

The Freethinker

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CANON L. J. Collins, of St. Paul's, depressed doubtless by the *ennui* of being merely an Anglican clergyman in a virtual sinecure, generally mis-spends his life in telling the South African Government how much better he could govern their large multi-racial populations. It is a favourite day-dream of the higher ranks of Anglican priesthood to fancy themselves as politicians, as you may discover by perusing the quasi-sermonising of even the sermons, of the two Anglican Archbishops, and such figures as Dr. Bell, the Bishop of Chichester.

Priestcraft and politics are, of course, closely akin, and celestial politics are duller than worldly politics. It is understandable that Canon Collins should enjoy the latter more than the former; so would anyone else. But ecclesiastical (as distinct from celestial) politics, are not altogether to be ignored.

Some of late the good Canon of St. Paul's has been giving some concentrated attention to an illegitimate purveyor of the Gospel, with doubtful credentials, called Billy Graham (by the vulgar) and now Dr. Graham (by the more cultured).

£ s. d. for Parrot-chatter

As you would expect, neither St. Peter's in Rome nor St. Paul's in London, can wholeheartedly approve of this American Billy-goat. He is outside the Apostolic Succession, being neither bishop, priest, nor deacon. None has sacramentally ordained or "laid hands" on him—unless it be his schoolmaster or parent in boyhood, and then on the base-part of his anatomy, no doubt. Billy's theology is rudimentary; his education is defective, just enough to enable him to read a mis-translation of the Bible in Tudor English, and to misunderstand and to misinterpret what he reads; his doctorate is of doubtful origin; his parrot-chatter vulgar, sensational, and crude. But he is a success. For he is idolised by the crowds (unlike Jesus Christ, who was emphasised in undemocratic days that he and his Gospel were for "the few" and that a "strait gate" and a "narrow way" barred "the many" from salvation; but we have falsified all that). He also draws the money.

And in these days, to attract the crowd and to draw the cash, is to draw the envy of properly-licensed competitors at the shearers' feast where

"Such as for their bellies' sake
Creep and intrude and climb into the fold".

The Canon's Misgivings

Therefore it is that Canon Collins must give a few kindly Christian words of doubt aimed at the redoubtable Billy. He does not denounce the upstart American in the vitriolic manner that Jesus denounced the Pharisees. That is "not done" today. Rather does "he damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer and, without sneering, teach the rest" of us to sneer. Billy, whose success the Canon compares with Adolph Hitler's success, has not answered yet, for which restraint he deserves a good mark as a Christian.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Carrot and Stick

By C. G. L. DU CANN

The reverend Canon finds the gospel as preached by Billy "neither Christian nor commendable". Billy's gospel, says the Canon, "has too-great an other-worldly emphasis". Well, well! This indictment might be brought against Jesus himself, and more strongly, perhaps, against the primitive Apostolic Church, which believed the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ to be imminent. "Biblical fundamentalism is an evil doctrine" says the Canon; unquestionably it is, and he criticises Billy

for "not translating thought and faith into action relevant to the economic, social, and political affairs of this ordinary *but very real* life here on earth" (my italics). Bill, it seems, then, should have Shakespeare's "pate of a politician" and be "one who would circumvent God", like the hero in a

novel I once wrote. (But Bill's money-backers are of varying political brands, and if Bill did what the astute Canon wants, his financial number would be up).

An "Untrue Version of the Truth"

In short, the Canon accuses Billy of a subtle use of carrot and stick. He adds acidly that "a partial or untrue version of the truth can do worse harm than the truth itself". (Note the egregious, if ridiculous, implication that the Canon's truth is the complete and true version of the truth. Whether Billy's "truth" is untrue or merely "partial" this intellect of Anglicism refrains from specifying.)

I hold no brief for the defence of Billy; but I will not have a criminal tried and convicted on a wrong indictment. Carrot and stick indeed! He who would dominate donkeys must use carrot and stick, and Billy's followers are particularly asinine. Moreover, who handed Billy the carrot and stick, who demonstrated their use and value? Who but the whole Christian Church, Catholic and Apostolic, Greek, Roman, and Protestant, throughout the centuries? The carrot of Heaven and the stick of Hell were not an original invention of this brash young Yankee, Billy Graham. There is no creative imagination or originality in that second-rate, little-educated, mentality, one regrets to note. If there were, in this dull and dreary and desperately mediocre social British scene, how gladly and warmly one would welcome it!

Poor Bill is no Jesus, no Paul, no Loyola, no Wesley. Just a Yankee silly-billy, a Muggins in the hands of shrewd backers, a successor to his forgotten predecessor, Billy Sunday. And I daresay he might be a good deal worse than he is. But low as he may be in the mental scale, he is not to be abused for offering the carrot and wielding the stick, for that is traditional Christian doctrine, as Canon Collins must know perfectly well, if he thinks at all. The fact is that the Canon has let his trade-prejudice get the better of him; he probably feels there ought to be a protective tariff on Yank evangelists imported into Britain, in the interests of the home-trade.

The Mouldy Carrot of Heaven

In these days, both carrot and stick are failing. The

carrot of Heaven is somewhat mouldy; age has withered it, and a new outlook staled it. A hatless and unmusical proletariat does not really want crowns on their heads nor harps in their hands; it prefers radio, cinema, newspaper, and television rubbish in their heads and a fatter pay-packet in their hands. But Scripture does not offer these up-to-date delectable blessings, unfortunately. And the stick of Hell fails to frighten a generation thinking of atomic and hydrogen bomb-burnings as inflictible at the whim of human Governments.

Yet how shall politicians and ecclesiastics govern the countless hosts of donkeys without some carrots and some sticks. Plainly religion is necessary to keep the masses in their place. The Government must uphold the westernised Christian—or some equally politically useful—form of

religion. If our thought is not controlled, we may even think for ourselves, like a myriad Bertrand Russells, about loyalty, patriotism, virtue, law, honour, and glories, and question heretically the much more important things such as the honesty and necessity of Government taxes and Government expenditure. Once people think for themselves, they may even question the value of that organised hypocrisy, the modern House of Commons, and think of getting rid of it entirely, like that cad Oliver Cromwell, for whom (amongst others) as Clarendon said, "hell was prepared".

Let us be careful—more careful than Canon Collins has been in displaying his warm Christian love for his brother-in-Christ, Billy Graham. We had better carry on with the carrot and stick to the stick.

Review

(*Father Murphy's Escapade*, by Hugh Robert Orr; price one dollar, published by the United Secularists of America at 4632, West 21st Place, Chicago 50, Illinois, U.S.A.)

Literature inspired by freethinking motives can be broadly divided into two distinct categories. There is the serious; to the uninitiated in special studies, "heavy" type of literature which deals with critical issues in a scholarly style; and there is the light, but equally indispensable, type which employs the more popular qualities of fancy and satire to denigrate and demolish time-honoured taboos and venerable dogmas hallowed by use and authority, but by very little else.

In the former category are to be found such works of profound scholarship and deadly analysis as *Supernatural Religion* or *Pagan Christs*; while in the latter are to be found such masterpieces of satire, wit and deadly irony as Voltaire's *Candide* or Anatole France's *Revolt of the Angels*, shafts of deadly ridicule barbed with wit and fancy, but none the less effective because couched in a lighter vein.

Of slighter texture and less lethal calibre than the French masterpieces but of essentially the same literary genre, is a recently published satire by the American freethinker, Hugh Robert Orr, *Father Murphy's Escapade*. With considerable courage, since Irish Catholicism is powerful in the U.S.A. in many spheres besides that of religion, Mr. Orr has taken as the "hero" of his escapade an Irish priest, one Father Murphy, a worthy but inconspicuous product of an Irish theological seminary, and who, one would imagine, is never likely to rise very high in his not very exacting profession, or come to adorn the College of Cardinals at Rome. It is, indeed, the extraordinary ordinariness, if this Irishism may be permitted in describing an Irishman, the utter and absolute conventionality of Father Murphy, that makes the fantastic celestial adventures that befall the Reverend Father even more fantastic than they would otherwise be.

At the word "celestial" our readers perhaps prick up their ears and anticipate, perhaps, an Irish Fatima, a visit of the Holy Virgin to the Emerald Isle, or, perhaps, the visit long anticipated, at least in Freethought circles, of Ireland's patron saint, St. Patrick, to sustain the still robust faith of "the isle of saints and scholars." But if so, the anticipation is proved unfounded for, whilst "Father Murphy's Escapade" is actually a celestial one, in which the astonished cleric does actually move amongst supernatural beings, it is amongst Gods and Goddesses much older—and also much less respectable!—than either the "Blessed Mary, ever Virgin" or the Venerable Patrick. It is to Olympus, the abode of Greek Gods, and not the Christian Heaven, that our Irish cleric is "translated," or, perhaps one should say, transmigrated.

Under the personal guidance of Mercury, the messenger

of the gods, the Reverend Father Murphy, primed with St. Thomas Aquinas and good Irish whisky, is escorted into the company of the Immortals. His varied adventures with the Olympian gods and goddesses are amusingly set forth. At least, if Father Murphy is the essence of the commonplace, his Olympian adventures are uncommon in the extreme; in fact we should say quite unique in the Irish priesthood! To how many holy Fathers has it been given to try to enlist the Pagan war-god in a Christian crusade, or to argue theology with Zeus, "Father of Gods and men," or to be forcibly bathed by goddesses or made love to by the goddess of love? But as Fr. Murphy soon discovers, Olympus was no place for celibate priests, or, indeed, for Christians at all. The Pagan atmosphere is brilliantly portrayed as a most incongruent background to Fr. Murphy, the man from Maynooth. Nor, amidst the often parlous adventures in which he finds himself entrapped, are lighter touches omitted. In the course of the theological debates which the Irish disciple of St. Thomas feels in duty bound to start, the Olympians ask their visitor some awkward posers, which, without any theological authorities to back up his mental equipment, Fr. Murphy proves quite unable to answer. Nor, it may be added, does the proximity of the goddesses always conduce to objective reasoning.

An hilarious satire, we predict it will be a hit. Mr. Orr has added to his already considerable services to freethought in writing it. This slender volume, packed with wit and "writ sarcastic" throughout, should be on many bookshelves on both sides of the Atlantic. But we doubt if *Father Murphy's Escapade* will pass the literary censorship so effectively wielded by his Irish colleagues who have not visited Olympus. We shall look forward to many more such works to lighten our gloom, and that of the Olympians, from the pen of this talented countryman of Senator McCarthy's, who, we would hazard would not enjoy Fr. Murphy's pleasant, if embarrassing, escapades among the gods of an older day.

Mr. Orr has quoted on his title page this aphorism of Dr. Nansen, the Norwegian explorer: "The religion of one age is, as a rule, the literary entertainment of the next." Our author is obviously of the same opinion. If the Pagan gods of antiquity entertained their Irish visitor in one sense of the word Fr. Murphy and his religion already entertain us in another.

F. A. RIDLEY.

—NEXT WEEK—

"MORALITY FAIR"

By H. CUTNER

Margaret Knight at Conway Hall

by G. H. TAYLOR.

The most successful Freethought meeting for a quarter of a century! That was the undisputed verdict on Sunday, September 25, when Mrs. Margaret Knight addressed an enthusiastic and overflowing audience at the Conway Hall on "Morals without Religion."

Though the doors were officially not open till 6.30 p.m. the Hall was packed well before that time, and shortly afterwards it was a case of standing room only. Still they came, and there was a relay to an overflow meeting in the Small Hall. Mrs. Knight was heard by some 700 people, and the number who turned away on seeing the accommodation taken up is anyone's guess.

To say Margaret Knight was fully equal to the occasion is an understatement. To say the Freethought position which she propagated has been advanced by others in the past, and is being propagated today in the N.S.S. and *The Freethinker*, is true.

It is also true that in less than a year a new and engaging personality has arrived on the Freethought stage.

It is given to many to propagate Freethought effectively. It is given to few, perhaps none, to advance the case with such charm and persuasion. What others have said, Margaret Knight is saying in a new way. Her way is simply this: **it is to put over militant Matter in a non-militant Manner.**

Tall, stately and attractive (the cameramen, like the journalists, quite failed to do her justice), her voice a silken melody, Margaret Knight strikes a new note in Freethought propaganda, and one well in tune with the age.

On the nineteenth century scene she would clearly have been impossible. For one thing she would not have been heard above the clamour and interruption. The microphone and the general orderliness of Conway Hall made her possible.

Nor did she fail to appreciate the labours of her predecessors in the gritty age of Freethought. All Secularists in the audience were warmed by the noble thoughts she gave to Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant during her brief reply to the official welcome at the afternoon reception. She had received many abusive letters from irate followers after her broadcasts, yet reminded herself of the brutal treatment meted out to these pioneers of the movement, and quoted the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names won't hurt my head."

Many grand notes have been struck on the clock of progress. The great popular exponents of Freethought have made their contributions in their own individually effective manner. The majesty, forcefulness and thoroughness of Bradlaugh, the devastating ridicule and rhetoric of Foote, the linguistic flowers of Ingersoll, the scholarly and industrious ferreting out of facts by Robertson and McCabe, the wit and lucidity of Cohen—all these have played their noble part in the story. But in our age of radio and microphones the public ear has been gained by Margaret Knight with an ease undreamed of by the impoverished battlers of old.

One so positioned can do either an immense amount of good or a vast deal of harm to the cause. It is felicitous, therefore, that the great chance descended on Margaret Knight. Her name is already honourably inscribed on the history of Freethought.

* * *

Next week's issue of *The Freethinker* will contain an account of the speech given in the evening. The proceedings,

however, began at 3.30, Mrs. Knight being the Guest of Honour at the Annual Re-union of the Ethical Union, who extended hospitality to the R.P.A. and the N.S.S. for the occasion.

The reception was opened by the secretary, Mr. Hutton Hynd, who said that "the fellowship offered by the Conway Hall gave courage, sense and moral support in the New Testament sense." Musical items followed, and then Mr. A. Robertson gave the official welcome to Mrs. Knight. Her response, followed by more musical items, carried the time pleasantly on to refreshments. The Guest of Honour then made the acquaintance of many of her admirers.

At the public meeting in the evening the Chair was taken by Prof. Barbara Wootton at 7 p.m. Her opening remarks were followed with a reading by Mrs. Knight from Adam Smith on the last days of David Hume. Then, after a musical interlude, the lecturer commenced at 7.35. For the next fifty minutes the audience were given an intellectual treat, Mrs. Knight being given a most attentive hearing, punctuated here and there by a round of applause, laughter, agreement or dissent.

The general level of the questions that followed made one feel there were a large number of intelligent people in the audience who remained silent. Generally speaking, Mrs. Knight's supporters sensibly left the questioning to the Christians present.

In view of the excellent organisation, without fuss, which characteristically marked this great effort by the Ethical Union—and it was obvious that they got more than they bargained for in numbers present—it would be niggardly to criticise adversely, so I hope I am being constructive when I suggest that questions would have been better all written, with stewards supplying material where required. Two considerations, I think, suggest the advisability of this course on any future occasion of a similar stature. In the first place, some of the questioners were inaudible anywhere, and all of them were inaudible somewhere. Time was thus lost by repetitions from the Chair, sometimes not acceptable to the questioners. In the second place writing disciplines the thoughts more than speaking does in many cases, and conduces to brevity and clarity. Much that one heard had an ambiguous subject, confused predicate and God knows what object. Perhaps, after all, inaudibility has something to commend it.

It was greatly to Mrs. Knight's credit that she always managed to extract some point from each questioner, however slight. The better questions and the speaker's answers will be given after the report of the lecture next week.

It is gratifying to note that as the Hall emptied after the meeting, there was a most satisfactory sale of *Freethinkers* by hand, apart from the stall supply.

It remains to put on record our warm admiration for the Ethical Union, the South Place Ethical Society, and all those responsible for planning and organising this great occasion.

The Church found persuasion powerless to arrest the spread of heresy. St. Bernard, Foulques de Neuilly, St. Dominic, St. Francis, had successively tried the rarest eloquence to convince, and the example of the sublimest self-abnegation to convert. Only force remained, and it was pitilessly employed. To this end the Inquisition was developed into a settled institution, manned by the Mendicant Orders, who were now utilized to suppress by force.

—H. C. Lea.

This Believing World

It was good to see in one of the latest B.B.C. "Brains Trusts," that Prof. Julian Huxley did not allow himself to be brow-beaten by its Christian members. The question was on Creation or Evolution and, naturally, one of them, a Mr. Peter Brook, plumped entirely for Genesis and was almost truculent about it. Sir Linton Andrews, on the other hand, declared that he did not believe a word of Genesis but was an out-and-out Christian believer. The pity was that these two Christians did not have it out between them there and then. Prof. Huxley did not censor himself. He bluntly said that Evolution, and only Evolution, held the field. We wonder what the religious directors of the B.B.C. feel about his forthright pronouncement?

Although both Christians and reverent Rationalists always insist that the days of Materialism are now completely numbered, every now and then some prominent ecclesiastic solemnly declares that the real reason why so few young men make religion their "vocation" is due entirely to Materialism. One of them is the Most Rev. W. E. Cousins, Roman Catholic Bishop of Peoria, and he sadly admitted that it requires "an unusual type of courage" in these days of Materialism "to explore the possibilities of a religious vocation." It does indeed. It means giving up history, science, and common-sense. And in Roman Catholicism, it means also giving up a wife, children, and a home with them. The kind of courage now required for religion, in fact, looks suspiciously like insanity.

Like his fellow Lutheran, the Rev. G. Crist, the Rev. J. Gerberding has been tried for the awful crime of heresy in the U.S.A.—and acquitted. All the same, as the charges were that he denied the authority of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Ascension and Miracles, it looks as if he certainly was a heretic; he stoutly denied these charges, however, and so was reinstated much to the disgust of another Lutheran, the Rev. F. R. Ludwig. This man of God was "shocked and stunned" at the verdict, maintaining that Mr. Gerberding was "guilty on all charges." The judges came to their conclusion because they felt that the mess-up was due to Mr. Gerberding's "confusion, immaturity, and inconsistencies." So once more the Rev. gentleman is one of "God's Elect."

In this journal we say little about Baptists as such, lumping them in with other Christians; but this does not mean that they—as a sect—are not responsible for some lovely imbecilities of their own. The president of the World Baptist Alliance, the Rev. F. T. Lord, recently declared that unbelieving critics "are hostile to Christian tradition and want to dethrone the God of their fathers in favour of the nebulous deity of humanism." Sin is "the flimsy creation of theologians," and "mankind no longer needs a Saviour." Mr. Lord scornfully repudiated these critics, and insisted that Baptists must build their Church on "the idea of a regenerate community." In fact, Mr. Lord went back and back to "true" Christianity—which nobody but Baptists appear to have. And Christians forever talk about Unity!

If some of our religious leaders are guilty of what we often impolitely call imbecilities, what about some of our professors when they engage in "psychical research"? A

Prof. Hart of Duke University has been studying spooks and poltergeists, and he told a Cambridge audience recently that these spirits have 46 recognisable traits. He based his conclusions on studying 165 reported cases as, unfortunately, he had never seen a spook himself. This is truly a pity for a spook in the hand is worth at least a hundred in the bush. Still Prof. Hart will from now be added to the other professors who are the great champions of Spiritualism, Lodge, Barrett, Crookes, and others; and that at least will cover up any nonsense for which he is responsible.

That august body of Romanists in America, the Knights of Columbus, bitterly complain that so many people take their Roman Catholicism from "misrepresentations or misunderstandings." If only they went to a body like their own, they would get their "facts" from "an authentic Catholic source." And of course they would forthwith become Catholics. Well, well. Catholics have been saying the same thing for centuries—and yet the world remains mostly unconverted. We wonder why?

No Roman Catholic priest worth his salt will ever see any "discrepancy" between the account of "creation" in Genesis and the modern scientific view of the Universe held by astrophysicists. One of them, a Fr. Treanor, contemptuously dismissed (in the *Sunday Express*) the idea that Genesis is wrong. Only "the words and style" are not what would be used today. Is it worth while discussing the views of these pious nobodies? They only make intelligent people roar with laughter.

Some Questions for God-Believers

The glib use of the word "God," as though it carried its own proof is a well-known characteristic of such broadcasters as the Rev. Leslie Wetherhead, the Rev. Donald Soper, the Rev. Lovell Cocks and many others. In the interests of clarity perhaps (or perhaps not?) they would answer the following questions:

- (1) What is a god, and what is "God"?
- (2) What is the nature of the change made in using the capital letter?
- (3) Where is God?
- (4) How is it conceived?
- (5) How is it known? And with what senses?
- (6) What does it do?
- (7) Claiming to know it, why cannot you define it?
- (8) In what body does the personality of God inhere?
- (9) With what does God see, hear, think, feel, know, etc.?
- (10) Does it by any chance also eat and drink, sleep and wake, smell and taste?
- (11) Is it concrete, abstract, or what?
- (12) Is it a part of, or apart from, the physical universe?
- (13) If a part of the universe, how is it distinguished from the rest of phenomena?
- (14) If apart, how is it distinguished from the totality of phenomena?

LUKE STRAIGHT.

The Son of God is the same as the Son of Man. The Son of Man is the same thing as the Son of God; his Father and God his Father is the same thing as his Son and as the Holy Ghost. This language may seem rather confused to persons of slight faith, but pious people will readily understand it.
—Voltaire.

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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.

J.Y.A. (Australia) and COLIN COATES (Australia). Very interesting. See notice above.

(MRS.) C. E. OSBORN. We wish we had more space to discuss such side-issues, but we have to "keep our eye on the ball."

(MRS.) M. WICKS. Thanks for good wishes, even if you do not see eye to eye with us. You will appreciate that we cannot deal with "evidence" that is locked up inside someone's head and which is not communicable.

F. HOOPER. Mrs. Knight's position may be described—if we may borrow political terminology—as more Left of Ethicism than Right of Secularism.

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. Saturday, October 15, 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 16, 6.45 p.m.: E. V. TEMPEST, "Changing Man. A Glimpse of the Future."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, October 18, 7 p.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Christianity Without Myth?"

Dagenham Branch N.S.S. (214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham).—Saturday, October 15, 7 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "Experiments with Apes."

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

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 16, 6.30 p.m.: ROY SPEAR, "Socialism and Religion in Poland Today."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (George Street, Manchester).—Saturday, October 15, 3 p.m.: A. W. FRASER, "Art and its use in Psychotherapy."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street).—Thursday, October 20, 7.30 p.m.: A. DANIELIAN, "Why I am a Christian."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, October 16, 2.30 p.m.: DESMOND GREAVES, "Feargus O'Conner."

Orpington Humanist Group.—Sunday, October 16: Ramble to Chevening and Breasted. Meet Orpington Station, 10.50 a.m. Train from Victoria, 10.4 a.m. Bring lunch. Leader: Mr. Miners.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, October 16, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Has Life a Meaning?"

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, October 16, 7.15 p.m.: CEDRIC DOVER, "The Chinese Scene."

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £953 14s. 4d.; J. J. Berckman (West Africa), £5-10s.; A. E. Smith, £5; Wm. Scarlett, 3s.; E. Henderson, 3s.; Mr. and Mrs. Grout, 16s.; R. B. Ratcliff, 7s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s. Total to date: £965 14s. 10d.

Notes and News

Following her tremendously successful visit to Conway Hall, Mrs. Margaret Knight has been booked by the Glasgow Rationalist Press Association for October 16; and in this, no doubt, the Glasgow Secular Society (N.S.S. branch) will also take an active part. Every effort will be made to see the meeting is as successful as the one at Conway Hall and we hope all readers of *The Freethinker* and members of the N.S.S. will do their best to be present. It is to be held in the Central Halls, Bath Street, at 3.0 p.m.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. has also booked Mrs. Knight for December 9 or 10—it is not settled yet which day. But full particulars will be given in these columns nearer the date. It should be added that in both cases her address will be on "Morals without Religion."

The notice we gave of the golden wedding of one of our oldest readers—Mr. A. W. Davis—has brought a small crop of similar ones, and we are not altogether surprised to find so many staunch supporters of *The Freethinker*, octogenarians who have never missed a number since they first bought a copy last century. As Chapman Cohen used to say—and he was in this following G. W. Foote—it is doubtful if any other journal ever made such splendid friends.

London readers will, of course, remember Mr. C. A. Ratcliffe who has contributed so often to these columns and who was for long with the North London Branch of the N.S.S. He writes to say he recently celebrated his "Diamond" wedding. He and his four children have been all happily married—"and without religion." Which, he claims, "makes you think!"

Mind and Evolution

We can always depend on Mr. Yates for some sound criticism and I want to thank him for his article. It is obvious, however, that I did not make myself clear in talking about the mind and what—perhaps—evolution may do to it. I do not know in what direction it may be going or whether evolution will in the course of time influence the mind; but I can see no reason to believe that time will bring no changes.

I can fancy a Neanderthal man saying to another, in Mr. Yates' words, "Evolution has furnished us with all the faculties necessary to life and wellbeing"—and yet Neanderthal man died out. Are we to believe that we are the final results of Evolution? Have we not advanced since man became "above" the ape?

Mind may, in the course of thousands of years, become telepathic—or it may not. I don't know. But whatever it becomes, it will still be "mechanistic." That is, there will not be a spirit or a soul or a God "directing" it. On this at least I think Mr. Yates will agree with me.

H.C.

Science and the Mysterious

By the Rev. J. ROWLAND

I am grateful to Mr. G. H. Taylor for so clearly pointing out the differences between us. I am grateful, too, for the general tone of his contributions to this discussion—very different, I may add, from some controversialists whom I have encountered, on both sides of the theological fence! But that is only by the way.

As I re-read what Mr. Taylor says I am driven, in spite of my own desires in the matter, to agree that there still seems to be that difference between us which it appears impossible to overcome. Mr. Taylor sees nothing mysterious, he says, in a man's will controlling his muscles, and he tries to bring this down to earth by saying that my will controls my muscles if I strike a match or button my coat. So, in a sense, it does; so it does (or does it?) if I listen to a controversial public speech and go off to burn down the house of a capitalist or to lynch a Communist, or a negro; so it does if I am playing in the cup final, and manage, by a superhuman effort, to jump higher than I have ever jumped before, in order to head out what appeared to be a certain goal against my side; so it does if I am in the Antarctic, know that I am ill, like Captain Oates, and that my companions have a chance of reaching safety if they haven't got me to look after. I choose, quite deliberately, a number of cases, good and bad, of very different types. But does Mr. Taylor—does any Freethinker—really think we can explain all those things by saying that the incentives were causally sufficient to drain the reserves of physical energy? That is a very scientific-sounding phrase; but what does it really mean? Aren't we really saying: "A man runs fast because he wants to run fast"? And is that not really saying, in different words, what I have been saying—that a great effort of will-power can sometimes enable us to do things of which we should not otherwise be capable? Mr. Taylor thinks I need to show beyond all argument, the fact that the actual performance of an athlete in such circumstances is beyond his possible physical performance. I think that the pure Materialist needs to prove his case, rather than that I need to prove mine. There are a number of cases in this world where science tends to dodge the issue (I have, indeed, a new book just out on this very subject, of which I have asked the publishers to send a copy to *The Freethinker*), and these cases are of just this type.

Mr. Taylor, I suppose, feels that the mechanical movement of the muscles, the chemical changes in the blood and the flesh, the electrical impulses of the brain and the nerves, accounts for everything—from the winning of a race to the writing of a symphony. I wish that I could see the world as simply as that. There are mysteries which we do not destroy, just by pooh-poohing them away; they are still there, even though we deny their very existence.

I have always admired the independence of mind of *The Freethinker*. I still do admire it. I don't know another paper in this country which would grant the space to its opponents which the Editors have granted me. And it is with the greatest reluctance that I am driven to the conclusion that the common ground I was looking for does not exist, at any rate with the leaders of the Freethought Movement and people like myself. Some readers may have been made to give a second thought to the problem by what I have written here, though not, it would seem, the more vocal ones—judging by the letters which have been printed.

I agree, of course, that everyone of independent mind can combine on problems like that of making the B.B.C. more liberal in its religious outlook—though, with commercial tele-

vision on the rampage, the B.B.C. will, I fear, become less and less important. But even there, you see, the Unitarian will feel happier at the present state of things than the Freethinker. There have, after all, been many signs in recent years of a gradual relaxation of the B.B.C. religious censorship. The talks of Fred Hoyle and Mrs. Knight would have been impossible in the past. The talks of my good friend the Rev. H. L. Short of Oxford on great heretics of the past, like Servetus and Socinus; even the fact that the services which are broadcast on Sundays have included Quaker services and Unitarian services—these are signs that the old bigotry is passing, even though slowly.

I have taken up a lot of space in the course of recent weeks. I owe a word of thanks to Mr. Taylor for allowing me the "last word." I shall, now, look forward to seeing what one of the learned reviewers of *The Freethinker* may say about my book. I don't suppose that either Mr. Taylor or I will have had very much influence on the other's thought—debates and discussions of this kind have a way of leaving the disputants at the end much where they were at the beginning. But the readers, who have seen what has been said on both sides, will really have the advantage, since the spectator sometimes sees most of the game.

The Light of Asia

By MIMNERMUS SECUNDUS

BUDDHISM is the most popular of the great religions with its adherents exceeding those of Christianity. Yet it is contradictory and paradoxical. Originally a system of Humanitarianism it is now, in its present form, a Salmagundi of debased Oriental Superstition. Gotama Buddha was an Atheist, but his teaching has been transformed through the ages from Atheism to Pantheism, Polytheism, Spiritualism, and even Demonology. Under a cover of profiteering Monasticism it shelters necromancy, witchcraft and fetishism. Hence a study of the story and character of Gotama himself does not really throw much light on modern Buddhism. Unlike Confucius, the great Chinese sage, Gotama never succeeded in impressing his teaching thoroughly upon his followers.

Buddhism, as a system, is a disappointment. It is not, and never has been, what might have been expected from the ethical code and the lofty character of its founder. Although Gotama taught for forty-five years, and had a most devoted following, Buddhism flouts its founder, and contradicts his teaching. It may bear his name, but it is no child of his, and remains but a changeling. In none of the great religions of the world is the priesthood so ignorant, worship so utterly mechanical, and superstition and idolatry so rampant. Had he been confronted with this farrago of faith and fraud, Gotama would have considered Buddhism as more childish and idolatrous than the Brahmanism which he himself rejected, and which he hoped he had superseded. Buddhism in its purity, as it left the mind of its founder, was worthy of being the light of Asia, but in its developed and debased form, with its praying by machinery, it is but "the rotary calabash system," to use the words of old Carlyle.

Yet the sacred writing of the Buddhists are of enormous interest to Freethinkers. Not alone because its founder was an Athiest, but principally on account of its parallel with the Christian Religion, which has puzzled scholars for generations. The early missionaries were so astonished

that they declared that the "Devil," foreknowing the details of Christ's life, anticipated them by resemblances in Gotama and his teaching. More recent scholars, such as John M. Robertson and others, have explained the matter more soberly and more sanely by saying that Buddhism being the older, must be a parent religion, and that the writers of the New Testament must, of necessity, have come in contact with Buddhist monks, or Buddhist ideas and legends. Other scholars maintain that the Christian documents had received Buddhist accretions. In either view Buddhism has the priority of idea and teaching.

The Jewish Old Testament has, obviously, nothing in common with the teachings of Buddha, but there is a singular resemblance between the "Tripitaka," the "Three Baskets" of the Buddhist Faith, and the Christian Gospels. In the "Tripitaka" it is stated that Maya, the Mother of Gotama, was immaculate, like Mary the mother of Jesus. The child Jesus was visited by magi; the infant Buddha by Kings. Neither Jesus nor Gotama wrote anything; their teaching was by word of mouth. Both preached charity, chastity, poverty, humility, and self-denial. Both fasted in a wilderness; and both were tempted by the "Devil." Both announced a second coming, and both were transfigured. Both died in the open air; and at the death of each there was an earthquake. Both healed the sick.

According to St. Luke, a courtesan visited Jesus and had her sins forgiven. According to the Mahavaggo, Gotama was visited by a harlot whom he instructed in sacred things. In St. Luke is the "Golden Rule"; in the Dhammaphada it says: "Put yourself in the place of others, do as you would be done by." In China Confucius was at the same time summing-up his life's teaching as "Reciprocity: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Indeed, the so-called "Golden Rule" is a commonplace of religious thought, but in the Christian Religion the beneficent effect is nullified by the intrusion of the dreadful dogma of eternal torment.

There are very many other similarities, which a study of comparative religions soon unfolds. Hindoo and Egyptian beliefs constitute the two primal inspirational faiths of large masses of mankind. From the one, Buddhism itself proceeded. From the other, which, indeed, has been called "the Motherland of Superstition," the creed of old Israel proceeded. The Egyptian Religion contained the germ of very many faiths. Religions that followed were but after-thoughts. Old Egypt had all the rites, ceremonies and abracadabra of modern religions, and, what is disturbing, the figure of the virgin and the child.

These analogies between Buddhism and Christianity are far too numerous to be fortuitous. There is definite evidence of Buddhist missionaries being in contact with the near East. Pliny, the historian, states that centuries before his day, disciples of Gotama were established on the Dead Sea, and from Josephus it seems highly probable that the so-called Essenes were in reality Buddhists. But the parallels between Buddhism and Christianity have been dealt with at length by many scholars.

How comes it that Buddhistic Atheism has resulted in a primitive New Testament and an earlier Catholicism? How is it that Gotama, the Atheist, whose teaching was Humanistic, should have unwillingly given his name to an ignorant and debased superstition? And why did Confucius succeed so well, precisely where Gotama failed? The answer is that Buddhism began as a heresy and degenerated into a superstition, just as the Protestant Reformation has degenerated into a battlefield of contend-

ing sects, instead of ascending to Freethought. Confucius never worried about such small things as heresies. He appealed to the human intellect. To the Chinese people that was an unique experience, but they were practical and level-headed, whereas the Hindoos were saturated with Brahmanism and Priestcraft. They even fanned Gotama's Atheism into a puerile system of idolatry and monasticism. If such men lived in England they would deify the Port of London Authority, and recite prayers to the Gas Light and Coke concerns. Gotama himself was only a man, and never for a moment pretended to be more. In some respects he may be likened to a Hindoo Hamlet, who found the times out of joint. Regarded by some as the light of Asia, his life's work was wrecked by Priestcraft. For the pure aim of the truthseeker has been frustrated by the monk with staff and alms-bowl, asking for bread and expecting money.

A Film for Freethinkers

By COLIN McCALL

Of the many fine films shown at the recent Edinburgh Film Festival, the Czechoslovakian *Jan Hus* was outstanding in several respects. From the purely technical point of view it is splendidly directed and acted, but for subject, too, it is notable. Hailed by *The Scotsman* as the "worthiest film of this year's Festival," it has especial interest for Freethinkers.

As its title implies, the film deals with the life of the Bohemian religious and social reformer, John Huss (1369-1415), a professor of philosophy and theology at Prague University, who was accused of heresy by the Catholic Church and burned at the stake. It is an honest and fearless production. The life of early fifteenth-century Prague is recreated most realistically in lovely colour photography as a background to the religious and social conflicts of the time. The wealth and corruption of the Church of Rome and the aristocracy are plainly portrayed and contrasted with the poverty and unemployment around. Here is episcopal arrogance and dissolution for everyone to see. Dominating all is the figure of Huss himself (superbly acted by Zdenek Stepanek, National Artist of Czechoslovakia), fearless and uncompromising—slightly idealised, perhaps, but essentially, I think, true to history. Indeed, immense pains have been taken to make this film an important historical record as well as a valuable contribution to the present struggle for freedom of thought. In an explanatory leaflet, the producers suggest as the film's motto: "Truth cannot be burnt to death!" and there is, in fact, a wonderful sense of inevitable triumph in the great scene where Huss is burned. The Church has killed the man but not his ideas.

At the start of the film, Huss is already known for his sincere and stringent disapproval of most of the actions and many of the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is just after the turn of the century when he had been influenced by the writings of our John Wycliffe as well as appalled by the flagrant misdeeds of the clergy. This early humanist taught in the University and preached in the missionary church known as Bethlehem Chapel, which had been built by a group of people striving for religious reform. Naturally Huss's plea for moral reformation was couched in religious terms. He appealed in the name of Christ and the Scriptures for a simpler, more humane faith in contrast to Catholicism with its ritual and its dogmas. Like Wycliffe he condemned the belief in transubstantiation and the sale of indulgences; and he denied the supremacy of the Papacy. At the time there were three contenders for the papal throne, the most generally recognised being the brutal and licentious John

XXIII, who was eventually deposed in 1415 by the same Council of Constance which sentenced Huss to death for heresy.

Huss, however, went beyond mere questions of theology. He was seriously concerned for the welfare of humanity in this life as well as the next, and his practical suggestions for establishing "God's Kingdom on Earth" attracted a large following. The Hussite movement continued after his death, despite fierce attempts at suppression and extermination, and helped to prepare the way for the Reformation. "It is no wonder," says the leaflet about the film, "that he must have seemed an unpleasant adversary in a country which occupied a key position in Europe at a time when the Church was hopelessly split by the grave problem of papal schism and could not shoulder yet another burden, namely that of reform." Huss was accordingly summoned to Constance with the imperial promise of safe conduct and in the belief that the Council would give him a fair hearing. Instead, he was treacherously arrested, found guilty of heresy, and condemned to death by burning, his ashes to be thrown into the Rhine. Yet, as the leaflet remarks, "the spark which the wind carried back to his native country inspired the Czech people in their great struggle for truth and against oppression, a struggle which marked the dawn of a new era in the whole of Europe."

It is understandable that Huss has been the subject of numerous Czech poems, plays, novels, paintings and sculptures; it is interesting to learn that the Bethlehem Chapel in which he preached has been recently rebuilt in Prague after being demolished in the last century. Most encouraging of all is the film and the manner of its making. We are told that those who participated in its production took special pride in doing so, and I can well believe it.

Unquestionably the finest historical film I have seen, *Jan Hus* is a moving and stirring experience. Director Otakar Vávra has devoted extreme care to every detail without sacrificing the grandeur of the whole. It is like a great historical canvas, conceived entire, but created with sure and tiny brushstrokes. And the photography excellent; even the sub-titles do not distract. One forgets that this is a historical film; we are there in the streets of mediaeval Prague and the countryside of Bohemia, so realistic is it all. We are marching in the midst of the crowds that follow the courageous man who "is not only a reformer, preacher and fighter for truth but also a simple man who laughs and talks the language of simple people and—just like them—knows how to live and to hate with equal vigour. "Love each other and respect everybody's right to express his view" was the precept of John Huss. The Church decreed otherwise and Huss was burned. But he lives again in this film; a truly great film that moved me to tears yet inspired me. By its clear portrayal of the facts of history, *Jan Hus* is the most terrible indictment of the Church of Rome that the cinema has produced.

Correspondence

DEUTERONOMY

Practically all Christian Bible experts concede that Deuteronomy was not written by Moses; even Jewish authorities admit that he did not have a hand in it. But, of course, none of them used the ugly word "forgery" when speaking of it. They try to cover their admissions with meaningless alibis and rationalization but the facts cannot be concealed.

The experts have studied Deuteronomy *only* from the religious side. No one has dared to suggest that it was written to justify land-grabbing expansion by the Jews who disguised their

plans by the mask of religion although, from the Mosaic period onward, one of the main objectives of Jewish leaders was to promote Jewish conquest and imperialism.

The narrow, barbaric spirit of the Bible is directly contrary to the temper of these times. The whole world is in a ferment of change. In country after country people are demanding more freedom, social equality, protection of minorities, right of self determination, the end of colonialism, imperialism, etc., it has seemed to me that if the real character of Deuteronomy were called to public attention, a lot of religious leaders would have a very difficult time trying to justify the ruthless rape, pillage and murder which this book advocates and defends.

ERNEST BUSENBARK (U.S.A.)

THE "HOW" AND THE "WHY"

I must remark on Mr. Ridley's final paragraph to his article, "Modern Astronomy." Mr. Ridley writes: "At present astronomy can only tell us how life and the universe have developed. It cannot yet inform us WHY we and the universe are here."

This WHY business seems to me to be just that sort of thing the N.S.S. exists to expose. Surely it is non-sensical.

PETER E. J. JORDAN.

DETERMINISM AND FATALISM

Mr. Ridley, under pressure, now allows there is an important difference between fatalism and determinism, and I am glad my letter sent him to find out. He now wants to "share the nonsense equally with me." No, sir! He has it to himself, and here is the proof.

On August 5th, p.241, 2nd col., he tells us that "according to astrology from the moment *all* men, including Christ, enter the world, their horoscope is cast and the stars rule their fate from the womb to the tomb."

This is obviously astrological fatalism. But Mr. Ridley's caption is "Astrological Determinism."

Again, he describes the Florentine astrologer who cast the horoscope of Christ as "a martyr to the principle of determinism." Can anyone doubt that in these passages Mr. Ridley had got fatalism and determinism hopelessly confused?

It also surprises me that he seems unacquainted with the position taken by Chapman Cohen, the scientific freethought position—because on September 16th Mr. Ridley writes, "At present astronomy can only tell us *how* Life and the Universe have developed. It cannot yet inform us *why* we and the universe are here." This, again, is sheer nonsense (and I cannot help it if he does not like the word. The cap fits). Time after time Mr. Cohen showed that the question "why" is in this context one of the questions that cannot validly be asked.

H. J. GRATOREX.

ATHEISM v. AGNOSTICISM

In his excellent *Grammar of Science* Karl Pearson demonstrated that a scientific law is based, not on "absolute" proof, but simply on a high degree of probability. Consideration of the evidence leads to the conviction that there is a high degree of probability that the Christian god who is said to be especially concerned with man's welfare does not exist; and this observation is as true as any other scientific observation based on equal evidence.

HENRY MEULEN.

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