no doubt at all that her book will add very considerably to the sheer enjoyment of reading the novels. It is a long book but an amply rewarding one.

It would be fruitless and irrelevant to claim that Mark Rutherford was a freethinker. He was a man of intense and passionate inward faith, with a tolerance and wisdom

far beyond that of most believers and unbelievers. As a young man he entered a college to train for the Dissenting Ministry, but found that narrow prejudice on the part of the Principal made any real discussion of religious and moral issues quite impossible. The circumstances of his leaving the college created quite a *cause célèbre* at the time, and after a while he entered the Admiralty as a clerk, rising before his retirement to a high position. His first marriage was marred when his wife contracted an incurable disease and became for many years an invalid.

There were two main influences upon the life of Mark Rutherford. The first was his father, William White, bookseller of Bedford, and later Principal Doorkeeper of the House of Commons. William White was a Dissenting Radical of that generation to which the Labour party was later to owe so much. The other was Caleb Morris, an Independent minister, whose influence upon the writer is apparent in at least two of the novels.

One of the shorter episodes of Mark Rutherford's life was the one in which, immediately after leaving College, he worked for John Chapman, the freethinking publisher, and met George Eliot. This was before she had achieved fame herself, and the impression she made was a lasting one.

Of all Victorian novelists, Mark Rutherford was the one to draw a sympathetic picture of the contemporary sceptic or unbeliever. First there is Edward Gibbon Mardon in the *Autobiography*; next, Dr. Turnbull in *Catherine Furze*; and lastly the freethinking radical in *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, Jean Caillaud. The last named novel possesses the distinction of being the only credible novel about working class characters written in the nineteenth century. One has only to compare it with Frances Trollope's *Michael Armstrong*, a story about a factory boy, to realise how authentic is *Tanner's Lane*.

Perhaps Dr. MacLean's book will send readers back to these novels. They are to be found on the shelves of second-hand bookshops, and it is not too much to be hoped that ere long an enterprising publisher of paper-backed books will discover that at least two of the novels might find fresh readers—even to-day. But is that too much to hope for?

—NEXT WEEK—

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

By MERRILL R. HOLSTE

Dr. Sangster on Atheists

By G. I. BENNETT

WHEN a man, who is an author, is a Ph.D., one feels one has a right to expect from him a book that has at least some educative value. That is why I was induced to read the Rev. Dr. W. E. Sangster's work, *The Pure in Heart: A Study in Christian Sanctity*.^{*} Had I ever read anything of Dr. Sangster's before I might have been more cautious. But I hadn't; and so I was disappointed.

It is far from my intention to attempt a critical presentation of his book. Its loose, prolix style, puerile reasoning, endless repetitions of thought and phrase, strange illogical inferences, and simple credulity would make such a presentation wearisome to the reader. However, there are two of its statements I am singling out for consideration, not because they possess any particular merit in themselves, but because they are typical of a kind of misrepresentation commonly met with.

Dr. Sangster leads up to one of these statements by discussing whether faith comes of "some great act of will." It cannot be denied, he says, that "there is a will to believe—just as there is a will not to believe." And he goes on: "The anxiety to disprove the existence of God and the hereafter is not always the pure passion for truth. Unfaith, as well as faith, can spring from the heart and not the mind. Unbelief is the excuse some men give to themselves for the way they have chosen to live. A man resolutely breaking the commandments, and angered at a conscience not sufficiently doped, finds his mind tampering with the belief in God and seeking 'reasons' for getting rid of it. Anyone eager to prove that faith is wishful thinking, might in honesty remember that unfaith is wishful thinking too." Such a man, he continues, should at least "question his heart concerning his eagerness not to believe. He who says: 'I am an atheist but I don't claim to like my unbelief. I want to believe in God if I can' . . . he is in one category. The man who throws his hat in the air because he thinks he has disproved God is in another."

Notice the imputation in that passage. Despite its quasi-reasonableness about the man who cannot believe in God (though he would if he could), its meaning is clear enough. It states in different words: The atheist is usually a man who disbelieves what he wishes to disbelieve so that he may have *carte blanche* to live an unconscionable life, casting decency and all inconvenient moral scruples to the wind.

Well, it is an old story that atheists are really rogues, whatever may be their pretensions or protestations to the contrary. The trouble is, a lot of people all too readily accept it. It is curious how the idea lingers that the belief in God makes a man a better man; and that, if you are devoid of such belief, you may be capable of any villainy—especially if you have the audacity to declare your unbelief publicly.

Questioned as to their reasons for so naive a point of view, most of the credulous people become a little "lame." It is apparent that it isn't something they have really thought out for themselves, but something they have heard so often and for so long that they hold it to be true—just as they may, for the same reason, also hold it to be true that white men are generally more intelligent and more moral than coloured men; or that a crowned head of State, even if he—or she—does not play an active part in government nowadays, does at least bind a country or an empire together and give it "standing"; or that "there has always been war and always will be war" because "you can't change human nature."

^{*} Epworth Press, 1954.

One could cite many similar instances of popular opinion passionately held that have little or no foundation in fact.

Many people, challenged on this issue of the need of religion for leading a good life, would have no clear or decided reply; but, with patience, we might get from them one of two views. Either (1) God is a moral being, enabling us to see what is right and what wrong if we do but trust in him and allow his spirit to work within us: therefore the atheist, being without the inner guiding light of God, cannot know what is really right; or (2) Fear of God's punishment of wrongdoing deters us from the grosser sins. The atheist does not believe that we shall some day be held accountable for our conduct. Therefore his attitude is: Why bother to adhere to moral principles? What does it matter?

Now Dr. Sangster certainly subscribes to the latter view, and so far subscribes to the first that he thinks that only those imbued with God's spirit feel, with especial force, the beauty of sanctity (a word of which he is fond) and the enormity of sin. But it is time we had a look at the second of Dr. Sangster's statements. This is really a variant of his contention that the radical freethinker is actually a man without conscience or soul. Here, it will be noticed, he won't even give atheists credit for what he has himself observed—that those not guided or consoled by a transcendental faith may be kind, charitable individuals.

"We must not suppose," he cautions, "that the extra kindness irreligious people sometimes display to sinners proves that the irreligious are more advanced in sanctity. So many of them take a light view of sin. Indeed, they often confuse in their own mind what they suppose to be a nobly forgiving spirit with a 'gangster's agreement' . . . Their overlooking of other people's moral failings is sometimes their unspoken bargain with people who will overlook their own nasty sins . . ."

Disinterested intellectual convictions that cannot be dovetailed with theism count for nothing with Dr. Sangster. He never stops to consider that most freethinkers—never mind the odd one or two so-called freethinkers whose character conveniently suits his theme—are good honourable folk who, so far from seeking excuses for moral laxity, are frequently *more* concerned, not *less* concerned, than the theist about social and ethical questions. Starting off on the wrong foot, however, our reverend writer apparently thinks that the tolerance manifested by atheists proceeds from their inability, lacking Divine grace, clearly to distinguish good from evil. But, going further, he imputes to them the most disreputable of motives. Not feeling the truly appalling nature of sin, as does, it seems, the genuine Christian, they make a contract with iniquity, overlooking the unrighteousness of others so that they may condone their own dubious living with: "I don't interfere with or condemn the doings of other folk, so they have no right to interfere with or condemn me."

Well, all I can say is that I have not found that sort of freethinker yet. If I ever do find him Dr. Sangster may be assured that I shall not conduct the case for his defence. But I don't expect to come upon him in a hurry. Dr. Sangster's freethinker isn't really a freethinker at all. He is one of those shallow-thinking individuals whose philosophy simply amounts to "having a good time"; who has never given a minute's serious thought to the pros and cons of religion; and who, while asserting he has no use for parsons, has not surrendered his conventional belief that they add seemliness to christenings, weddings, and—of course—funerals.

This Believing World

At a religious Conference in America, the Bishop of London found there were two ideas about the Kingdom of Heaven. Most Americans thought that a properly run Heaven should have the requisite number of household gadgets and the right sort of plumbing; while others thought the Kingdom of God had nothing to do with this world. What Dr. Wand himself thought of his own last resting-place he did not say but it is obvious that he must believe in the Heaven of Jesus with its many (first class) Mansions and its Angels, to say nothing of Peter and Paul interminably discussing with David and Moses the advantages Christianity has over Judaism—without effect; Jesus of course acting as an impartial Chairman. It almost makes one wish to abide with Heaven for ever.

The Rev. H. E. Winter trying to answer the question, "Where are the great preachers to-day?" admits that there are none quite equal to Spurgeon, Parker, and others who, last century, used to fill their churches to overflowing. What was considered great then! "would not be considered great to-day," he tells us—and how right he is. No one loved to thunder Hell and Hell fire more than Spurgeon and his fellow preachers, and no doubt they believed it all themselves. But these days what preacher—except Billy Graham—would dare to condemn his congregation to the Burning Pit for ever and ever? The truth is that Science and Freethought have civilised Christianity to such a degree that Hell and its Devils are a mere joke, and there is precious little a great preacher can now thunder about. Even the greatest of preachers finds it hard to enthuse about a Jesus who is merely a glorified Sunday school teacher.

At the beginning of the century Neo-malthusianism was the name given to what later was called Birth Control. Nowadays, both have been superseded by the words "family planning" but Roman Catholics all know that a rose is still a rose no matter what you call it. The Family Planning Association want to begin a clinic in Chester and have stirred up all believers in Rome to righteous indignation. If the clinic comes into being, then Roman Catholic girls will not be allowed to nurse in our hospitals; and a Miss Mullen wrote that she looked with horror at the spreading of any birth control information. In fact, it appears that Eire would be called on to stop Irish girls from becoming nurses in England, and what would English hospitals do then?

It is good to record that in spite of these and other threats as to what will happen to an unbelieving England if Roman Catholics are not allowed to do what they like in such a Protestant country, that at least most of the people present at a meeting of the Chester and District Hospital Committee were in favour of birth control information to be given at an approved clinic. And it is a great pity that most of the Roman Catholics who oppose Family Planning cannot go back to Eire where there is a wonderful censorship supervised by the Pope himself, and where the muzzle and the gag on other matters as well are abundantly administered. And all in the sacred name of religion, too.

Heaven may fall but nothing will prevent celibate priests from severely denouncing women for some reason or other. Many of the early champions of the primitive Christian

Church used language unprintable against the sex, and ever since if there was nothing else the clothes they wore would come in for a severe trouncing. Cardinal Ria who, at 72 years old, ought to know, has angrily expressed his disgust to his fellow Spaniards at the way women bathed with men at the seaside—no doubt the sight of a bikini was more than he could stand, even at his age. But we have an idea that the sexes will still bathe together wherever possible in spite of the worthy Cardinal's denunciations—even in Spain.

The Fleet Street Pope, Mr. Hannen Swaffer, is still very angry at the severe handling the Spiritualist healer, Mr. Harry Edwards, received from two doctors on T.V. the other day. It will be remembered that he chortled with joy in proclaiming that doctors have the biggest proportion of lunatics among them—yet he writes in the *People* that "a despairing doctor" who is in bad health wants to consult Mr. Edwards. But is this doctor therefore one of Mr. Swaffer's lunatics?

FOR NEWCOMERS

The Late Chapman Cohen

SEPTEMBER 1st, the nearest date to that of the publication of this issue of *The Freethinker*, was the birthday of the late Chapman Cohen, its editor for 35 years (1915—50) and President of the National Secular Society. From time to time you will have seen short extracts from his writings reproduced in these columns. He was the recognised leader and spearhead of the Freethought movement in Britain, in succession to Charles Bradlaugh and G. W. Foote. The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund, some details of which will be found on the next page, was devised to raise £1,000 as a tribute to his memory, and, with the ready agreement of Mrs. Cohen, the fund is being used to help to keep *The Freethinker* in existence.

Thousands of people in this country alone—and his influence extended far beyond these shores—reacting to his stimulus began to shed their religious, and other, dogmas, and began that course of independent thinking which made them Freethinkers.

Many of Chapman Cohen's works are still obtainable through the Pioneer Press. For quick reading (and passing on) his *Pamphlets* are admirable (2d. each; 5/6 bound vol.) and his *Grammar of Freethought* (4/6) provides an authentic general introduction to the subject.

Chapman Cohen began writing for *The Freethinker* in 1896, and for fifty years from 1899 he was a regular contributor. About 2,700 articles from his pen appeared in *The Freethinker*, besides a quantity of unsigned matter as editor. In addition he delivered many hundreds of lectures both indoors and, as a younger man, in the open air. On the platform he was a formidable opponent to the numerous Christian representatives with whom he debated. His quickness of response and deftness in exhibiting the fallacies in his opponents' arguments, showed that debating came very naturally to him.

It is hoped that those who have not yet made contact with Cohen's writings at first hand will endeavour to do so. And although, naturally, we cannot be answerable for everything he said on every subject he wrote on, nevertheless the position taken by Chapman Cohen on all major points in the secularist outlook is still the basic position of *The Freethinker* today.

G.H.T.

THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

To Correspondents

CORRECTION.—The phrase in Mr. E. H. Grout's article on August 12th (page 255, third line from bottom, first column) should of course have been "Say nothing but good of the dead." The error was not the fault of the author.

J. T. McDONALD.—Thanks for very relevant comment on Mr. McCarthy's article, which we will pass on.

F. WALKER.—The Freethinker's quarrel with religion is that it interferes with the conduct of life, and it makes no difference to that if certain definite beliefs are given up while the harm continues in the name of certain other nebulous beliefs.

ALAN BICKHURST.—Glad you find the articles "stimulating enough to urge you to further study." We would prefer to stimulate a new reader to pursue a subject on his own, rather than satisfy him immediately. The best teacher is the one who teaches his pupil to do without him.

MR. & MRS. C. E. RATCLIFFE.—Congratulations on achieving your Diamond from all your fellow-missionaries.

C. F. SHORTHOUSE.—We do not require God, to prove he exists, "to act wisely." We merely require him to act.

J. POND, JUN.—John Wesley taught that earthquakes were caused by human sin, holding that God unchained natural forces as a punishment. Evidently an indiscriminate revenge!

R. FOX.—The philosophical argument for Eternal Forms was answered by Anatole France thus: "Before there were apples there was The Apple; before there were lewd and greedy monks, there was The Monk, Lewdness and Greed; and before there were feet and posteriors in the world, the kick in the posterior must have had existence for all eternity in the bosom of God." (*Revolt of the Angels.*)

MISS E. CLAY.—Evidence for the non-Christian origin of hospitals may be consulted in Fort's *Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, Lecky's *History of European Morals*, Prescott's *History of Mexico*, Wylie's *History of Hospitals*, or Draper's *Intellectual Development of Europe*. There were hospitals in Persia and in India, long before the Christian era. The Buddhist Emperor founded hospitals for both man and beast; in the Roman Empire there had to be military hospitals; and the Temples of Serapis and Hygea served the dual purpose of hospitals and medical schools.

S. WATERSTEIN.—A Freethinker in a law court is not to blame for the affirmation not being ready to administer. The more trouble he puts the Court to, the better. They are the more likely to have the affirmation ready in future.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m. Sunday, August 7: HAROLD DAY and other speakers.

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 Fields: 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 Friday 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Saturday, September 3, Messrs. MORRELL, ELSMERE and 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. EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

INDOOR

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street, Room 7), Thursday, September 8, Mr. JACOBS, "Dialectical Materialism."

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £924 18s. 0d. Miss D. Rider, 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s. 0d.; D. Fyfe, 4s. 6d.; A. S. G. Hamlyn, New Zealand, £2 0s. 0d.; Persecuted Atheist, £1 0s. 0d. Total to date, £928 6s. 0d.

Notes and News

Readers who have sent cuttings for use in "This Believing World" will note that Mr. Cutner is at present in Paris, but will give them his attention on his return. Mr. Cutner has been visiting some of his favourite haunts in the French bookstalls, and tells us that anti-religious books are now very seldom seen—probably due to Rome's stranglehold on such literature in France. Mr. Cutner has also taken a photograph of Joseph Lewis's Statue of Thomas Paine in the French capital.

The annual re-union week-end conference of the Ethical Union will take place from September 9th—11th at High Leigh, Hoddesden. High Leigh is a large mansion standing in extensive grounds, the nearest station Broxbourne (from Liverpool St.). Perhaps the two papers of primary interest to Freethinkers are *The Difficulties of Unbelief* (Saturday, September 10th, 10 a.m.—12.30 p.m.), the discussion to be opened by Mrs. Hobman, and *The Background and Future of the Rationalist Movement* (Sunday, September 11th, 2—3.45 p.m.), the discussion to be opened by Mr. Hawton, who will deal with Rationalist organisation, plans and hopes.

We have pleasure in announcing the co-optation of two more members to the National Executive of the N.S.S., in Mrs. Grant and Mr. J. Gordon. Mrs. Grant makes a most welcome return, having been an Executive member during the presidency of Chapman Cohen. Mr. Gordon, whose articles have recently appeared in *The Freethinker*, was connected with the Glasgow Branch before taking up residence near London.

Owing to another professional assignment abroad, Mr. W. J. O'Neill, the popular N.S.S. speaker at Marble Arch, will again have to suspend his activities there, but will, of course, keep in touch with the movement. The meetings at Marble Arch continue to be very successful and effective, and for some weeks, on our London pitches, the brunt has been borne by that ever dependable stalwart, Mr. L. Ebury. Still far from the veteran class, we estimate that in his thirty years of outdoor work for the movement Mr. Ebury must by now have made something approaching two thousand appearances on the outdoor platform alone. It is a tribute to his energy and skill that his effectiveness remains undiminished. Whenever the opportunity arises, he is ready to speak for the provincial branches of the N.S.S., and some weeks ago spoke at Nottingham Market Square. In Mrs. Ebury he is fortunate in having a constant and enthusiastic assistant at the meetings.

A commendable effort has resulted in the formation of an Orpington Group of the Ethical Union. Starting with informal meetings at the house of its genial chairman, Mr. W. E. George, the group has grown and has now about forty contacts, with the result that monthly indoor meetings have been arranged to take place in Sherry's Cafe, High Street. *The Freethinker* will be among the periodicals on display, and it is expected that the syllabus will include Secularist speakers. Details will be given in our Lecture Notices.

A Note on Telepathy

by H. CUTNER

THE experiments and investigations into what we now call Telepathy appear to crowds of people—including Mrs. Margaret Knight—to be something new in “psychical research;” whereas, if the reader can see a copy of the first volume of the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research published in 1883, that is 72 years ago, he will find therein Three Reports with voluminous details and notes on Thought-Transference, as it was then called.

Long before Dr. Rhine or Dr. Soal was born, almost exactly the same kind of experiments as theirs were undertaken with what appears to me to be exactly the same kind of results. The great names in those days were F. W. H. Myers, Edmund Gurney, Frank Podmore, and Prof. W. F. Barrett, and they and lots of more or less unknown and forgotten people constantly experimented in trying to transmit various drawings or pencil shapes, cards, numbers, and names, exactly as Rhine and Soal are doing these days.

Take cards as an example. One of the experiments recorded gave 36 trails. 10 were right on the first guess, 9 on the second guess, 24 were right, altogether and if a first guess only is counted, the actual result was 1 right guess in 3½. Now compare this with a success by accident—it would be, 1 right in 52. Prof. Balfour Stewart obtained this and many similar results. Out of 85 trails with cards, names, objects, and numbers, he obtained 26 right on the first guess, 16 on the second, with 50 completely right. Guessing resulted in very small numbers.

There are in this volume many similar experiments which could have come straight out of Rhine or Soal or Upton Sinclair, so similar are the results. The Report insists

“that the *cumulative* character of the evidence which we have now amassed, and the extent to which we have eliminated the hypotheses of collusion, chance coincidence, and muscle or sign-reading, render our claim to have established the reality of this class of phenomena a very strong one. We continue carefully to consider all adverse criticism; but we venture to think that much of it really depends on an *a priori* presumption of impossibility which, natural though it may be, cannot of course be legitimately opposed to positive evidence.”

Or to put it another way, the Report really accepted Telepathy as quite proven. Yet though Rhine and Soal have continued similar experiments with perhaps more success, it cannot be said that Telepathy is even now fully accepted. It has always seemed to me that we accept people like Rhine because they do the experimenting—just as we say we must accept what a doctor says because he has had the training, or what a Bishop believes because he has been “ordained.”

Quite a number of the experiments described in this volume of the Proceedings of the S.P.R. emanate from two men, the percipient Mr. Smith, and the agent Mr. Blackburn. Blackburn came from Brighton “at considerable inconvenience to himself” and the Committee took every possible precaution against being hoaxed. But as readers who have read what I have so often said in discussing Spiritualism, the biggest fools to do any “investigation” are our “men of science.” Admirable in their own work, they are quite unfitted for finding out how a conjuror, for example, bamboozles them. When I read that Professor This with the help of Professor That carefully made it impossible for a medium to hoax them, I am quite certain that they will be thoroughly hoaxed. The one class of “investigators” Houdini preferred to all others was men of science. He knew, with

them as the investigating Committee, he could *never* be found out.

The experiments with Messrs Blackburn and Smith (who were unpaid) are carefully detailed and reproductions of drawings made by telepathic communications between the two reproduced. And the Committee were left in no doubt about the reality of “Thought-Transference” as they called it—in 1883. What else could they conclude? Blackburn himself claimed that the experiments “were the first scientifically conducted and attested experiments in thought-transference and later were imitated and reproduced by sensitives all over the world.”

But you will not find Smith and Blackburn mentioned these days as the great pioneers of Telepathy. In 1911, writing in the *Daily Mail*, Blackburn gave the whole show away much to the disgust of all believers. He and Smith had a beautiful code of signals and they deliberately hoaxed Gurney, Myers, and the rest. “Messrs Myers and Gurney,” he declared, “were too anxious to get corroboration for their theories . . . they allowed us to impose our own conditions . . . (they) exhibited a complaisance and confidence which, however complimentary to us, was scarcely consonant with a strict scientific investigation on behalf of the public.”

In other words (as Joseph Rinn points out in his *Sixty Years of Psychical Research*) “two youths were able with a week’s practice to take in such trained observers and careful investigators as Gurney and Myers (and afterwards Podmore and Sedgwick); there is no saying what might have been done with experienced cheats with a real motive for the use of deception.”

Let me make it perfectly clear that I am not *utterly* denying Telepathy—I have not made any experiments myself, and even if I had, I do not think that I would be able to say definitely anything one way or other. One experiment would settle the question, it seems to me, for all time. Put the “transmitter” in one room and the receiver in another. Give the first a £1 note and ask him to transmit the numbers on it to the second. If that can be done correctly *every* time—I can see no reason for doubting Telepathy. That it has *never* been done is not at all remarkable.

And finally, why should Telepathy not be a fact in the evolution of mind? We know little about mind in spite of the thousands of books which have been written about it. But in the course of Evolution, why should we be surprised if it can transmit and receive messages? Nobody knows the exact course Evolution will take in the future and it may well be that, more than anything else, a new type of mind will evolve—not of course in thousands of years, but in millions. Who knows? We can only say that, so far, Telepathy is not proven.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

THEOLOGIANS and philosophers argue that the Universe is full of antithetical truths. Apparently contradictory, they are yet necessary to each other. The Sovereignty of God and the freedom of the human will, for example, are but two sides of one great truth. But if man is a free agent he is his own sovereign and cannot possibly be in a state of subjection to God. On the other hand, if God is absolutely supreme, man is not free. I am of necessity the slave of him who is in the true sense of the word my Sovereign. And yet many preachers proclaim the absolute sovereignty of the Divine Being and, at the same time, the perfect freedom of man. Speaking of the former they say to man :

"You cannot oppose God. Do what you may, His will is bound to prevail." Speaking of the latter they address man thus: "You are so great and strong that you can successfully resist and quench the Holy Ghost. You are the maker of your own character, the framer of your own destiny." Now if God longs to make man good and happy, to secure his love and confidence and the complete surrender of his will, and fails to do so, then God is less than Sovereign. But the two opposing views cannot both be true. Either God is supreme and man a machine, or man is supreme and God must confess himself defeated.

Does not reason, therefore, require our renouncing God—him we have never seen or known, while man is a present reality, a fact we cannot ignore. And we cannot be just to man so long as God remains. It is to nature, including himself, that man is indissolubly bound.—(ex-REV.) J. T. LLOYD, *The Freethinker*, September 3rd, 1905.)

Ignoramus sed non Ignorabimus

By Dr. HUGO HECHT

[President Eisenhower was recently quoted as saying it takes no brains to be an Atheist. On the contrary many Atheists are doing notable work in various branches of science, but in some cases play down their unbelief for professional and economic reasons. The fullest avowal of atheism will never be possible while Christianity retains its present influence on social customs. The following is extracted from an article in *Liberal* (U.S.A.) for May, 1955.]

The author became a Doctor of Medicine fifty years ago in Prague, and in the course of a distinguished career was an Associate Professor of Dermatology and Syphilology till the outbreak of war in 1939. He published 185 papers and monographs in seven languages, being best known for his syphilis test "Reaction de Hecht."—Ed.]

Mankind has reached a height in living conditions rarely dreamed of in old times. In comparison with this, the progress in thinking seems to be slow, far too slow to keep in step with the technical achievements. This contrast is nowhere else seen so clearly as in modern medicine when diseases like pellagra, diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever, malaria, and typhoid, which killed millions of people year after year can be controlled, thanks to the achievements in hygiene, chemistry, bacteriology and immunology. At the same time voices can be heard who try to give credit for these feats to some supernatural power. Astonishingly, to this chorus of miracle believers also belong doctors of medicine. And this is the cause about which I am concerned as a doctor and scientist.

Read Dr. Karl B. Pace of Greenville, N.C.: "There is a power that goes with a doctor greater than he is. I have never seen a doctor who was an infidel." (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 5, 1954.)

Dr. Elmer Hess, president-elect of the American Medical Association, a specialist in neurology, said any doctor "who lacks faith in the Supreme Being" has no right to practice medicine. A physician who walks into a sickroom is not alone. He can only minister to the ailing person with the material tools of scientific medicine—his faith in a higher power does the rest. (From the *Kansas City Star* of November 8, 1954.)

From the Bulletin of the Academy of Medicine of Cleveland, January, 1955, an article "Religion and Medicine":

Men of medicine to-day have greater need than ever for the staying power of a firm faith and a belief that they are but instruments of a wiser Being. They are inspired by the sober reflection that "it is God Who hath made us and not we ourselves" to continue their work with the deep humility that is the mark of true wisdom.

... Most of the progress of modern medicine comes from doctors and scientists who do not believe in a "wiser Being" or "Supreme Intelligence." Having lived more than half a century in Europe I know that the doctors there rarely go to church; it is an exception when a doctor there attends church Sunday after Sunday. From all the many of my teachers only one was known as a churchgoer. Nevertheless some of my teachers were world famous for their achievements (Wolfler, Ph. J. Pick, V. Jaksch, E. Hering, Sheinach, Franque, and others). None of them was pious, but had to belong to a recognized church because in old Austria no one could become a professor who professed to be a Freethinker.

Dr. Pace says he has never seen a doctor who was an infidel. Probably he never looked at doctors when he attended an annual meeting of the A.M.A. There must have been many hundreds who proudly confess that they are atheists, members of the Freethinkers of America or the Friendship Liberal League, and many thousands who are merely conformists. The latter would be everything the society in which they practice expects and demands from them—in China Confucianists, in Japan Shintoists, in Russia Communists. Dr. Pace's statement is unbelievably naive. His attention is called to an editorial in *The Observer* (London, England) of January 16th, 1955, titled "Morals" and the following sentence: "Although Britain remains a Christian country in many public ways, it now probably contains more non-Christians than Christians, and responsible speakers for a non-Christian approach to current problems, including moral problems, should be heard." At the time being the U.S.A. population has at least 80 million people without any church affiliation; Dr. Pace wants us to believe that there are not physicians in this group! Ridiculous! And Dr. Hess "only ministers to the ailing person with the material tools of scientific medicine" without probably realizing that this alone, and only this, can restore his patients to health. But he thinks that "his faith in a higher power does the rest"; this means nothing, absolutely nothing as he could observe if he would reverse the order of his procedures.

This reminds me of a story: A priest was taking a walk through a new farm and seeing the farmer busy at work complimented him for his fine achievement with the words, "What a good job you performed with God's help." The farmer responded, "You should have seen the mess this place was in when God had it all for himself!"

In half a century of medical practice and scientific research I have never seen a patient with a serious disease who was cured by a miracle. Every time such a one was proclaimed inquiry proved that the report was not true or the diagnosis wrong or the claim of a miracle cure exaggerated. Modern medicine knows only two groups of observations: the ones we can explain and the others we cannot explain. But this "cannot" is not definite. It means, not yet, but probably some time in the future.

An experience I had a few years ago will explain this situation: I was flying from London to New York on a fine September in 1947. I was sitting at the window and a young Catholic priest next to me. It was a clear night and flying at 8,000 feet we had a wonderful view of the blinking stars outside. We both looked at the glorious sight and got into a conversation about stars, about the universe, about men. My companion was a highly educated man and teacher of physics at a Catholic University. When I mentioned Fred Hoyle's *The Expanding Universe* the priest remarked: "You don't believe?" I answered that

this is natural for me as a scientist and physician and added, to cut an expected discussion short, that there is only one difference between us two—if he cannot explain a phenomenon he says God (with a capital G!), the scientists admit that they don't know yet: even if we don't know today the cause of a natural phenomenon there will be sooner or later a time when science will give the solution. The priest looked at me and said this was the first time that the difference between faith and facts was so clearly put before him. We parted friends.

There are no miracles in medicine. This should be clear to everybody, at least to all doctors of medicine. Prayers never cured a cancer, never a leucemia or hemophilia. Only a few cases out of millions of the futility of prayers are published in the daily press, but these few should be enough to convince the people who are sensible to reason: There are no miracles!

There was a little girl for whom the nation prayed (1949) to save her right hand. It had to be amputated because of a malignant lesion on her third finger. No miracle saved her hand! No miracle replaced the lost hand, but a man-made prosthesis gave her at least an artificial one.

A political reminiscence to the futility of prayers: In 1883 special services were held in all churches all over Austria-Hungary to pray that the expected child of the wife of Crown Prince Rudolph Habsburg would be a son. Even Cardinals and the Pope joined the many believers in prayers. All in vain—a girl was born.

The doctors who believe in a "Superior Being" should read Spinoza's *Of Miracles* in his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. They should pay attention to the following quotation: "They are but triflers who, when they cannot explain a thing, run back to the will of God; this is, truly, a ridiculous way of expressing ignorance."

If the M.D.s here had the same study courses as the doctors from Middle Europe they would perhaps read in school some writings of Aristotle and about his theory of the eternity of matter which is basically recognized even today after 2,300 years. This excludes the possibility of creation in which the religionists believe. Dr. Pace, Dr. Hess and all those who harp on their line of a higher power without which they cannot help sick people should join the ranks of the faith healers. But no! On the contrary: the doctor who has the impudence to propose that any doctor who lacks faith in the "Supreme Being" should not have the right to practice medicine, should be advised to see a psychiatrist—instead, he was elected to become president of the A.M.A.!

In our country "of the free," freedom of speech, thought, teaching and research is still regarded as essential. If somebody believes in a superior being it is his privilege to do so. But the same privilege have the non-believers, the freedom to think in their way. And nobody has the right to interfere! This privilege is granted by the Constitution as every child is taught in school. There is no room for intolerance, if we want to preserve our freedom of thought.

It was Aristotle who said that men create their gods after their own image, not only with regard to their form but with regard to their mode of life. Men create their gods and therefore, they can demote them as did the Babylonians, Syrians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Germanic tribes. It is not even 10 years ago that an American general

told the Japanese people that an Emperor-God will not be tolerated. One more God went down showing the foolishness of his believers. It is possible that in a few generations from now another general—probably of the yellow race—will tell European people their God cannot and will not be tolerated. And no miracle will save this fantastic creation of men.

Correspondence

CAUSES OF WAR

Mr. R. Reader (*The Basic Causes of War*) argues two main points: that war is caused by overpopulation, and that overpopulation is the result of "religious neurosis."

Neither seems true to me; to blame religion for overpopulation is to pick on a scapegoat and leave the real problem unsolved. What of the many countries, including our own, which favour high birth rates? Or the politicians who approve of unemployment in order to pay workers a low wage? The economic system at the present day thrives on threatened unemployment. So long as there are classes of privileged and underprivileged, overpopulation exists, and the problem is a political (or economic) one and has virtually nothing to do with religion.

Where such classes exist there is inevitably conflict between them but, more important, there is also conflict between rival groups of capitalists. Both conflicts arise out of the same cause, the profit motive which is the basis of the present society, and where there is the danger of war. The rivalry between capitalists takes the form of competition for markets, natural resources and (in imperialist wars) cheap labour. In other words wars arise out of our economic system, which is a class-system based on private profit rather than co-operation and communal benefit.

R. Reader is in agreement with this to the extent that he writes that wars are concerned with territory and natural resources, and that their causes lie in the economic sphere. He also writes that the cause must be of a general nature—as the economic system of any society is—yet does not seem aware that despite its generality war has a very different nature in different centuries. For example, modern war increased in scale as trade and competition expanded, whereas in earlier times wars were usually quite local and often did not involve natural resources but were looting and slave-making expeditions.

The common feature of all wars is their origin in the conflicts between classes and between sections of the exploiting class, and the dependence of their scale and nature on the class-structure of the time.

EDWIN G. H. CROUCH.

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Re Mr. Rowland's article.)—"Worshipping the unknown is on a par with the fear-and-trembling superstition of the savage. . . Values, good and bad, true and false, are always based on the ever-changing social conditions."

RICHARD KEAN.

"I have enjoyed my first copies of your paper but cannot support all the principles of the N.S.S., I quarrel very seriously with several of them."

R.B.

"Next time Billy Graham comes, why not get a supply of leaflets to distribute to his crowds?"

L. GRAHAM.

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