

# The Freethinker

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AFTER quitting the Belgian capital I took the Ostend-Copenhagen express as far as Hamburg. The route passes almost underneath the famous dome of Cologne Cathedral, celebrated by so many German poets, including not least the infidel, Heine. Certainly the architectts of this impressive pile, like their military successors in our own time, displayed in an unworthy cause a skill and energy which, in a better cause, would have moved the admiration of the world. The train also passed through Munster, nowadays a very commonplace industrial town, but, in 1534-5, a European sensation, the headquarters of the revolutionary Anabaptists who set up their "New Jerusalem" there, and confidently expected Jesus Christ to return in glory out of the placid German sky! It was in the public square of Munster that there occurred the grim finale of the Anabaptist insurrection, one of the most fiendish crimes in ecclesiastical annals, when the captured Anabaptist "King" was torn to pieces with red hot pincers in the presence of the Bishop, who solemnly intoned the Penitential Psalms until the stench of burning flesh proved too strong for the episcopal nostrils!

## An Amazing Recovery

Since those far-off days Germany has passed through many misfortunes, including the last and most terrible of all, the terrible life, and still more terrible death, of the Nazi Reich of 1933-45. But at present she shows little trace of that devastating experience, only even the least observant spectator must notice that the houses in practically all German cities are entirely new. Allied bombing virtually obliterated the old German cities. However, all that belongs to the past. The recovery of Germany during the last decade can only be described as an economic miracle. Hamburg, for example, the biggest town in Western Germany, by all accounts a mass of ruins at the end of the war, is now almost completely re-built, much more effectively so than London.

## A Divided Land

German political life today centres on the question of re-union, which arouses passionate political interests that are entirely foreign to the leisurely verbal conflicts of Tweedledum versus Tweedledee which characterise the present comparatively trivial points at issue between the "new look" Tory of today and the bowdlerised Socialism of the Labour Party. In Germany politics means something—perhaps the concentration camps of a new Hitler? The present writer was reminded of this fundamental problem of contemporary Germany when he visited the grave of the famous creator of German imperialism, Prince Bismarck, for the Bismarck mausoleum was filled with German "Frontier Guards," the present nucleus of the future German army of Dr. Adenauer, come to pay their respects to the Founder of the old German Empire. Frontier guards only "a Sabbath Day's journey" from Hamburg and the

sea! The Iron Chancellor sleeps his last sleep only a few leagues from the "Iron Curtain" which effectively cuts Germany in two. All German public life today lived in the shadow of that "curtain."

## The Present Conditions

The fearful Nazi era, which witnessed the most terrible regime that mankind has ever experienced—the Inquisitors were incompetent amateurs compared with the Gestapo—the present writer's statement is made from direct contact with its victims—has left Germany, so to speak, in the melting pot, much as it was before Hitler. By and large it would be broadly true to say that the same interests which backed the Fuehrer, Big Business, the military class

or what is left of it, and the Catholic Hierarchy, are behind Adenauer as they were behind Hitler. But Dr. Adenauer is an old man, a relic of the Bismarck-Hohenzollern era. He was Lord Mayor of Cologne under the Kaiser and he holds together by his strong personality an uneasy coalition, instead of relying, like Hitler, on a single monolithic political party. Unlike Hitler he is a really devout Catholic, and the Catholic Hierarchy is today perhaps the strongest political force in the conservative camp. German Catholicism, unlike French, does not pretend to be democratic; it is regarded by German radicals as a pro-conservative, even as a pro-fascist, force. It is, perhaps, this association which in the recent provincial elections has induced many Protestants to vote for the opposition, an unheard-of phenomenon since German Socialism, like European Socialism in general, is marxist and atheistic in outlook. Her Majesty's very Christian opposition, the British Labour Party, is, in that respect, something quite peculiar to these islands! All things considered, it would probably be true to say that the Roman Catholic Church is at present the most powerful and the most reactionary force in contemporary Germany. This has also an important but rarely mentioned bearing on the paramount question of German re-union, for the aim of the Vatican with regard to Germany is to re-create the medieval Holy Roman Empire, for which purpose it seeks union with the conservative Catholic south, Austria and the Saar, and not with the Protestant and/or Communist East beyond the "Curtain."

## Religious Life in Hamburg

The "Free and Hanseatic State" of Hamburg, to give the famous seaport its official title, is traditionally Protestant, combining, one gathers most successfully, the worship of God with that of Mammon. There is also a strong Scandinavian and Lutheran element in the town, whilst the numerous Persian colony have imported their own religion. Jehovah's Witnesses appear to have survived the Nazi concentration camps, or, at least, some of them have, for many died before Nazi firing squads rather than quit the army of their heavenly Fuehrer, Jehovah, for that of their earthly one, Hitler. Incidentally, the projected revival

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Some Impressions of Europe: Germany

By F. A. RIDLEY

of the German army—a most reactionary step in this writer's opinion—will, again, present the Witnesses with a similar choice. That esoteric compound of American dollars and oriental mysticism, the Mazdaznan sect, also appears to be quite strong in Hamburg. Readers of Mr. Upton Sinclair's entertaining "Who's Who" of American sects, *The Profits of Religion*, will recall some fascinating details of this originally Californian sect and of its late Founder, the Venerable Hanish, who, unless our memory fails us, started life as a lift boy and ended it as a Messiah! However, the Mazdaznan women put out quite a progressive manifesto in opposition to the hydrogen bomb and similar horrors. Rather curiously, amongst the women's pacifist organizations, who are very active in opposition to the approaching German re-armament, there appear to be

quite a number of Catholics. Without in any way questioning the sincerity of these Catholic pacifists, they cannot, one imagines, know very much about the history of their own Church, and about the crusades for which it has so often been responsible.

#### **Pecunia non olet**

Alongside such esoteric products as Mazdaznan, more familiar names recur in German religious life, and the ubiquitous Billy Graham has also visited the Fatherland.

Periodically, throughout the night-long revels of the night life, lasses demurely clad in the uniform of the Salvation Army go round collecting the shekels, or, more exactly, the marks: *Pecunia non olet* (money does not stink). This apt Pagan motto has long been the working motto of the Christian Churches—and not only in Germany!

## Defective Vision

### A Critical Study of "Now I See" by Arnold Lunn

By Rev. JOHN H. BROOM, M.A.

(Concluded from page 346)

In view of the immoral nature of Catholic doctrine dealt with, Lunn's continual sneers at the ethical behaviour of humanists can only be described as impertinent. The humanist, he claims, has only a feeling as to what is right and wrong to guide him, forgetting that these "feelings," morality being of social origin, were nurtured at the dawn of history by the necessities of communal life, and are therefore not, as he supposes, only subjective opinions. A course of reading in Ingersoll or Bradlaugh on the non-supernatural basis of ethics might again have saved Lunn from talking nonsense on this point. He should also consult Joseph McCabe's *The Social Record of Christianity* where he will find that the righteous atheist, far from "living on the capital of Christian tradition" as Lunn asserts, would in fact, if he followed that tradition consistently, be righteous no longer. This is, as we have seen, in effect admitted by Lunn himself, when he quotes with approval the unethical utterances of Christ regarding hellfire, etc., whose loathsome example Christians are theoretically expected to follow. The revolt against "the external command which comes from God" is not, as Lunn states, "as old as human folly," but on the contrary as old as human goodness. In undertaking the hopeless task of defending the Catholic moral record, Lunn writes that even the bad Popes were orthodox, which commits him to the extraordinary opinion that it is better to be immoral and believe than to be moral and doubt. Could the will to be orthodox in face of ethical sanity go further? Lunn has the audacity to sneer at the Stoics for uttering merely "a stream of pious platitudes" but every waiving the obvious point of the exemplary lives of such Stoics as Marcus Aurelius, it is surely better to talk morality no matter how platitudinous, than, as did the Christ of the Gospels, recommend immorality. The extent of Lunn's ignorance of Christian history may be judged by the fact that he quotes the story of the monk Telemachus stopping the gladiatorial games by diving into the ring, as if it were historically accurate when, in truth, there is not the slightest evidence apart from one Christian source dating from 50 years after the alleged event that such an occurrence ever took place.

It is perhaps in his remarks on New Testament criticism that Lunn's credulity is most clearly seen. He claims that "if it were not for a violent bias against the supernatural, the traditional authorship of the Gospels would not be

questioned." This extraordinary statement makes it clear that Lunn is not arguing on the merits of the case, but from the standpoint of an *a priori* believer. The man who seriously believes that for example such great scholars as Guignebert, Goguel or Montefiore are merely shutting their eyes to the facts because they are "biased against the supernatural" is hardly worth arguing against. Lunn's chief authority in this field is apparently Prof. Salmon's *Introduction to the New Testament* dated (sic) 1904, and he states blandly that "the most recent research has modified very few of Salmon's conclusions and strengthened his main arguments," though who these most recent researchers are Lunn does not specify. Indeed, his whole chapter, "Scissors and Paste," abounds in such vague expressions as "few instructed modern critics would deny," "in recent years there has been a great reaction towards traditional views," "many critics of Christianity tacitly concede" and so on, which is a classic way of concealing one's ignorance of a subject. It is true of course that certain of the conclusions of the extreme Tübingen school of nineteenth century criticism have been modified. But as Lunn, if he had done any intensive study of the problem, would know, the most recent research maintains that it is impossible to tell what the actual words or actions of Christ were since we always see them through the spectacles of the evangelists (whoever they may be). Such is the conclusion of the Form Critical School of criticism, whose principal exponents are Bultmann and Dibelius in Germany and Prof. R. H. Lightfoot in this country. Their reasoning is hardly favourable to the orthodox viewpoint!

Lunn of course makes much of those Gospel passages (such as the woman taken in adultery) which he says seem to "ring true." But so do many works of fiction and in any case not even the most convinced mythicist denies that the Gospels contain some historical elements. Lunn cannot have his cake and eat it. If the passages which ring true are evidence of historicity the myriads which manifestly ring false (e.g. the whopper about the dead wandering around the streets of Jerusalem at the crucifixion) are on the same grounds evidence of unhistoricity.

When we come to the central fact of Christian doctrine—the Resurrection—we find that Lunn's whole argument<sup>15</sup>

undermined by one simple but fatal objection—it assumes what it attempts to prove. How can we explain, asks Lunn in effect, the remarkable change in the disciples from a body of frightened men to a courageous band of missionaries? How can we account for the empty tomb except on the supposition that Christ had risen from the dead? To these rhetorical questions it is only necessary to make the shattering retort that we have no evidence apart from the Gospels that the disciples were immediately transformed, or that the tomb was empty or indeed that the crucifixion ever took place in the manner described. Lunn is trying to prove that the Gospels are true when they report the resurrection. To do this he assumes quite gratuitously that the Gospels are true when they report the events immediately preceding and following this occurrence. But the truth of the Gospels is the very question at issue. "In all the literature of the period," says Lunn, "There is no suggestion that the emptiness of the tomb was disputed." Ignoring the fact of the wholesale and unscrupulous destruction by Christians of masses of anti-Christian literature in the first few centuries of our era, there is also in all the literature of the period (apart from the blatant forgery inserted in Josephus) no suggestion that the Christ of the Gospels ever lived.

We are told that at the Crucifixion the sky was darkened for three hours in the middle of the afternoon and that there was a great earthquake causing many of the saints to be raised from their graves. Yet there is not a whisper of such astounding happenings in all the non-Christian literature of the time. If only one writer apart from evangelists had reported the empty tomb Lunn would have a case. But by using as proof the very documents whose historicity is in question his whole position is annulled. Apart from all this, of course, we have the familiar convincing arguments against the Resurrection from the earliest tradition itself: that is, the silence of Paul and the very suspicious circumstance of the lost ending of the oldest Gospel, that of Mark, arguments that Lunn has either never heard of, or to which he deliberately turns a deaf ear.

It would be possible to continue the refutation of Lunn's fallacious statements and assumptions for many pages, but let me conclude by merely commenting on a few miscellaneous howlers.

1. "A miracle is neither a violation nor the suspension of a law of nature. It is the interference of the divine will in the course of nature, as when a man raises a stone weighing a hundredweight and holds it aloft." From this brilliant analogy we must suppose that God possesses a body and nervous system, without which the concept of will is nonsensical.

2. "Boredom and unhappiness are the rewards of rejecting (the Christian) tradition." The universal happiness prevailing in the ages of faith with their heresy hunts, tortures and burnings was indeed wonderful, while the misery of Einstein, Bertrand Russell and Gilbert Murray, to say nothing of the Hindu and Buddhist saints, is plain for all to see!

3. Some of the arguments which helped to convert Lunn have to be read in cold print to be believed. Apparently, he once put the point to a Catholic priest that if as stated in the Book of Joshua the earth stopped revolving (which he says is of course what the writer really meant by saying the sun stood still) everyone would be thrown off its face. To this the worthy priest replied, "Surely, Almighty God who made the laws of gravitation could stop their action if he chose." This fatuity apparently silenced Lunn completely, which goes a long way towards explaining why his position in *Now I See* is so easy to attack.

4. On the very few occasions on which Lunn attempts to answer objections to Christianity, he makes a sorry hash of it. To the argument that if Christ was God and knew he was going to be resurrected his sufferings on the cross were largely nullified, he replies simply that Christ was also man. This of course is like saying that a door can be open and shut at the same time but Lunn, like all Catholics, is quite prepared to abandon his reason when the occasion demands. Again, when he is brought up against the obvious fact that the Gospels are a hotchpotch of contradictions and absurdities, he says that this in itself is evidence in favour of their genuineness. Lunn, in spite of all his rational pretensions, is clearly a follower of Tertullian with his "Credo quia absurdum est!" His credulity probably reaches its height when he asserts that Christ's famous denial of his divinity, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God" really means "I am good, therefore I am God." Yet after this blatant example of twisting the plain meaning of scripture to suit his own ends, Lunn has the affrontry, as we have seen, to accuse modernists and sceptics of putting their own subjective interpretations on the Gospel record!

I regret that both space and time prevent a more detailed examination of *Now I See*. But I hope I have written enough to convince freethinkers and doubting Christians that they have nothing to fear from the apologia of Sir Arnold Lunn.

## Review

*The Plain View*. Autumn number. Subscription for one year 10/6 post free. Stanton Coit House, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8.

READERS who find our columns often too flippant and without due reverence for Religion, or too elementary in discussing Philosophy, will, we are sure, find the perfect journal in the *Plain View*. Here are discussed—and very well discussed—the most erudite subjects bearing on God, Humanism, and Philosophy, by gifted and earnest writers, and they are always worth reading.

In "Commentary," the centenary of the first edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*—a landmark in literary history—is discussed, as well as the main himself. The erudite Mr. J. B. Coates tries to answer his own query—"Is God Nonsense?" from the point of view of philosophy, logic, and mathematics, and I cannot help wishing that some of our own inveterate anti-Theists would tackle this article, and tell us whether they agree with Mr. Coates. If he has done nothing else, he has shown that the question cannot be answered with a wave of the hand, even if it is true that some of the earlier Positivists (he says) look upon metaphysics as "nonsense" just as statements about God are "nonsense."

Mr. Coates tells us that Positivists "do not say that the statement 'God exists' is not true, but that it does not possess any meaning so that it is impossible rationally to discuss it. Thus A. J. Thayer attacks the traditional agnostic and atheistic positions as well as the standpoints of the theists." Well, whether Mr. Ayer attacks the lot or not, the fact remains that Bradlaugh's attack on Theism was exactly the same as the Positivists—that the word God had no meaning for him, and could not be discussed; and in the course of some pretty extensive reading, I have been unable to agree with most of the "attacks" on the position put so ably by Bradlaugh in his *Plea for Atheism*.

However, this is only a point in passing, and Mr.

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

One point regarding the Church of England and Princess Margaret worth remembering is that it is not the Church marriage which is legal in this country but the marriage performed by a properly appointed Registrar; in other words it is the *secular* marriage which is legal—and this applies to Royalty as well as to the people in this country. Any religious mumbo-jumbo can be added by the parties concerned of course, but this has nothing to do with the legality of the marriage. The Church, then, in its out-of-date talk about divorce, is using the weapons of fear and bluster.

Following a correspondence on "Fundamentalism" in the *Times*, the B.B.C. staged a "Discussion" the other week on what it means between three earnest Christians, all of whom were certainly Fundamentalists, and all of whom haltingly repudiated the term. They all admitted, however, that Fundamentalists believed in the Bible "literally"—for example, they believed every word in Genesis as real history; and the disputants then warily proceeded to skirmish with each other to find out how much the other two believed in Adam and Eve and the Hebrew-talking serpent with the "discussion" eventually fizzling out in words and words. Nothing was more ludicrous than to hear three grown men gravely discussing Genesis as "history," all of them doing their best to make their hearers believe they believed it without actually saying they did. Thus is religion defended by the B.B.C.

But if they were quite uncertain about Genesis and Fundamentalism, they were quite positive about the "Spirit of God" as indeed are all B.B.C. religious defenders. Dr. B. Graham had the "Spirit of God" to a supreme degree, and there was no doubt he ladled it out with pious fervour so thoroughly that all the people he "converted" shared the Blessed Experience equally with him. So did the Reverends Duncan, Huxtable, and Nineham, the three disputants, who left their hearers no doubt whatever how full they were of the same "Spirit." God be praised!

The Leicester parson who writes under the pseudonym of "the Padre" is a convinced believer in the Devil—that is, the Prince of Darkness; and he bluntly tells his fellow Christians that if they deny his existence, "they are calling damnation to their own souls." Hear hear. We have always in this journal denounced those pale, pink, Christians who nervously deny the Prince's existence, who tremblingly tell us that Hell is a "state" not a place, and that the "blood" of Jesus (the blood you get washed in) is not meant to be taken literally. The only Christianity worth believing in these days is that of the Salvation Army with lots and lots of Blood and Fire and, in particular, a real Devil and a flaming Hell.

After all, "our Lord" thoroughly believed in the Devil, and who should or could know better than the veritable Son of God? The Padre—God bless him—insists that "Jesus never treated the Devil as an old wives' tale and the Devil never treated Jesus as myth." There you get it straight from the shoulder. We have said the same thing over and over again. How can Jesus be a myth if the Devil believed in him? When Jesus said, "Get thee

hence, Satan!" he literally proved the existence of the Devil; and all blatant and effete Atheists and Materialists who dare question the Son of God will infallibly frizzle for eternity in the infinitely hot atmosphere of Hell. You have been warned.

The Vicar of Warwick recently declared that "there was nothing duller than the length and breadth of religious broadcasting." This is shocking heresy, and we are afraid he will never, never be asked to air his views by the B.B.C. Millions and millions of people regularly listen to the Touching Old Story reverently given in a voice which irreverent comedians so often have the impudence to parody. The Touching Old Story and the Reverent Voice hang together, and what Perfect Joy they bring to all who believe. What matters it if even parsons—other parsons, not the parsons officiating—find the whole Service a haggard old bore? The people who listen are those who are saved in the Blood of Jesus. Nothing else matters.

### REVIEW

(Concluded from page 355)

Coates' article should be carefully read in its entirety not only by anti-Theists but by Agnostics; and even by those readers of these pages who have long since made up their minds about God and his existence (or non-existence). It is astonishing what a lot can be said against some of our impregnable positions.

For those people who are in their element discussing the "physical and the metaphysical," the article with this title by Odon Bodnar (from an unpublished work by this Hun-Hungarian philosopher) will prove exactly what they are looking for; while the late John Katz has an excellent article on "The Five Orders of Civilisation." In this number two only are discussed with a wealth of knowledge drawn from history. Another article is "A Criticism of the Functional Method in Social Anthropology" by M. Roshwald. This also is very learned—Mr. Roshwald declaring that his criticism "of the functional explanation in sociological terms of anthropological facts does not intend to abolish it altogether but rather to modify and supplement it by other series of factors—to establish a methodological pluralism instead of the functional monism." Whether he succeeds or not, the reader can decide for himself.

There is a poem by Lois Ann Hubbard on "Krishna-murtian"—that is, understanding oneself—which will appeal to poetry lovers, and some very good reviews of important books. Among these is one by J. B. Coates of Mrs. Knight's *Morals Without Religion*. Mrs. Knight, he says, "has rendered great service to the Humanist movement," and it is interesting to note that he was appalled at "the low intellectual level of the public discussion" which it produced. Her arguments "are sound as her morality was practical and shrewd." Mr. Coates is quite enthusiastic about her "simplicity and skill in broadcasting."

H. CUTNER.

In the war of ideas there is neither treaty nor truce. To ask for quarter is to admit defeat; and to give it is treachery to truth.  
—G. W. Foot.

NEXT WEEK

### THE FUTURE OF RATIONALISM

A report of Hector Haulton's address to the Ethical Union.

# THE FREETHINKER

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Telephone: Holborn 2601.

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

## To Correspondents

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.

- R. MCKEOWN.—It is indeed refreshing to learn that Mr. Lewis "has a brilliant head." We presume he acquired it subsequent to writing *The Problem of Pain*. It was not then in evidence.
- F. BARBER.—The world organization to which the National Secular Society is attached is the World Union of Freethinkers.

## 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.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and CORSAIR. Every Sunday: 8 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, CAVANAGH 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.
- 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, November 13, 6.45 p.m.: C. V. BELLAMY, B.Sc., "Some of our Ancestors."
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, November 15, 7 p.m.: Dr. WALTER SCHINDLER, "The Use and Misuse of Psychological Treatment."
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 13, 6.30 p.m.: Councillor E. MARSTON, "Current Council Problems."
- Manchester Humanist Fellowship (64 George Street).—Saturday, November 12, 3 p.m.: Mrs. W. PERCIVAL, "The Microcosm that was Yugoslavia."
- Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, High Street, Orpington).—Sunday, November 13, 7 a.m.: Mr. H. J. BLACKHAM, "Humanism as a Philosophy."
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, November 13, 2.30 p.m.: Debate: J. H. PECK (Communist) v. P. V. PICKUP (Conservative).
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, November 13, 11 a.m.: Dr. D. STARK MURRAY, "Ethics in Modern Medicine."
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, November 13, 7.15 p.m.: C. V. BERRIDGE (A.E.U.), "Automation and its Implications to Society."

## Reply to "A Disclaimer"

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

244, Lauderdale Mansions, London, W.9.

Telephone: CUNningham 3881.

Over thirty-five years ago it gave me as a young writer of twenty-three a great deal of pleasure and encouragement to have the first of many articles I have contributed to *The Freethinker* published in the issue of January 4th, 1920, and readers can imagine with what indignation and bitterness I

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,008 11s 10d.; R. C. Proctor, £1 1s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; Mrs. B. Allbon, 2s. 6d.; F. Hancock, (Leicester), 5s.; N. Cluett, 4s.; F. S. B. Lawes, 6s. 3d.; H. G. Bluett, 2s. 6d.; N. G. Horler, 6s. Total to date: £1,011 0s. 1d.

saw the notice in the issue of July 15th, 1955, which implied that I had been abusing a position of trust in the freethought movement. I know that some of them have taken the notice to mean this and, as no explanation of my ceasing to be Secretary of the National Secular Society has been published, they may think that it explains why I left. I take this opportunity therefore of stating the position as briefly as I can.

Last year there were differences between the Executive Committee of the N.S.S. and myself which caused unpleasantness in our personal relations. I informed them in February of this year that I was not prepared, as matters stood, to be nominated by them as Secretary again. They considered this an improper action and at the March Executive Committee meeting dismissed me with one month's notice. On legal advice I pointed out that this dismissal exceeded their powers under the Society's rules, and they then passed a motion suspending me from my duties until the Whitsun Conference. Advised that this was also irregular, I brought pressure to bear on them and they rescinded previous resolutions so that I was able to carry out the duties of my secretarial office in the N.S.S. until the Conference, although I at once resigned from positions as Secretary of The Secular Society, Ltd. and G. W. Foote & Co., Ltd., respectively.

My employment in the movement finally ceased on June 10th, but I have remained a member of the Parent Branch and have since joined the Dagenham one in order to be as active as I can. So far as my "Business Promotion" activities are concerned the facts are as follows:—

In December, 1951, when I was first appointed Secretary I told the Executive Committee of the N.S.S. and the Board of Directors of The Secular Society, Ltd., that the salary I was prepared to accept as Secretary of the two bodies would be insufficient to cover my living expenses and that I should have to continue to do a certain amount of advertisement-writing work in my spare time to earn a little more. They offered no objection, and I have occasionally done such work since. There was no secret about it, and I told my small business connection the address and telephone number where I could be contacted during normal business hours. I felt entitled to do this as the calls were not likely to be frequent. Also, I did much of my N.S.S. work at home after business hours and my private address and telephone were regularly used by my colleagues wishing to make contact with me during evenings, week-ends and holidays. On no occasion did my private work receive priority over my secretarial duties.

Although prices rose steadily and most wages rose with them, I never asked for or received any increase of salary, but by 1954 I had to think about earning more. So I had a circular letter duplicated, intending to send out copies as occasion arose to business firms from whom I might get advertisement writing work. I did not want to do this kind of work, but it was necessary that I should, if I was to remain working for the freethought movement at the inadequate salary I was taking. I had the office address and telephone number duplicated on the circular in question, but I only sent out four copies to firms not connected with the movement and later found no time to proceed with the idea. The rest of the circulars are still in my possession with the

exception of a few that remained at the office when I left. Incidentally, 41 Gray's Inn Road is not wholly occupied by the bodies associated with "A Disclaimer." Two business firms having no connection with the freethought movement are there as well.

I told my successor that he could open any letters addressed to me there and send on anything of a private nature, and he promised to do so. The fact that not once has he had occasion to act on this promise shows how unnecessary it was to publish "A Disclaimer" five weeks after I left, without my being asked to give any explanation of the circular or to whom it had been sent. Readers may think I was at fault, but I am not ashamed to make the facts known.

[The Editorial Committee do not necessarily associate themselves with the contents of the above statement.]

## Notes and News

A **SPLENDID** portrait in oils of Charles Bradlaugh, painted in his parliamentary days, has just been presented to the National Secular Society by Mr. C. H. Scopes and his family. It now hangs in the N.S.S. offices—a worthy companion to that of Chapman Cohen painted over twenty years ago by John H. Amshewitz, R.B.A. All who have seen the Bradlaugh portrait are delighted with it, and we have pleasure in conveying to Mr. Scopes the warm thanks not only of all the members of the N.S.S., but also of the readers of *The Freethinker*. Bradlaugh was the first President of the N.S.S. as well as its founder and this portrait will be a permanent reminder of his great personality and the turbulent days of Freethought in which he was such a sturdy fighter. It is a great pity that no portrait has yet been painted of G. W. Foote, the second President of the N.S.S., who so worthily carried on the Bradlaugh tradition—albeit in his own way. 'Perhaps such a portrait will come one day.

Mrs. Margaret Knight has been invited to speak to the next conference of the Student Christian Movement at Swanwick. We fancy the S.C.M. have taken on more than they can chew, Daniel in the lions' den? Or a lion in a den of Daniels? However, the S.C.M. are to be congratulated on this broader policy.

Mrs. Knight will also be debating with a minister of the Unitarian Church at Golders Green in December. Later details will be given, and perhaps London freethinkers will be able to swell the attendance on this occasion.

Branches of the N.S.S. whose winter programmes are not yet complete may like to know that Mr. L. Ebury, whose circumstances have hitherto prevented him from doing as much indoor speaking as could be wished, is now in a position to fulfil more engagements of that nature.

### GENERAL BOOTH ON HELL

The Salvation Army creed was that if a man does good for Christ's sake—that is, because Christ died as a sacrifice for sin—he will be rewarded in heaven; if he does not, he will be punished in hell. We ring the changes on those truths. We are about the only people left who dare say they believe in hell. We preach everlasting hell. But hell was a place of degrees, and that perhaps the most favoured parts of it will be near to the least favoured parts of heaven. We may venture to put it in this way: the worst of the saved may have to drudge by the fire in the celestial kitchen, while the best of the damned may have a draughty seat near the infernal doors.

## "The Difficulties of Unbelief"

By G. H. TAYLOR

THIS was the title of one of the five addresses given to the Annual Conference of the Ethical Union at Hoddesdon on September 9-11. The conference took place in a drawing room of the large mansion of High Leigh, some hundred yards in length and much favoured by various organizations for their meetings. Its extensive grounds cover much beautiful Hertfordshire scenery in which man's interferences with nature are limited to occasional clearings for the purposes of lawn games, and steps to facilitate the wooded slopes. Giant trees abound, giving shelter from the hot sun which poured down on High Leigh throughout the proceedings. The forest scenes of *As You Like It* could be played here with full scenic effect, and it was in these idyllic surroundings that forty and five of us contentedly ensconced ourselves in armchairs, french windows thrown open without fear of unwanted sounds and only admitting the lazy low whistling of birds, affording the while a view of peaceful green, statuettes, pond and water lilies.

The Ethical Union, unlike the National Secular Society, is not a militant propagandist organization, and there was naturally no public demonstration connected with the conference. Nor was there an agenda containing motions for discussion. The primary value of the conference was probably social rather than propagandist.

The difficulties of unbelief, according to the speaker, Mrs. Hobman, were: (1) doubts which suggested that perhaps the Christian was right after all; (2) isolation of unbelievers; (3) professional drawbacks; and (4) aesthetic difficulties.

Mrs. Hobman took as her text St. Mark, IX, 24:—  
And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe: Help Thou mine unbelief.

There has very seldom been an aggressive atheist, said Mrs. Hobman, who has not at some time wondered if he were wrong, and the more aggressive he is, the deeper the doubt. She referred to the recent book, *Belief and Unbelief since 1850*, which showed "the great change in the climate of opinion towards religion." At the Amsterdam Humanist Conference she had met others who rather regretted they had lost their belief.

Although belief in the supernatural had started in primitive times, nevertheless religion, she maintained, had civilized all that, and reduced the number of gods. But we cannot shed what is inborn, she contended, and so even the Rationalist might resort to prayer in times of great stress. A dear friend or child lying in danger was enough to make us revert to belief, and it was a great consolation to believe in survival even though reason is against it.

And what of the mystics? "If you say the mystic state does not exist you are wrong, because it does exist," she said. Then again, what about those flashes of inspiration that see right to the heart of a problem, without any process of reasoning? Do not all these things show "there are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of?"

Then as regards isolation, it is religion that provides for births, marriages and deaths when we require ceremonies. More than this, the Church provides for times of national disaster or national rejoicing. She herself had been "most deeply moved by the Coronation ceremonies." Yet, "just as Christians have suffered martyrdom, Freethinkers must muster up courage to face the difficulties of isolation." As for atheists, they were usually "the result of having had an over-religious upbringing."

Rationalism, she said, suffered from aesthetic malnutrition,

whereas religion had inspired great works of art in the Middle Ages. It was quite spontaneous, whereas "Communism has tried to produce art to order and has failed miserably."

"I should hate to take away the comfort that many people find in believing in God," she concluded, and while it may be impossible to *believe*, it is very difficult to disbelieve.

I have summarised Mrs. Hobman's paper, not for any intrinsic merit it may possess, but because it was delivered to the 1955 Annual Conference of the Ethical Union, and it is well that we Secularists should know something of the other side of the freethought movement. Where the other side is moving to is, I suppose, conjectural. Personally I prefer new nonsense to old. New nonsense may be interesting; old nonsense merely bores. I have in my possession some handwritten sermons of my great-great-grandfather, a lay preacher, dating back to 1809, in which he takes more or less the same position as Mrs. Hobman. I have always regarded these sermons as mostly piffle, but having regard to the lapse of years I must revise my estimate. Mrs. Hobman spoke as though having only recently crossed the threshold of investigation into matters religious. Consequently she ignored all the well-chartered dangers.

For instance, the "mystic state" has been shown, by Leuba and others, as capable of reduplication under secular conditions. And in any case where there is the basic difference between the man who eats too little and sees God, and the man who drinks too much and sees pink rats?

Her observations on "flashes of inspiration," in view of the work put in by psychologists on the matter, are also rather innocent. The Gestaltists (Kohler, Koffka, Sander, etc.) have shown that animals (presumably not initiated into any religious faith) are capable of sudden solution of problems by *Einsicht* (insight).

As for religion having inspired works of art, this is a quite hopeless position. Religion was *the occasion* for art, not the mainspring. The artist draws from his environment (broadly interpreted), and his work reflects it. In a social atmosphere saturated with the Christian religion, as in the Middle Ages, the artist will paint the Last Supper; in a Mohammedan land he will depict the winged bulls in the Prophet's ascent to the Heavens, and the primitive artist will represent the hunted animal. The character of his output is determined by what the artist can get hold of: and his work as an artist, *qua* artist, has a perfectly secular social background and origin. It is channelled into religious subjects as an accident of time and place and preference. If we introduce "divine inspiration" into the explanation we are working with a hypothesis of spooks—and spooks have a well established reputation for not existing.

Though there was little, if any, real opposition to Mrs. Hobman, it is difficult to think that the Union, which contains many fine freethinkers, would, as a body, subscribe to this antiquated drivel.

## Parson, Professor and "Purpose"

By COLIN McCALL

A NEWSPAPER parson recently regretted that the glorious summer had been "freely used as an excuse for absence from public worship and church services". It might be argued, he realises, that one can worship God equally well in the open air as indoors, but "Canon Greenfields" is "quite a fair-weather profit," and his sermons are "dry or not at all". The parson doubts if the Canon's followers stay to worship if the weather is bad. Indeed, he wonders if many Sunday motorists, cyclists and pedes-

trians "really worship at Nature's altar on their trips out of town".

Of course they don't! But I have a suspicion that a lot of them would agree with this clerical gentleman that "Nature is like a tube through which a mighty Mind is speaking". They might echo the words of the psalmist, that "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork". Some might even refer us to the rather more authoritative statement of Prof. W. M. Smart: "When we study the Universe and appreciate its grandeur and orderliness, it seems to me that we are led to the recognition of a Creative Power and Cosmic Purpose that transcends all that our limited minds can comprehend." Does it not occur to Prof. Smart that neither he nor anyone else can recognise a power and purpose that "transcends all that our limited minds can comprehend"? No doubt he is a distinguished astronomer but he is talking nonsense here. Obviously we cannot recognise anything that is beyond our comprehension, and the professor should leave the futile discussion of such matters to newspaper parsons who appear to have nothing better to do. He may regard the belief in a "Divine Creator" to be "as necessary now as ever it was" but his book, *The Origin of the Earth\** (from which the foregoing and subsequent quotations are taken) conveys a different impression. It is only in the Introduction and the Epilogue that the Creator receives attention. It is on the final page that we are told:

"Our study has been one of the stage only, and we have learned much about its construction, properties, lighting and so on, but we have been in no position to investigate the characters, the aspirations, or even the foibles of the actors and, most important of all, the mind of the author, in the background, who has created the play."

The metaphorical presentation is, I think, significant. By this means the professor is able to make the unwarranted assumption of purposive creation. I want to stress his use of metaphor as distinct from analogy; no analogous situation is presented to us and the metaphor is treacherous as well as trite. Let us examine it. What is the "stage" in question? The Universe? But does it resemble a stage in any way? If so, who are the actors and the audience? Where are the carpenters and the electricians? And is the author also the producer? These are a few simple but important questions that are unanswered. Take the actors for instance. It is possible that these might be identified with the (astronomical) stars but there is some reason to think that the Professor associates them with humanity. For it is "man's place and destiny in this marvellous creation" that he is trying to illustrate. Neither interpretation is satisfactory. However bad they may be at their art, actors are purposive beings and not even a Christian astronomer is likely to claim that the Sun has a mind. On the other hand, human beings can hardly be regarded—even metaphorically—as actors on a Universal scale. Nor can we be regarded as the audience at the Universal drama: our vision is too limited. And so far as I am aware, "this muddy vesture of decay" still prevents us from hearing the angelic singing of the orbs in their motions. But the Shakespearean reference reminds me that the "stage" image was successfully employed in the famous "seven ages" speech in *As You Like It*. Poetically it is justifiable to conceive the Earth as a stage and the men and women "merely players" with "exits" and "entrances", playing "many parts" as they go through life. The professor, however, has introduced a misleading metaphor into a work of popular science, and this cannot be justified. I suggest a test for such theological-cum-poetical scientists, namely: \*Pelican Books, 1955.

re-state your remarks in meaningful, non-metaphorical language. And I am convinced that Prof. Smart would find it impossible to do this with the passage under consideration.

It is distressing to find *The Origin of the Earth* ending in this manner because it is in many ways an excellent guide to modern astronomy. True, there are occasional disturbing allusions to a "grand theme" or "synthesis" beyond the reach of science, and there is one appalling paragraph where the professor asks if science "has really been more successful than the poetic expounder of Hebrew cosmogony" in "probing, in the deepest sense, the mystery of Creation"—and answers "emphatically" no! But the work as a whole is concerned with the genuine pursuits of science, and we read at the start that: "The doctrine of Evolution as it concerns the biological sciences is familiar, in its general aspects at least, to all intelligent people in this scientific age; it is not always realised that evolution is an active principle in the material Universe. The Sun itself, or any star, is slowly evolving, its physical and chemical characteristics undergoing, slowly but relentlessly, changes which find their eventual expression in the heat and light radiated from the Sun's surface into space. . . . In the phenomenon of evolution of the continuous kind the scientist can trace the progressive changes in development—and this applies also to the post-explosion changes in the life of a 'new star'—with perhaps as much certitude as is claimed in the biological sciences."

What need is there, then, for a "Creative Power", a "Cosmic Purpose"? Clearly there is none. Professor Smart drags them in, quite unwarrantably, on his final page, preparing the way—on the preceding page—by some remarks about the limitations of science. "The authority of the scientist in his own province is unquestioned", he writes, "for his activities are governed by his own well-established rules of measurement, by the formulation of theories, and by the search for order in Nature; the danger lies in believing that this authority can be transferred to other realms of thought." There follows an inept analogy with the position of an umpire at cricket, and we gather that these "other realms" are "the rules of life, the problems of political philosophy, of ethics, and of religion". Then he continues: "Fortunately, scientists are becoming more aware of the dangers inherent in a blind belief that science is a golden key which can open the door to all knowledge and are ready to agree that there are far greater, or more important, problems in the field of human experience than those to which the scientific method is appropriate".

Notice the metaphor again! They are the Professor's undoing. Of course "blind" belief is dangerous; more so, blind belief in "a golden key which can open the door to all knowledge"—whatever that may mean. But let us forget the golden key and conclude with a few words on the scientific method. Unlike Prof. Smart, I know of no field of human experience to which it is inapplicable. And I haven't the faintest idea why politics, ethics and religion should be excluded from scientific study. The Professor would seem to represent the last line of religious defence against the encroachments of science, where the believer is forced to admit its superiority in explaining the external world and possibly even the biological aspects of man, but still bars its entry into the sociological and psychological "realms." Obviously it is a position that has already become untenable.

*The Bible Handbook* (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.

## Correspondence

### TELEPATHY?

I should like to add to the discussion of telepathy which has been carried on in the pages of *The Freethinker* recently.

The whole case for telepathy, as for all other psychic phenomena, rests on the assumption that certain psychics and experimenters are honest, an assumption which is illegitimate, considering that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by cheating or cooking their results. Who would go on for years getting negative results, when by cheating he could make a reputation for himself, write books on his experiments, get mentioned in the literature, rise to the top in psychic societies, please himself and all his friends, and confound the sceptics and materialists? I expect most psychic researchers resist these temptations, but to base a scientific theory on the assumption that all of them do is like basing it on the accuracy of income tax returns. It requires only a few dishonest workers to explain the telepathic results not attributable to carelessness and wrong experimental procedures.

It has not yet been proved that ordinary telepathy acting over small distances is incompatible with what we know of the brain. But belief in it is based on the same type and quality of evidence as is produced for phenomena which are physically impossible, such as precognitive telepathy, telepathy over hundreds of miles (the brain has neither the energy nor the apparatus to emit rays detectable hundreds of miles away), the ability to make dice fall on the side willed, and the ability to guess correctly the middle cards in a pack.

Yours sincerely,  
E. C. CAPEY.

### INFORMATION WANTED

May I suggest that now is an opportune moment for a campaign for disestablishment, when a large portion of the populace must be disgusted with the attitude of the Church towards divorce?

Can you please inform me: (a) Does the Established Church receive any direct revenue from taxes? (b) Who pays the salaries of the Archbishops, etc.? (c) Was, as I have contended, the Spanish Inquisition originally set up to "convert" the Jews? If so, can you give me references?  
S. AFRICA.

MALCOLM CLARKE.

### "MYSTERY" AGAIN

The essential difference between the Rev. J. Rowland and Mr. G. H. Taylor is definitely one of attitude. Where the Rev. Rowland is inclined to say, "Here is Mystery; let us pause and adore it," Mr. Taylor says, "Here is a problem; let us examine it more closely."

It is wrong to assume, as the Rev. J. Rowland seems to do, that the philosophy of Materialism is bounded by any particular conception of matter. As Chapman Cohen pointed out, it makes no difference whether we conceive matter as little knobs of atoms or as indeterminable movements of electrons. It is also wrong to suppose that questions of a psychological nature can be answered solely by physical laws. A psychological problem needs a psychological answer, and to say that because it cannot be answered by chemical formulae or physical law it is therefore a mystery, is to misunderstand the Materialistic approach.

Materialists are as aware as anyone of the emotional nature of many human reactions, and though they may not yet understand or be able to explain these "mysteries," their answer would be because this is due to the state of their knowledge, not to anything inherent in the problem itself.  
G. L. DICKINSON.

## Obituary

I regret to report the death of the oldest members of N.S.S. in the North-East of England. Mrs. Annie Shiel, of Old Renshaw, was 91 years of age, and had been associated with our movement ever since the late Charles Bradlaugh first came to this area. She was one of his first supporters, and subsequently supported Mr. Cohen and even myself in our efforts to spread Freethought. Her life was full of action in all movements which tended to enrich the life of the people, physically and mentally. Her name and reputation were very well known, and often her advice and help were in demand. She retained her interest, and some of her activity till the very last, and few have done more than she for the greatest of all causes. At her request a funeral oration was delivered at the Sunderland Crematorium by John T. Brighton, before friends and relatives.

NEW N.S.S. GENERAL SECRETARY desires permanent unfurnished accommodation in London area for self and mother. Suggestions welcomed. Replies to Colin McCall, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

FRIENDLY informal international house. Plentiful food, company. Moderate terms.—Chris & Stella Rankin, 43 West Park, Eltham, S.E.9. Tel.: ELT. 1761.