

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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SEVERAL people, recently meeting with THE FREETHINKER for the first time, express surprise that religion should be attacked "with such vehemence" (to quote one). Other extracts are: "I am probably at heart as much an Atheist as you, but at least I respect the opinions of my religious friends, and there is something rather sacred about a man's religion which we should not violate."

"After all, 'there are more things in Heaven,' and the subject is not to be treated lightly. Your item, 'This Believing World,' treats religion as a joke."

"We know there are fallacies in Christianity, but it's really a sacred, holy thing to talk about, isn't it?"

"Don't forget—Religion is not like science. You can deal with science in a matter-of-fact way, but Religion needs quietness and prayer."

## Protection for Religion

Now Freethought, on the contrary, asks for no such special consideration, no such protection. Hard as the religious bigot may be towards the beliefs of others, to his own he is all tenderness. He is ready to denounce the opinions of freethinkers with ferocity; for his own he demands gentleness, and will solemnly remind his critics that they are dealing with a sacred subject which must suffer no outrage. Moreover, such is his show of indignation when his beliefs are attacked that he may even induce some of his critics, such as the ones quoted, to regard religion as something not to be investigated in the ordinary way, but as something which demands a special method of inquiry which shall protect it at the outset.

Thus it happens that there are many who have gone some distance along the road of unbelief, but who, so far from following the advice of Prof. W. K. Clifford, "Let truth be shouted from the housetops," are almost afraid to avow their unbelief as though it were something to be ashamed of.

## Conditions for Broadcasting

This is exactly what the religious bigot wants. He is even prepared to allow an occasional mild dose of scepticism on the Third Programme, so long as it is done with reverence, providing the script is seen by Christians beforehand and suitably censored, and of course, always with provision for a Christian answer to be supplied immediately, without rejoinder. But if such scepticism actually runs to Atheism and is voiced on the Home Service, it is called "invading the sanctity of our homes."

Denouncing the B.B.C. for permitting the Margaret Knight broadcasts, one Bishop put the sad case of "a young couple with their first baby, teaching it to say its prayers," and the dreadful effect of Mrs. Knight's talks. We pass over this peculiar Christian method of rearing their infants, having them up at ten o'clock at night listening to radio talks, but for the parents the answer is easy. Switch off. Then there can be no question of "invasion."

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

# Treating Religion Gently

By G. H. TAYLOR

## "Violating" Sanctity

And in truth, if anything really stands in need of being invaded it is sanctity.

Sanctity is the black hole of mental suffocation in which useful thinking cannot function. Sanctity is the atmosphere which defies reason. Sanctity is death to the solution of any problem. Sanctity is the mother and protector of bigotry.

Once create the delusion that a subject is "sacred" and you have established an authoritative platform for prejudice and persecution. The timid unbeliever will shuffle hesitantly in his opinions and wriggle awkwardly from his position. He will earn the pity of the freethinker and, what is worse, the contempt of the Christian.

## Respecting Opinions

To the question, "Have you no respect for religious opinions?" the plain answer is No. No opinion, merely as an opinion, deserves respect. The most we can have for it is a regard, but that does not forfeit equality, whereas respect, in this connection, implies *inequality*. What we can respect is the *right* to hold and voice an opinion, not the opinion itself. And to tread gently on religious opinions merely because their possessors insist they are "sacred" is to forfeit immediately the chance of getting an objective view of what such opinions are worth.

## "The Lie at the Lips of the Priest."

The believer who demands the protection of sacredness for his opinions is, in fact, guilty of pickpocketing at the mental level. By imposing sanctity on the investigator he is depriving him of freedom of judgment. He is guilty of forcing his own lower morality on the unbeliever. He is asking him to suspend his notions of "true" and "false," and to substitute those of "sacred" and "profane." It is the path to the lie mistaken for the truth. It is the mental shackling by which priests have always sought to perpetuate the long Christian ages of ignorance and superstition.

Once religious opinions are placed on a level above all others, their superiority is at once granted. From that, it follows that all opinions critical of religion must be wrong. It is then a natural step to their suppression, and to the persecution of those who hold them. And that is a step that Christianity has always been willing to take.

## Back to the Savage

Why should religion not be discussed with the same freedom as other subjects? Many are they who will discuss politics, sport, films and so on with perfect ease. Put religion before them and the savage ancestor immediately rears his head. It is a characteristic of early religions that scepticism is feared because of the danger it involves, and our social organization is still such that many people react to religious influences in a primitive manner. When we assail religion we fight an uncivilized and uncivilizable thing. The method of its defence is to cloak itself with "sanctity."

## Selling the Pass—An Indictment

By E. H. GROUT

ONE of the many victims of Romanist hate was the young Chevalier de la Barre, beheaded on 1/7/1766, aged nineteen years! A count in his indictment was that *he had not raised his hat when a procession carrying the 'sacred host' passed.* Freethinkers should take note of this, for this position is fast being reached in this "free" country. It is being helped along, for example, by the short-sighted contention of the R.P.A. that there is no longer any need for freethought pioneering.

Shown also by the spinal curvature of the B.B.C. apologising to Cardinal Griffin for presenting on Easter Sunday last, the television play, "Family Portrait." The objection by Romanists was that Christ was depicted in the play (in accordance with *Mark*) as having blood brothers and sisters, so that his mother was not for ever a virgin.

What a point to make a row about, when everybody knows that *there never has been a mother who was a virgin*—not a human mother, at any rate! And what advantage would it have been to the world, for the birth to have been so monstrous? The myth is not only implausible, but it is also unedifying. The mother-woman is a higher type than the virgin-woman.

Not satisfied with giving foolish publicity to this self-stultifying myth, Cardinal Griffin must needs mount the high horse, and regardless of the truth, say (in his arrogant letter to the B.B.C.): "This theory is contrary to sound scholarship and the beliefs of all Christian bodies . . . it must be taken as an affront to the Christian conscience of the country." Affront my grandmother! Contrary to the beliefs of *all* (!) Christian bodies—rubbish! There are many Christian bodies that regard Christ as having brothers and sisters, for it says so in their Bible. Dr. Leslie E. Cooke, retiring secretary of the Congregational Union, addressing the annual assembly, condemned "the obsequious capitulation of the Director-General of the B.B.C." He stigmatised it as "an affront to the reformed and evangelical Churches of this land."

Another high Dignitary of the Romanist hierarchy has been threatening to refuse Romanist parents in Cardiff participation in the Sacrament, if it is found that their children attend non-Catholic religious services in school. The threat is made by Dr. McGrath, Romanist Archbishop of Cardiff. The proper answer by the parents is to stay away entirely from Romanist Churches: the public celebration of the God-eating ceremony is, in any case, an outworn and disgusting survival of cannibalism, conferring more honour by the breach than by the observance. Of course, the old argument is introduced—that education is important, but eternal salvation is more important still. It is an appeal to ignorance; no Archbishop or Cardinal, no Pope or Prelate, nobody knows anything at all about anything eternal; and all the money that the Romanist system has taken for indulgences and the saying of masses was robbery of the credulous and fearful on behalf of the unscrupulous Janists (i.e. people with two faces).

The brazen arrogance continues and gathers force. At the very time of writing, I hear of the mother Superior of St. Brigid's School, Cookstown (Co. Tyrone), who refuses to give a transfer for a Catholic child to go to a non-Catholic school in Britain, where the father is now living. I am not aware that any such transfer is essential. Are transfers provided for all these West Indian children who are flocking in to schools at Brixton, Liverpool, etc.? What I am drawing attention to is the increasing arrogance

and domineering tendencies of the religion that was 'emancipated' in 1829.

The Romanists have been assisted in reaching this present threatening position by the utter folly of Anglican parsons, who have gone over to ceremonial as fast as they have had to give way to the onslaughts of science and secularism. The Anglicans owe all their power, with its fine salaries and splendid homes, to the break that was made with Rome; but they are ready to endanger all this for the sake of making-up to the Romanists. They are delighted to acclaim themselves 'Catholic'—a term that stands for so much wicked cunning, wholesale bloodshed and cruelty that it is really a term of reproach; but every week *The Church Times* tries how often it can describe its foolish Anglicans as Catholic. And the Anglican parsons are not slow to copy the arrogance of Romanists. There is the Rev. G. L. C. Mitchell, Vicar of Collierley (Co. Durham), who has recently disgraced himself by refusing to baptise a baby, because one of the godparents was a professed non-Churchman. In answer to the parents' complaint, the Bishop of Durham said he was satisfied with the Vicar's explanation! What a paltry couple!—I mean the Vicar and the Bishop—prepared to shut out the innocent baby from (the alleged) eternal life because they are aggrieved by the adult's non-attendance at Church.

Another saucy parson refused to baptise a child when there are elder brothers and sisters who do not attend his Sunday School. "If you don't come to my Sunday School, your little brother shall go to Hell, for I won't baptise him." That is what this parson says in effect.

I am reminded of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer. He was given the job of painting a fence, and hated it. But he set about it as if he really enjoyed it, and refused to be lured away from it. Presently, his pals were offering him all kinds of bribes for being allowed to take a hand in this painting. Tom Sawyer's attitude paid him handsomely, but that attitude was humbug. So is that of these parsons. They are not such utter fools that they themselves believe that the sprinkling of water and a few throaty verses are going to set the poor little mite on the road to Paradise. They know full well that the happiness of a marriage does not depend upon whether it is performed in a Church or in a Registry Office or in a Consular Office. But they like to make out that their services are very essential—doctors and lawyers do the same, and they all agree in charging fees for their services. Sometimes the lawyer and doctor (in spite of much general humbug) perform services that are beneficial to the community; the only time that is true of the parson is when he leaves Divinity and devotes himself to Humanity.

In fact, these parsons are very human. They love a good-sized audience although they have nothing of value to say to it, and they love a good-sized collection. It's a pity when they get peeved like the Canon Edwin Berrisford. He has closed the Sunday School at Bramshott, Hants, because parents use it for their own convenience—a naïve excuse! What is the parson doing all the time, but using the Sunday School, and the Church, and the Choir for his own convenience? But if he acted in accordance with the spirit of the "Master" he would not close the Sunday School, but go out in the highways and byeways and by his sweet persuasion compel them to come in!

## The New China

By F. A. RIDLEY

SOME time back I dealt with an interesting and important book written by an eminent Indian diplomatist and publicist, *Asia and Western Dominance* (Allen & Unwin, 1954), in which Mr. Pannikar dealt in a bold historic sweep with a whole era, the epoch of the ascendancy of Western imperialism and, incidentally, of Western religion over the "backward," feudal, pre-industrial nations of the East. It is a pioneer work in historical analysis and interpretation. His new book, *In Two Chinas*, shows something of the same political and historical insight, but its interest belongs entirely to a different kind. It is a personal, intimate memoir of the author's own experience of a great historic revolution and of what may well be the emergence of a new distinctive era in human history. The later work is also published by Allen & Unwin (12/6).

Mr. Pannikar enjoyed the double distinction of having been the first ambassador of the recently established republic of India, both to the old nationalist government of China, headed by Chiang-Kai-Chek, and to the first Communist government of the new "Red China." These are the two Chinas. As a resident Indian diplomat, able to view the Chinese revolution from above the battle but at close quarters, he had opportunities to describe and analyse the major historical transformation, nor was he unequal to these opportunities. As his earlier book convincingly indicated, he is an able publicist and has an exceptional grasp of an historical situation and of its political problems. He was resident in China in his successive capacities from 1948 to 1952. During this vital period of transformation he saw the vast Chinese Empire, containing some 450 million inhabitants, pass from one form of society to another. It is not often given to an historian to witness such a colossal event at, so to speak, first hand.

Mr. Pannikar's first assignment was in 1948 to the then tottering Nationalist government of Chiang-Kai-Chek. He describes this rather sinister figure in some detail, not unsympathetically. Chiang, he claims, is a great man of the traditional Chinese type, who would have effectively founded a dynasty in mediæval times, but absolutely ruthless. On the occasion of his celebrated kidnapping by one of his generals Chiang, on his release, not only killed the general but, comments Pannikar, grimly exterminated his family to the third generation, an act for which this "Christian General" could have found Biblical justification. Mr. Pannikar, however, does not take the General's Christianity too seriously. His adherence to the Methodist Church is, perhaps, only part of his pro-American policy. Our author describes the General as surrounded by a corrupt clique, which he was unable or unwilling to control, and which was largely responsible for the final downfall of his regime. He adds an interesting pen-portrait of the famous Madame Chiang, herself one of the outstanding personalities of Chinese and Asiatic politics.

However, when the newly founded Indian Republic accredited its first ambassador to its giant neighbour, the Nationalist regime was already on the way out, and what Pannikar witnessed were its dog-days. Most of his diplomatic duties were concerned with the new "People's Democracy" set up in 1950 under the effective leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Our author is not a Communist and deplores what he regards as the excessive effacement of the individual by the state inherent in a Communist regime. But he was impressed by both the

honesty and the efficiency of the new political set-up, which he describes as the most efficient and honest that China had had for centuries, and he pays tribute to the dynamic wave of popular energy that the revolution aroused. He gives interesting pen-portraits of the leading personalities of the new regime, including General Mao-Tse-Tung, probably the most outstanding single figure in the post-Stalin Communist world. He especially pays tribute to the cultural, equally with the political, work of the People's Democracy.

Perhaps the most interesting, as it is the most politically important, incident narrated in this fascinating memoir is the dramatic midnight interview of the author with Premier Chou-en-Lai on October 23, 1950, when the Premier informed him that if America, then at war in Korea, were to cross the 38th Parallel, China would promptly intervene in the Korean War. The Indian ambassador promptly informed his government, which passed on the warning to London and Washington. When the Americans crossed the Parallel soon afterwards and China did intervene, the subsequent hullabaloo at "Chinese aggression could hardly have been sincere! Thanks to Pannikar's efforts as a go-between, Gen. Macarthur and his government knew *beforehand* that China would regard the appearance of American troops on the Manchurian border as a *casus belli*, an interesting comment on present-day diplomacy.

In his earlier book Mr. Pannikar gives a detailed and extremely hostile account of the work of Christian missionaries in the Far East. Here he contents himself with this brief summary of their activities:—

"All my life I have been an opponent of missionary activity in the East. I have always considered the missionaries as spiritually arrogant, contemptuous of the faiths and beliefs of others, subversive in their social purposes and propagandists of the theory of the inherent superiority of Europe. China especially had a clear and unanswerable case against the missionaries, for mission work in the country had been under foreign imperialist protection."

A truthful *précis* of missionary activities in China, ever since that eminent hymn writer, Sir John Bowring, had forced vast doses of poisonous opium at the bayonet's point, down the throats of Chinese during the infamous "Opium War" of 1839-42, which opened up China to Western penetration. It is clear that the new China has no room for this species of missionary activity. Our author gives a very interesting account of the splendid works of art discovered in central Asia, formerly the seat of a brilliant Buddhist culture.

In an epilogue our author summarises the results of the Chinese revolution. In China, he claims, Communism has become the first effective political instrument of nationalism. China, for the first time in its long history, has become an effective modern state with incalculable potentialities. The Chinese revolution, along with that of India, has opened the way to a new era in Asiatic history.

Lawyer: A man with brains who needs money.  
Client: A man with money who needs brains.

—NEXT WEEK—  
MARGARET KNIGHT  
at CONWAY HALL

## This Believing World

Polygamy has again become "news" and some of our journals are printing letters from many Christian supporters. Is not polygamy sanctioned in the Bible—God's Precious Word—they rightly ask? And perhaps we shall see all good Christians follow the example of David, the Man after God's own Heart. Whether a good Christian wife will be happy to share her husband, or a good Christian husband will find sharing his wife delirious joy is another matter. But Bible teaching it is—and therefore "Heavenly."

A book has just been published which will shock Christians, Communists, and reverent Rationalists alike. It is *Retreat from Reason* by Peter Nathan, and the *Sunday Times'* critic tell us that the author "is a postivist" who believes that religion "is a relic of mumbo-jumbo, that most philosophy is tautological, that the mechanist, materialist conception of man's mental life is the only correct one, and that history is rigidly determined." This has been the position of many of our great Freethinkers, and it is quite amusing to find it so clearly admitted in a more or less religious journal, while "Rationalists" go about insisting that it is time for us to give up such conceptions as "out of date." In actual fact, they are fast coming to be beliefs of all people who think.

We often wonder exactly how God in Heaven can possibly be a Heavenly Father, considering that he never was married? Surely the word in his connection is quite meaningless? Dr. Matthews, who is the Dean of St. Paul's and ought to know, recently told readers of the *Daily Telegraph* that "St. Paul thinks that a good human father is a faint reflection of God, in whom true fatherhood is completely realised and perfect." But surely "true" fatherhood means "fatherhood"—a wife and a family?

Dr. Matthews, who appears to be more or less confused on the issue, painfully asks, "How shall we conceive the nature of God?" Well, if nearly 2,000 years of Christian teaching has failed to inform him, there isn't much that can be done. Isn't God, after all, "a Father?" Isn't he always "in fellowship" with his Church's elect—like Dr. Matthews? However, the conclusion the good Dean comes to is that "there would be more Christians in our land if there were not so many families which are almost the last places where one would look to find God."

This is a complete failure to answer his own question about "the nature" of God. Dr. Matthews should have shown us some typical families where we can find God and where we can ask the Almighty to explain his nature to Dr. Matthews. We personally don't care two hoots about it, not even if it's Divine. But it does matter to the Dean. What glorious sermons he could give St. Paul's—to say nothing of the heartening uplift articles he could make the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* devour! Please, Dr. Matthews, where are these families where you can find God?

No one need be surprised that the Rev. B. Graham has at last found out exactly what the good Christian Fathers discovered early in Christian history. Woman is the great Temptress, the Evil Being who ruins men's souls—the abhorred sex that leads man to perdition. He addressed a congregation in Toronto recently and flaming with indignation, he told them: "It is as bad as murder

to entice others to immorality. Many of you women have dressed in such a way as to bring impure thoughts to the minds of men. May God have mercy on your souls."

This outburst should specially intrigue the hundreds of thousands of good, kind, and beautiful Christian women who formed the greater part of the Rev. gentleman's congregations in this country, and who would never, never, tempt the weaker sex to immorality with flimsy clothes, bikinis, lipstick and red finger nails. It is their wicked and unbelieving sisters who sport such devilish things. And what a blessing from the Almighty it is that the Rev. Billy is married. Think of the consternation in Heaven if a bachelor Billy had fallen—just like blatant and effete Atheists!

## Telepathy

By A. YATES

I have read Mr. H. Cutner's articles on Telepathy with interest, and, to a point, with agreement. He gives a fair account of some of the experiments made by those who accept Telepathy as a fact, and the humbug by which many of these sanguine investigators have been gulled. It is to his concluding remarks (*THE FREETHINKER*, September 2) that I take exception.

He asks, "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 one be surprised if it can transmit and receive messages?"

The only means by which we can gain any knowledge at all is through our five senses; they are the only channels of communication between ourselves and the world about us; and they are so constituted that nothing can have access to us through them that has not the proportion of matter. It must be either seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelt. Whatever the nature of mind may be, it is certain that thought has a material origin. The ideas and images of which it is composed are derived through our senses, and would be impossible without them. If we may judge by the analogy of our other senses, a special organ for the telepathic exchange of thought would be necessary. That there are occasional coincidences of thought between two or more persons is true, but they are due to a similarity of feeling and circumstances, and are, for the most part, vague, accidental and trifling. We may argue, therefore, from the absence of sensory organs, other than those we already possess, that Telepathy is neither a physical nor mental possibility.

Mr. Cutner says "Nobody knows the exact course evolution will take in the future, and it may well be that a new type of mind will evolve."

As far as we know, evolution has furnished us with all the faculties necessary to life and well-being. If thought-transference would be a benefit to the Human Race why has it not evolved before now? Would Telepathy and its kindred so-called manifestations of sensory perception, mind-projection, clairvoyance, etc., be a gain to the Human Race? Would life be worth living if we were constantly subjected to the bombardment of other people's thoughts and feelings? The great works in literature, art and science have had their genesis in the secrecy of individual minds, secure from the intrusion and distraction of alien thought. It is our private thought that forms our character and makes us what we are. If the operations of the mind were merged and confused individuality would be lost.

"A new type of mind" is a vague expression. Such a change would involve a new type of humanity and a new world, and cannot be conceived.

# 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.

W. SALT.—Your "ideal Jesus," as distinct from the "historical," must also take his place in the queue. Scores of similar products of the imagination are already in existence.

A. HANCOCK.—Sorry, but we are afraid that "11" can look like "2"—even to a printer.

G. W. CLARK and R. D. VINE.—Sent on to Merrill Holste—who, by the way, is at present recovering from a serious operation in U.S.A.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, WHARRAD, NEWTON, SHEPPARD and MURPHY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1.0 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday: 8.0 p.m.: Messrs. MCCALL, MILLS and others.

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 at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, October 9, 6.30 p.m.: 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. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

### INDOOR

Bradford N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, October 9, 6.45 p.m.: W. SHEPPARD, "The Church and Books."

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, October 9, 7 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "The Attack on our Liberties."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 11, 7 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "Some Humanist Classics."

Glasgow R.P.A. (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, October 16, 3 p.m.: Mrs. MARGARET KNIGHT, "Morals Without Religion."

Glasgow Secular Society N.S.S. (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, October 9, 6.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Three Imposters—Moses, Jesus and Mohammed."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 9, 6.30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Secularism and Capital Punishment."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 9, 2.30 p.m.: RONALD STORER, "Christadelphian World Viewpoint—1855-1955."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, High Street, Orpington).—Sunday, October 9, 7 p.m.: DONALD FORD, "Humanism—an International Movement."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 9, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "The Religion of Albert Schweitzer."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, October 9, 7.15 p.m.: CEDRIC DOVER, "The Chinese Scene."

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £944 16s. 10d.; L. Sanderson, 10s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; L. Hanger, 1s. 6d.; D. Dambe, South Africa, 6s.; J. P. Tuck, 13s.; F. B. Bolton, £4 1s.; A. G. Bedane, £1; L. Martin, South Africa, £1; Miss D. G. Davies, £1; C. Musgrave, 2s. 6d.; F. Muston, 2s. 6d. Total to date, £953 14s. 4d.

## Notes and News

Some time ago the Glasgow and District Co-operative Association approached the president of the Glasgow Branch of the of the National Secular Society, Mr. R. M. Hamilton, with a view to obtaining information about Alexander Campbell, one of the pioneers of Co-operation in Scotland, and whose portrait in oils adorns the board-room of the headquarters of Co-operation in Scotland. The portrait, we may add, has a brass plate with the inscription, "Presented by the Glasgow Secular Society." The information required was duly supplied and a notice of Alexander Campbell appears in the *Scottish Co-operator* for September 10. It begins: "If asked to compile a list of Scottish Co-operative pioneers the average student of the movement's history would almost certainly head that list with the name "Alexander Campbell of Glasgow." Much information follows but, needless to say, there is no mention of his Secularist activities or his connection with the movement in Glasgow. Nor is there any mention of his imprisonment for his agitation against the Newspaper Stamp Duty (1833-4). According to Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*, Campbell, who was born about the beginning of the nineteenth century was, in 1867, presented with a testimonial and purse of ninety sovereigns by the admirers of his exertions in the cause of progress.

### BRANCH LINE

#### Dagenham

The next meeting of the Dagenham Branch is on October 15 (Saturday), at 7 p.m., at 214 Fitzstephen Road, the speaker being Mr. G. H. Taylor, who will describe more experiments with chimpanzees and other apes.

Among the varied flora of Kew Gardens, pansies were prominent on Sunday, September 11, when twenty members and friends visited this wonderland of natural beauty. The weather, though showery, did not spoil the ramble through the Gardens, and the party had an enjoyable picnic-lunch in a leafy glade. The afternoon was devoted to exploring the museums and hothouses, after which came a break for tea. At closing time the party reluctantly made its way to the station, and a vote of thanks was proposed to the secretary, Mr. G. W. Warner, for planning the outing, which is to be followed by other social occasions.

Replying to criticism from members of the Branch, the Rev. Donald Hailey, in the *Post and Guardian* (Sept. 14), says he has "been interested in what the Secularists have to say," and "appreciates the courteous way" in which it was said. "I can assure you I have received the same type of criticism said in a far less 'Christian' manner. I am not going to suggest that a Secularist has nothing constructive to say and only lives by opposing Christianity. But if the Oxford Dictionary is right "Secularism" is firstly the doctrine that the basis of morality should be non-religious and secondly is the policy of excluding religious teaching from schools under State control. Why, then, this obvious interest in Christianity? If Christianity

is as weak as they would suggest, they have nothing to fear from us. Or is it just a love of debating and discussion? I do feel, and here I am speaking to Christians and Secularists alike, that what makes Christianity difficult is that we complicate it by our debating remote points. It is not that we are afraid of difficult questions (please continue to send them); nor are we afraid of sensible criticism. But all these things blur the simplicity of our faith."

Now whose side is the Rev. Donald on? The Christians' or the Secularists'? If he had deliberately gone out to exhibit Secularist strength as opposed to Christian weakness, he could hardly have done better. Let us dismiss the dreadful suspicion that we have here a Secularist in the best of all disguises. If it was the Rev. gentleman's intention to be courteous he has fully succeeded. If it was his intention to meet criticism, he has written a model on how to reply without answering. Apparently his method is to look the difficulties squarely in the face—and then pass on.

## Unitarianism and Mystery

By H. CUTNER

THIS journal is often enlivened by the few (or many) champions of Communism and religion who really believe that their wares will be most welcome to all Freethinkers. We have one Totalitarian, for example, who feels quite sure that, when he recently wrote that "religions and anti-religious views are accorded unimpeded propagation in the U.S.S.R.," there will be a rush to adopt his brand of Totalitarianism. That religious teaching is *not* allowed in Russian schools is, or course, by the way; the word "unimpeded" must still stand. Here in England, we are allowed to attack the doctrines of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin; and the fact that they are not allowed to be attacked or even questioned in Russia proves that the U.S.S.R. is "at least as democratic as the U.K." This kind of thing certainly adds to our gaiety.

Or we get the Rev. John Rowland on a crusading expedition—arguing that, because there are "mysteries" in the Universe, Freethinkers should forthwith give up Freethought and become Unitarians.

It may be remembered that when Mr. Rowland went from Rationalism to the Supernatural, he accused this paper (and in particular, myself) with advocating the dropping of atom bombs on natives. When asked to give chapter and verse, he blandly told us that *I* did not believe in turning the other cheek, but preferred "an eye for an eye"—which incidentally *I* do. Here again we have just a little scope for laughter. At least under Rationalism, Mr. Rowland might have had some regard for the truth. Under Unitarianism, he appears to have completely discarded that regard.

What exactly is Unitarianism? Briefly it may mean that the believer is a genuine Christian without accepting the doctrine of the Trinity. Or it *can* mean just plain Theism—like Judaism though, while Jews believe in one God, Unitarians are not necessarily Jews.

But whatever an individual Unitarian may say about his belief, the fact remains that the heads of his creed do not deny the Bible or the supernatural. Unitarians are expected to believe in the Father of Jesus, the good old Jewish God, without believing that Jesus is actually the same God. "All Unitarians recognise," says that great authority, Dr. Beard, "the authority of the sacred Scriptures as containing the sole and sufficient guide in faith and morals." They hold that "the Universe, as the handwork of God, and the temple

of God's spirit, is replete with Divine truth and religious impulse." The "august Being" of the New Testament is designated by them, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory" (Eph. 1, 17) and "the Father" here means "the Creator, the Governor, and Benefactor of all worlds and all men." Jesus Christ is God's Son who came down from Heaven "to expound the eternal truths" about God and man. Then again Unitarians, though they throw overboard the Trinity, believe in the "Holy Spirit" who is "God Himself." "Thus regarded," Dr. Beard tells us "God is very nigh to man."

These samples of religious drivel are part and parcel of the beliefs of all Unitarians, and Mr. Rowland would like some of us, particularly those who agree with him on "mystery," to swallow them all with the same heartiness he has himself. But can anyone read about these doctrines without amusement?

On the other hand, Mr. Rowland can write very entertainingly on Science even when he is insisting on its "mysteries." His latest work on these lines is *Mysteries of Science* (Werner Laurie, 12/6 net) and the book is packed with comments on the difficulties scientists have of "explaining" (if that is the proper word) all sorts of puzzles in physics, biology, psychology, sociology, and the "unclassifiable." He is delighted with the admission of one writer who said that science can often answer the question "How do these things happen?" but can never answer the question "Why do they happen?" For Mr. Rowland, when a scientist cannot answer the "why" of anything, he ought forthwith to adopt Unitarianism. The fact that no scientist bothers himself with the "why" (if he knows his job) does not worry Mr. Rowland. The scientist can't tell you "why"; therefore God, that is, the God of Unitarians and of the Bible, "did it." Why? To glorify and worship God Almighty of course. A God who doesn't like to be adored and worshipped and grovelled to is no God for Mr. Rowland.

Most religious writers love to put up either scientific or Atheistic scarecrows and then jump for joy when overthrowing them. All through his book, Mr. Rowland claims that scientists say "science can solve all the problems"—though, as he knows he could not possibly prove this absurd claim, he saves himself in his Preface by admitting that it "has not been explicitly put forward by any but the most doctrinaire of rationalists; but it has been more or less implied by many recent writers, and needs consideration." Neither the doctrinaire rationalists nor the recent writers are named—though, considering the large number of quotations given in the book, it would have helped no end to have these names. In any case, why should not science claim that ultimately it *might* solve all problems and answer all needs? Unitarians talk like this about their God without bringing a particle of evidence that the fiery old gentleman exists. We can prove that science exists!

Thanks to Rationalism in which Mr. Rowland once believed, he has not gone wholly over to the mumbo-jumbo of religion. He believes in Evolution—a belief which must have done more harm to all *religious* beliefs than anything else so far discovered by science. Indeed, one might say it is impossible ever to go back to the old, old story once Evolution has been accepted. If the old stories are accepted by scientists it is generally in a "Pickwickian" sense.

There are about 150 books listed in his bibliography, most of them appearing under some religious aegis and, no doubt, they have quite converted him; but those which I myself have read appeared to be packed with all kinds of pious assumptions long since given up even by many Christians.

I found it quite amusing to see how often things were "rationalised" or "explained" or even "explained away." In such an article as this, however, it would be quite impossible to take up Mr. Rowland point by point—it would require another book bigger than his to answer him.

But a quotation from one of his authorities caught my eye. It is from M. C. Ratter's *Abiding Values*:—"All men worship, whatever their social habits on a Sunday; for all have their sacred places, church or cinema, Shakespeare or football ground, concert hall or dog track, honest trading or the black market. Evil rampant has as its emblem a six-headed monster—sex, money, murder, blood, soil, power—a hideous brute..." Mr. Rowland calls this "a broader view" and it certainly is pretty broad. It is broad bilge and bluster. I certainly go to a cinema, but I don't worship it or call it "sacred." And some of us see in this lumping of "sex" with murder as "evil rampant," the authentic Christian voice of yore when the old Christian Church Fathers hardly ever ceased denouncing woman as Hell personified and worse.

Still there may well be readers who find Mr. Rowland on the "mysteries" of science both provocative and stimulating. To his well-written book I have therefore pleasure in sending them.

## "Category Mistake": How to Understand it

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS

(Concluded from page 312)

At the adult level, you may dispense with the child test, and repeat only the adolescent level. Then substitute for "fairies" the label "deities" and for "Fairy" the label "the Deity," and proceed to the same result. Then repeat the argument with the identical labels "gods" and "God," explaining first that there are some inconsistencies, in English, in the use of the definite article, and that "God" should have been correctly written "the God" just like "the Deity," both "God" and "Deity" being genuine generic names (reproducing in translation the Hebrew generic name with the definite article, *ha-elohim*, "the god"), of which the article and the capital initial refer, in the Bible, to the god Yahweh, exactly like "the Queen" refers to the queen Elizabeth II. nowadays. By the time you finish with the third repeat of the argument, the god-illusion should have been cleared away.

Historically, this illusion of "God" as referring to somebody else than the Hebrew god Yahweh (and Jesus and Holy Ghost) is very old among Christians. The Latin apologist Minucius Felix, writing his *Octavius* shortly after 160 A.D., makes his heathen friend Caecilius say: "The Hebrew tribe worship their only god publicly, in temples, on altars, by sacrifices, but his power is non-existent, since he is, along with his tribe, a Roman prisoner of war. But even Christians spin marvels! They make their notorious god, whom they can neither show nor see, diligently inquire into everyone's habits, actions, words, and hidden thoughts, fussing around and present everywhere; molesting, nervous, even shamelessly curious, etc. (chap. 10)." M. Felix obviously ignored the fact that even in the New Testament, "the god" referred to Yahweh, since he makes Octavius reply to the heathen: "Don't ask for (the Christian) god's name: the name is 'god.'" Which is a very clear case, to point out, of the non-sensical assumption of an extra god called "God." We see now the non-sense, but only if we remember not to remain by the label, but to ask, beyond the word, for the thing labelled, which is not at all

an easy habit. Even "Bertrand Russell is singularly prone to the confusion of the *symbol* with the *symbolised*" (Stebbing, *op-cit.* p.507).

How is the "category-mistake" applied in other spheres of Knowledge? After the German freethinker, Fritz Mauthner, had suggested, on this principle, that "Of God's essence there really remained nothing over, when we had taken away its properties" (*Atheism*, Vol. I, p.15), and Chapman Cohen had shown that there remained no such conceivable thing as a "God" when we had taken away all particular gods (*Agnosticism* or . . . ? p.8); Bertrand Russell used the same category-mistake argument to explode the theological "substance" (as well as "mind" and "matter"): "When we take away the properties, and try to imagine the substance by itself, we find that there is nothing left" (Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, pp.224, 684).

In atheistic terms of labels and things labelled, the words "substance," "mind," and "matter" are only higher labels for sets of lower labels, but not at all of some extra particular things, whereas the biblical words "the Deity" and "the God" are both labels of another label "Yahweh," to which there never was a corresponding (human-like) being. As to the extra-biblical "God of the Universe," it is an artificial label, separately made out of the label "god" by changing the initial letter, thus giving the illusion of a proper name, but remaining a generic name actually; properly labelling any and all gods.

Now, with the arrival of "category-mistake," the last remaining ghost of gods, the modern "God-in-General" will follow them to the oblivion of all the gods.

## A LETTER TO GOD

You, my dear Lord, have little cause to dislike the Freethinkers. He has stood between you and your detractors, and declined to accept your authorship of a questionable good deed, or of an unquestionably bad one. Over and over again he has denied your responsibility for the crimes with which you have been charged. The Freethinker was the first to deny, against the solid body of your worshippers, that you ever ordered old men and old women and children should be burned for witchcraft. He was the first to deny that you sent bears to devour children because they called one of your followers "Bald-head." He was the first to deny that you would burn people for ever because they did not believe you existed, or did not offer their worship in the right way. He denied that you wrote the stupid and brutal things in the book which, without the slightest evidence, has been attributed to you. And but for the Freethinker, these and many similar things would still be placed to your credit. The Freethinker has never crawled before you, never called himself a worm of the dust in order to emphasise your greatness, or described himself as puny and insignificant in order to flatter your greatness. Men would soon get tired of such fulsome praise, and Gods should certainly be above it. The Freethinker has met you, if not as man to man, then as Man to God, and a God in whose presence a man cannot stand with his eyes open and his head up is a being in whose presence no self-respecting person should be pleased to find himself. The Freethinker has asked for proof of the things you are charged with doing; he does not believe that you have ever done them, and he has a strong suspicion that the list of follies, cruelties, and blunders with which you are charged are so many reflections of man's own ignorance. There is no evidence that you created man, but there are very strong grounds for assuming that man created you.

(CHAPMAN COHEN, *Letters to the Lord*)

## KEATS THE FREETHINKER

"The church bells toll a melancholy sound,  
Calling the people to some other prayers,  
Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,  
More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.  
Surely the mind of man is closely bound  
In some black spell; seeing that each one tears  
Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,  
And converse high of those with glory crown'd,  
Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,  
A chill as from a tomb, did I not know  
That they are dying like an outburnt lamp;  
That 'tis their sighing, wailing as they go  
Into oblivion: that fresh flowers will grow,  
And many glories of immortal stamp."

Thus did the young (and shrewd) John Keats express his hostility to churchgoing and religiosity. The somewhat shrill and hectic rhapsodisings of his contemporary, Shelley, have tended to overshadow the less spectacular liberal freethinking utterances of Keats.

For example, the opening lines of Book III of "Endymion" contain a pointed criticism of the methods of government then in fashion, and the oft-quoted description of the cruel and close-fisted brothers in "Isabella" is as eloquent a denunciation of Gradgrindism as anything penned by Dickens.

Shelley has been hailed as the freethought poet *par excellence*, but I consider his etherial abstractions, in spite of their word-magic, to be too remote, "too bright and good for human nature's daily food." Poetry is, or should be, a frank appeal to the emotions, and Keats's warm and robust humanity is poetry in just this sense.

S. W. BROOKS.

## Correspondence

### ZEN

I read the article *Zen Buddhism* (Aug. 26) with a certain amount of misgiving which is, perhaps, shared by your contributor when he says "To most readers perhaps Zen will appear merely so much mystical mumbo-jumbo." I have just read the chapter on Zen Buddhism in Mr. Christmas Humphrey's *Buddhism* (Pelican), and while it may be impossible to judge it on such a slight acquaintance, I suggest that the intellect is our only means by which anything tangible can be learnt and we should not be tempted to belittle it by vague references to an "enlightenment" which is "beyond" it.

It also seems doubtful how far such a mystic attitude is desirable. In *Flight from Conflict* Mr. Laurence Collier says "The terrible record of tyrannies, invasions, conquests, famines and pestilences, which makes up the greater part of Oriental history, continues from century to century practically unaffected by the presence of mystic after mystic in Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries; and in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia Buddhism in its purest form flourished under rulers who habitually perpetrated cruelties exceeding even those of the Albigensian Crusade." While this does not mention Japan (and indeed Mr. Humphreys says that "it has been doubted whether Zen is a Buddhist School at all") there seems a danger that the serenity of outlook to which your contributor refers might degenerate into an impassivity and indifference to the misfortunes of others, whereas a little kindness and active interest might urge us to assist them.

G. W. CLARK.

### SCIENCE AND MYSTERY

I have read with interest the article on "Science and Mystery," by the Rev. John Rowland, B.Sc., and the characteristic reply to Mr. Rowland by G. H. Taylor.

When a person is annoyed by some event or occurrence, the adrenal glands function and pour substance into the blood stream, and thus the body is prepared for battle. This is one of the most primitive instincts of Homosapiens. Adrenalin also assists in the coagulation of blood. This is no "mystery" but a fact. Here is no new thing under the sun and, as we progress, we shall continue to explain phenomena logically.

I enjoy reading your weekly and am an advanced Freethinker. Christians are not born and very seldom made.

ISABEL M. T. FRASER.

## RELIGION AND MORALITY

In News Miscellany (*The Observer*, Sunday, September 18), an article on a record increase in Church membership in the United States contains much of interest. The article does not say whether there is any co-relation between these figures and the population increase.

In a comment on the figures, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, this year's president of the National Council of Churches, says "Morality seems to be on the decline at the moment when there appears to be a religious boom (there's a 'moral' here). Preachers in this industrial age are finding modern man's anxiety for his job is just as acute as primitive man's for a good harvest."

An investigation into the motives of a hundred people joining the Baptist Church shows that less than a quarter gave religious reasons.

PETER M. BAMFORTH.

## TORONTO GETS A DOSE

Toronto. Hill-Billy Graham is in town to convert this City of churches. The churches need him, being empty all but a sprinkling of women. The local papers are strong for Billy rampant, with shots of crowds of women with smug faces and Billy Graham song books in hand, rooting for God. They take to religion like kids to candy, it's so sentimental and drooly when Billy's at the mike.

Plainly, this whole business is commercialized drama, a show. Billy is news and whoopee. He's an exciting change in a drab world and the crowds flock to take in the drama atmosphere, the showmanship. That's the Jesus business to-day. Religion is a sure winner, makes a body feel heaven-bound sure as shooting. Canadians being mostly of hayseed extraction, this sort of thing is right up their alley and Billy says he's bound to clean up big here. We're used to the Sally Ann but Billy is a welcome novelty and so the hop-heads of religion are slap-happy. Most of us will roast in hell but they don't give two hoots. As Spurgeon said, "The elect will be all the happier at seeing us squirm down below." Toronto, Canada.

J. F. KIRKHAM.

## N.S.S. EXECUTIVE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 21, Mr. L. Ebury (Vice-President) in the Chair. Mr. R. Johnson again acted in the capacity of Secretary. Also present: Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, and Messrs. Griffiths (Treasurer), Hornibrook, Draper, Arthur, Corstophine, Gordon, Barker, Cleaver and Taylor. New members were admitted to the Parent Branch (5), Manchester (2) and North London (1) Branches. It was agreed that arrangements for circulating the Annual Report to members should go forward immediately. A letter of resignation from Mr. Francis, the Secretary, was read, stating that circumstances did not permit him to continue in that office. Several avenues were suggested and discussed for procuring a suitable new secretary, and it is hoped that an appointment will be made in due course. Ways and means of coping with the accumulation of secretarial work were also discussed. It was decided to hold two Executive meetings in October, and important outstanding matters were deferred till then, including the arrangements for the Delegates' Conference to be held shortly.

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