

# The Freethinker

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THE central rites of the Catholic church are those which adhere to the daily sacrifice of Jesus Christ in the Mass; when, in a rite far older than Christianity, God offers himself to himself, by the consecrated hands of sacrificing priests. Today, it is the orthodox doctrine that the original sacrifice of Christ on Calvary was offered to God, and that it is repeated, indefinitely and simultaneously, in the miracle of the mass. Such, however, was not always the doctrine of the church. For nearly a thousand years, that is, for about half the total duration of Christianity, it was believed widely, indeed almost universally, that the sacrifice of Christ was to the *Devil*, and not to God. That, in brief, the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary represented the first "Black Mass."

## Christian Dualism

As has been aptly demonstrated by Freethinking scholars, such as for example, the late Mr. Gordon Rylands, the science—or pseudo science—of theology originated amongst the Christian "Gnostics," who flourished—or failed to flourish!—on the fringe of the early church. It was in Gnostic circles that such canonical writings as the Fourth Gospel and the "Pauline" Epistles were originally composed. The Gnostics were, in fact, the first Christian theologians. However, as Mr. Stephen Runciman has demonstrated in his book on Christian Dualism, most of these Gnostics were "Dualists," who held a belief akin to that of the Zoroastrians or the later Manicheans, that there were two gods, one good, and the other evil. This was emphatically the view of the famous heretic Marcion, who published the first edition of our New Testament, and the unknown author of the canonical *Gospel of John*, appears, at least if we accept Mr. Rylands' exegesis, to have been a pronounced "Dualist" (L. G. Rylands—"The Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity.")

## The Christian Devil

The church eventually accepted dualism in a modified form. Over against the supreme power of God, stood the inferior but still extensive, power of the Devil, the biblical Satan. Orthodox theology finally decided that Satan was not actually equal to, or independent of, God, which was the full "dualistic" doctrine: nonetheless, though a creation of God, he had rebelled against God, and as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve, enjoyed a temporary supremacy over a sinful mankind, given over to his kingdom by the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The unknown Gnostic who wrote our Fourth Gospel ascribes this belief to Christ, who is made to say, "The Prince of this World cometh, and he hath nothing in me."

## The Atonement of Christ

From a very early period, if not from its earliest days, the Christian Church believed that Jesus Christ, the god-man, had descended from Heaven in order to save sinners. Later on, the Pauline dogma of "Original Sin" equated the term "sinner," with the entire human race who had "all

fallen short of the glory of God." That mankind is, or can be, saved by the death of Christ, constituted one of the most ancient dogmas of Christian theology. However, by what may seem to be a curious omission, in view of the tremendous importance of Christ's death in the Christian scheme of salvation, no church has ever defined *exactly* how the atonement has been effected. However, speculation has been busy on this mystery, and some of its results have been extremely curious.

## To Whom was the Sacrifice Offered?

One positive result has eventually emerged from this labyrinth of speculation. It is now *universally* accepted by all the theologians of all the churches that the sacrifice of Calvary was offered to *God*. Indeed, this is now taken for granted in theo-

logical text books, and contrary views, if noticed at all, are merely dismissed as grotesque curiosities, but such an attitude merely falsifies history. In the history of theology, for a period of about a millenium, from the second to the twelfth century, many, perhaps most theological experts, including some of the most famous, held the contrary view, that the sacrifice on Calvary was actually offered to the *Devil*, to, that is, "The Prince of this World." This belief, far from being merely a grotesque anomaly, as modern historians of dogma sometimes suggest, was for a thousand years the orthodox doctrine of the church, or as near to it as makes little difference.

## The Ransom to Satan

In the canonical book of *Revelation* we learn the terrifying item that, the Devil will reign over mankind for a thousand years; actually, this prediction was verified in the evolution of theology, for this was about the period during which the belief that Christ was sacrificed to Satan actually lasted! The evolution of this belief is described by a learned French Protestant historian of dogma in these terms: "But if we enquire into *how* the death of Christ brought about the redemption of sinners, we discover that almost all the Fathers, looked upon it as a semi-mythological, semi-judicial drama of the strangest kind. The theory of a ransom paid to the Devil, seems to have been the continuation, within the church, of the Dualistic speculations of Gnosticism. Had she been consistent, the church ought to have made of the Mass, a sacrifice offered to the Devil."

## Hook, Line, and Sinker

One of the strangest chapters in the strange story of religious aberrations could be written about this belief. The gist of these speculations is that the Devil, in the form of a serpent, had tempted and overcome Adam, but Christ, "The Second Adam," had successfully outmanoeuvred the Devil on Calvary. Indeed, the term "Double Crossed," would be actually more appropriate to the language used by some of the Holy Fathers who speculated on this theme! Out of the many possible sources of quotations, we will select one, a quite representative one. The learned Greek

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## The First Black Mass

By F. A. RIDLEY

Father of the church, St. Gregory of Nyssa, solemnly tells us, "Like a skilful fisherman God veiled the Divine nature of his Son beneath human flesh, in order to catch Satan by the hook of his Divinity. The latter like a greedy fish, swallowed both bait and hook. Thus was fulfilled the Word of old spoken by God to Job, 'Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a fish hook?' but his greediness proved fatal to himself, as Saturn of yore, he was obliged to vomit up those whom he had devoured." In more secular language, the "Father of Lies" was completely out-witted. By accepting the offer of an *innocent* victim, he had lost the hold over the human race that he had acquired by the original sin of Adam. He had, in St. Gregory's eloquent metaphor, swallowed the bait cunningly thrown to him by the Divine Fisherman, hook, line, and sinker.

#### Canterbury to the Rescue

It is satisfactory to an English student of theology to record that it was, finally an Archbishop of Canterbury who came to Christ's rescue and kicked out the Devil. We doubt if the present Archbishop could have done that. For, at the end of the eleventh century (1094-8), St. Anselm, the then Italian Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the most subtle theologians of the Middle Ages wrote his famous book *Cur Deus Homo?* (*Why did God become Man?*). St. Anselm gave short shrift to Satan, it is perhaps, the outstanding achievement of the See of Canterbury. In place of the "ransom" paid to Satan for the human race, St. Anselm expounded a complicated scheme by which, God sacrificed himself to himself, on Calvary as in the Mass. Satan has now also vomited up the hook so artfully dangled before him by the Son of God. Today, very few Christians are even aware that the first Mass on Calvary was actually a *Black Mass!* The sacrifice to Satan has been related to the domain of theological curiosities. St. Anselm of Canterbury has put Satan out of business, a memorable feat!

## Where Does the Soul Go?

By ADRIAN TA'BOIS

WHEN a person dies where does his soul go to? Many people who have had a lot to do with the Bible, Sunday School, Morning Prayer, Divinity Lessons and various Churches would answer that it "probably goes to Heaven." Some people might tentatively suggest that occasionally people's souls went to Hell; while a third suggestion would be that the soul goes on ahead into another world, perhaps even into some future life.

But the point that most Christians would agree with is that the soul of a dead human being does go on somewhere—even if we do not know exactly where. Under these circumstances it is rather annoying to hear an Atheist give the answer "Nowhere"! A Christian sometimes feels that he has been cheated of a proper answer.

To say that the soul disappears without moving seems (to most Christians) to be merely juggling with words. But supposing we have an analogy. Imagine a battery wireless set which operates until the battery runs out. When the battery runs dry, where does the "soul," i.e., the life and sound of the wireless, go to? To an Atheist the question "Where does the sound of a radio set go to when the battery runs out?" is very similar to the question "Where does the soul of a human being go when his heart runs out?" A Christian seems to understand quite readily that when the radio set batteries fail to give the necessary life to the whole wireless machinery the sound will suddenly fail. This is because he realises that the sound or "soul" is merely

the product of the machinery *when it is in working order.* The Christian does not need to be a wireless technician to realise this. It is merely common sense.

Similarly, the Atheist seems to understand quite readily that when a man's heart fails to give the necessary life to the whole human machinery the soul will suddenly fail. This is because he realises that the soul, or "sound," is merely the product of the human machinery *when it is in working order.* And similarly the Atheist does not need to be a doctor to realise this. It is merely common sense.

If a person faints his soul may appear to have "gone away," but in reality it has not moved. *It has merely ceased to be produced.* And again, if a wireless set has minor troubles of some kind its own soul or sound will equally appear to have "gone away." But again, it has not moved. *It has merely ceased to be produced.* It is all so simple as to be almost laughable. If we confront the Christian by asking him where the sound of a dead wireless has gone to, he will say "Nowhere." The Atheist does not see anything strange in this answer, because the general reasoning is the same in both cases, as in many others.

If, when red and yellow in even proportions make orange, a lot more red is added, the orange disappears. Where does it go to? Answer: "Nowhere." If a motor car runs out of petrol where does the power go to? Answer: "Nowhere." Yes, it is as simple as that. The car, the colours, and the wireless set only produce the expected results when the correct combination of conditions applies; so naturally, when these original conditions are altered the results, be they power, colour, soul or sound, *are not produced.* They do not suddenly go somewhere else; and the Christian will usually see this as clearly as anyone else. Yet, Abracadabra and Hocus-Pocus! every time a magical human being is produced, the Christian's reasoning comes to an abrupt halt and he pictures imaginary souls flying away to a distant, and not too clear, destination.

#### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

"He wrested the thunderbolt from heaven and the sceptre from kings"—Turgot

On 17th January, 250 years ago, Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, youngest son in a family of 17. He became outstanding as a scientist, a statesman and a secularist. His lightning experiments are well known but they form only a part of his pioneer work in science. He introduced the terms *positive* and *negative* into electricity, developed the economic Franklin stove, realised the value of ventilation in hospitals, advocated the use of mineral manures, studied the Gulf Stream and navigation at sea.

As a statesman he was responsible for introducing the post office system in America, had much to do with paving, lighting and cleaning Philadelphia, founded the public library there, and worked to repeal the Stamp Act and develop education. He was a signatory to the Declaration of Independence and, less than a month before he died, strongly condemned slavery.

Like his friend Thomas Paine, though not so outspoken, Franklin was a deist and had no use for revelation. "The way to see by faith," he said, "is to shut the eye of reason." And, in his essentially secular way, he remarked: "Lighthouses are more helpful than churches."

—NEXT WEEK—

THE DIVINITY OF BLUNDERS  
A Suppressed Poem of ROBERT BURNS

## Prosper Alfaric

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

(Concluded from page 12)

Alfaric found himself compelled to examine his opinions and his conscience with the greatest scruple. "If God exists," he thought, "He must know that I am sincere. Why then this dilemma which affects all that I hold dear in life?" Common consent, that argument often repeated, was, he concluded, to the judgment of his own reason that he was impelled to bring opinions as to a last tribunal. Even the existence of a God must be brought to judgment. Why imagine an eternal deity, something incomprehensible, in order to explain the existence of the universe? Nor could the argument of no law without a law-giver hold either; nor need Duty be the voice of God. Conscience may be equally well, if not with greater probability, a social product, the Voice of Humanity.

Bearing in mind, as we must, that from his earliest youth Alfaric had seen the Church and Roman Christianity as the finest ideal for any man, we can understand the immense difficulty he had to arrive at a final break. He sought the advice of his brother who had been through much the same education as far as Rodez, which he had quitted to study medicine. Far from showing surprise the young doctor though he had not been aware that his elder brother had progressed so far, expressed his sympathy, in fact his satisfaction, with his brother's opinions. But very different was the reception accorded him by his old school friend, the new Canon of Algiers, who was astounded to discover that one whom he regarded as a pillar of the faith was thinking of leaving the Church. Let it be remarked that to no matter whom Alfaric turned, whether they approved or disapproved, they remained his friends.

Not being able to bring himself to the point of discussing his personal problem with the Archbishop of Albi, although he had ever found him very understanding and much inclined to Modernism, Alfaric turned to Canon Rous, the Secrétaire Général of the diocese, with whom he had little commerce till then save on official matters. Tall, slim, distinguished in appearance, with an open expression and a keen look, Rous had at first some difficulty in grasping the situation. "What, you can no longer believe," he cried, "You are making a mountain of a mole-hill. If it is only a matter of taking literally the virgin conception of Christ or of his ascension in the flesh, well, I am ready to deny more than that. Do you have doubts as to the dogma of the Trinity or that of the Incarnation? So have I. Do you still believe in God?" "No," replied Alfaric, "if I could still believe in a God, I could retain a belief in the Church which derives from him and which speaks in his name." And the Canon, dropping his teasing note, looked thoughtfully at his visitor, and said "Now I understand why you have come to ask my advice."

This was the beginning of a series of friendly discussions in private between the two men, in the course of which Alfaric set out his whole position and the Canon listened with the keenest attention and not without approval, for, he declared, this was a state of mind which he personally knew well; he himself had more than once found certain dogmas incomprehensible, and more than once had wished for time to study the problems as deeply as possible, but his secretarial duties had provided neither the leisure nor the means. He himself had been led to the Church through the deep religious devotion of his mother for whom he had had a great affection.

In such a manner was initiated a friendship which was to end only with the death of the Canon, as we have already noted, in 1929. On the latter's advice, Alfaric wrote to Loisy and Hébert who both received him with sympathy and gave him good advice, as a result of which he decided to leave the Church and study for the university degrees which would allow him to enter the state teaching profession. Archbishop Mignot, who had been kept informed of the trend of the discussions by the Canon, was sympathetic, but regretted the decision to break completely with the Church—both Canon and Archbishop suggested ways of remaining within the fold, at least for a time. For the Archbishop the dogmas counted for little, but religion, hence the Church, was his life; he too owed his piety to the upbringing of a pious mother, nevertheless he thought highly of Frederick von Hugel, of the ex-Jesuit Tyrrell and his defender, Miss Petre. So he recommended Alfaric to go and study for a time in England, after a period in Geneva preparatory to sitting for a degree.

It is in the course of these conversations that Alfaric sets out very skilfully the pros and cons for supernatural religion, especially for the existence of God; he scarcely needs to expound his own opinions, for his friends, the Canon, the Archbishop, to whom must be added the Archdeacon of the diocese, refute one another.

In short our late friend left the Church with, it might almost be said, the goodwill and blessing of his immediate superiors and the regrets of his pupils. The Paris degree was easily gained—after that, not England, but Germany was visited (1911), but the Lutheran dogmas and the bellicose spirit of his fellow students of theology and philosophy were distasteful, and he was glad, after a twelve-month to return to Paris, where his younger brother, now a doctor of medicine and married, was established. There also he met, by invitation, Archbishop Mignot at the Gare du Nord—the latter had been rapped over the knuckles sharply by the Vatican for having admitted and retained at the Albi Seminary a priest who "*extrema impietatis attingit facinera*" (who had attained the extreme limits of impiety). At Paris, moreover, Alfaric saw much of Loisy, Hébert, Lévy-Bruhl, Guignebert and other religious liberals. His first teaching post was the College Chaptal; at the same time he married a girl of similar religious views. In 1919 thanks to efforts by Houtin, Guignebert and Lévy-Bruhl, Alfaric was appointed to the chair of History of Religions at the newly established University of Strasburg where he taught till in 1939 the University was temporarily transferred to Clermont-Ferrand. In 1933 on the request of the Préfet of the Bas-Rhin and of the Director of the Alsace Services, he was awarded the Legion of Honour, a fortnight before receiving the notice of his excommunication by the Supreme Sacred Congregation.

This ends the book, save for a brief epilogue. When the war came to an end, Alfaric retired to Paris, where he unceasingly studied and unceasingly laboured in the cause which he had made his own, that of freethought. One of his friends was Dr. Couchoud, once the medical attendant and friend of Anatole France, who, with France's encouragement, had also turned to the study of Christian origins and had also arrived at the conclusion that Jesus Christ had no historical existence. Another was Joseph Turmel, whom

(continued on next page)

## This Believing World

Poor Cardinal Griffin (and the Catholic hierarchy all over the world, for that matter) is greatly disturbed at the increasing number of backsliders his Church is reporting. The solid religious education given to all Catholic children at home and in school and church appears to have no restraining influence, for as soon as possible, Catholic youths between 15 and 18 particularly get out (or lapse), and very few of them go back. Mixed marriages are also a contributing factor. But why does the Cardinal not face facts? Converts will, of course, believe anything, but surely any Catholic child who reads even a little for himself must see that Virgin Births, Miracles, Assumptions, Devils, and Hell, are just religious hoaxes. Once the Church is found out by anyone—even the Cardinal can do nothing whatever about it.

Nor can the Wee Frees do anything about a Scots expert on schooling, Dr. William Boyd, who actually opposes God's Holy Word in one of its most important teachings. All Christian parents and schoolteachers have proudly obeyed the Biblical injunction, "Spare the rod and spoil the child"—an injunction supposed to have come from the wisest man that ever lived, the famous King Solomon himself. Who is Dr. Boyd who wants to correct the Inspired Book to "Spare the rod and save the child"? Is he a blatant and effete Materialist? Gold help his erring children if such crass blasphemy is allowed to infect those good God-fearing men and women in Scotland long known as the most vigorous opponents of unholy infidelity. As the *Glasgow Daily Record* says, we all must look upon the Bible as "a sacred heritage."

The late Dr. Garbett made an admirable Archbishop of York but it was really unkind of the *Daily Mail* to head an article about him—"Garbett Challenged the Nation." For the things he challenged the nation about have always been challenged and had no more to do with Christianity than with peppercorns. He believed, for example, that the H-bomb was a deterrent to war, in occasional laziness, that corporal punishment was not "sadistic," that horror comics were bad for children, and so on. All these things are essentially topics of Secularism, and they go to prove that in the ultimate even Archbishops have to be gravely concerned with this world and what happens in it. As for the "many mansions" in the sky so beloved by Jesus, there appears to have been not a word from Dr. Garbett.

Girls in bikinis seem to be the pet aversions not only of our R.C. celibate priests but also of a number of our married Protestant vicars. Quite a hullabaloo has been stirred up in Ramsgate because a picture of one of these "pin-ups" has been printed on the cover of a Guide to Ramsgate with clerical opponents horrified, and publicity people delighted. And it would be a safe bet to make that the Rev. G. Bennett, who is outraged by the cover, would prefer to have a deserted Ramsgate in summer rather than a town attracted by bikini lovers. So would, of course, most good Christians who still believe that there is something about a bikini which is religiously evil. May the Lord save Ramsgate from such!

Reincarnation is once again in the news. Somebody in America hypnotised a lady who immediately remembered that she had lived before, and the *Sunday Graphic* is

publishing "investigations" which will conclusively prove that we all, or most of us, have lived before. You have to hypnotise people to find out for this makes what they say quite infallible. Moreover, there is another check. Get a woman doctor and a manager of an hotel "as witnesses" and there you are.

However, even the "Sunday Graphic" seems a little uncertain for it warns readers, in commenting on one infallibly true case of someone who gave details of his life 150 years ago, and a couple of other subjects, that "to draw any conclusion from these cases would be rash." Only "rash"! All these stories are on a line with the many cases of "absent" healing of incurable diseases which, for some mysterious reason, never supply the only details that matter—genuine medical reports. The age of miracles may have gone, but not yet the age of credulous humbug and gullibility.

### PROSPER ALFARIC

(concluded from page 19)

Alfaric visited more than once at Rennes. The late Prof. Langevin, war victim of the Nazis, had established the Union Rationaliste; Alfaric became the mouthpiece of this Union and was frequently heard broadcasting freethought matter at 9.30 Sunday morning, the once a month emission allotted to freethinkers. He was also its pen and the author of many Cahiers Rationalistes. Not content with these labours he founded a Cercle Renan and also supplied the driving power to the Ligue de l'Enseignement. The World Union of Free Thinkers was honoured by his acceptance of Vice-Presidency of the Luxemburg Congress in 1954; but his health which had become increasingly poor did not allow him to give the address intended and it was read in his absence by M. J. Cotereau.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was of the greatest interest for Alfaric for in their contents he found support for his thesis that the Christians were an offshoot of the Essenes.

It will be long before great scholars such as Alfaric, Couchoud, Loisy, Turmel and Guignebert all gifted expositors, and some at least gifted with great charm of manner and the simplicity of truly great minds, will be seen again. L'Union Rationaliste, le Cercle Renan and the World Union have suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Prosper Alfaric.

Many writers seem to imply that family affection of any sort was as foreign to pre-Christian life as a knowledge of modern astronomy, whereas the evidence of all classical literature and of monumental inscriptions suffices to show that in this respect human nature was precisely the same 2000 years ago as it is to-day.

J. A. Farrer.

## — NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY — 50th ANNUAL DINNER

followed by Social & Dance

ALL WELCOME SATURDAY, 4th FEBRUARY, 1956  
at the MECCA RESTAURANT,

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# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

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

R. SMITH. The R.C. Index of Prohibited books has no authority in this country, which has the status (for Catholicism) of a "missionary country." The Index dates from 1549 and we do not know of any complete copy outside the Vatican archives.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Lincolns Inn Fields, Kingsway, W.C.1.).—Every Tuesday, 1 p.m. (Tower Hill) Every Thursday, 1 p.m. Speakers: J. M. Alexander, W. Carlton, and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1.0 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and CORSAIR.

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 Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute).—January 22, 6.45 p.m.: J. COLIN SIDMONS, B.A., "The Heart of the Matter."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, January 24, 7.15 p.m.: Rev. I. LIVINGSTONE, "The Essence of Judaism."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 22, 6.30 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "The Secular Basis of Culture."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (64 George Street).—Saturday, January 21, 3 p.m.: WALLACE OWEN, M.I.MECHIE, "Presidential Address."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, January 22, 2.30 p.m.: G. O. DOUGLAS, "Freewill and Determinism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, January 22, 11 a.m.: H. TENNYSON, "Unity and Discord among World Religions."

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Community Centre, Wanstead).—Thursday, January 26; F. A. RIDLEY, "The Vatican and Ecclesiastical Fascism."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, January 22, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "History and the Bible."

## Notes and News

All who intend coming to the Jubilee Dinner of the N.S.S. should notify the General Secretary *at once*. This will help the work "behind the scenes." In more ways than one, this Dinner will be unique, and a record attendance is expected. In addition to the principal guest, Mrs. Margaret Knight, that mystifying magician, Mr. John Brearley, should prove a great attraction and there will be a band for dancing and every opportunity for members and guests to get together for talks and exchange of views. But send *at once* for your tickets, please.

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,057 12s. 7d.; W. Humphries, 7s. 6d.; R. Lewis, 10s.; A Hancock, 1s.; A. Brooks, 5s.; E. C. Capey, 10s.; Mrs. J. Partington, in memory of her husband, 10s.; Total to date, £1,059 16s. 1d.

Readers of *The Freethinker* who are also Esperantists may be interested to know that they can obtain a specimen copy of *Nia Libera Opinio* (Our Free Opinion) on request from the group Esperanto-Amikaro de Liberpensuloj whose organiser is Mr. E. Weichmann of Lotenkamp, 4 Dortmund-Kirchderne, Germany. This group has been formed to link together Freethinker Esperantists throughout the world and generally to advance the cause of international Free-thought by the use of the language Esperanto. The special role this group is called upon to play in the furtherance of Secularism will readily be appreciated and we feel that support of this group will materially strengthen the work of our freethinking colleagues within the Esperanto Movement and help to combat in a practical way the influence of religious organisations which are also active in the Esperanto sphere.

Addressing the North of England Education Conference at Harrogate on Wednesday, 4th January, Dr. J. Bronowski, Director of the Central Research Establishment of the National Coal Board, made a timely plea for the expansion of scientific education. Letters to *The Times* and prize-day speeches "speak as if we need do no more than give a little grace and dignity to a few uncouth scientists," he said, "But the scientists are inheriting, they are conquering the earth, and if you do not speak their uncouth language then you will sink to the status of the native yokels when the Normans overran England." "You do not become a cultured person by happening to be a specialist in a humanity subject rather than a scientific subject," he continued; humanism was doomed if it did not learn the living language and the springing thought of science. Dr. Bronowski made several suggestions for the teaching of science in schools "as an evolution of knowledge," which offered links with history, literature, and geography; presented science as changing, questioning, and argumentative, so teaching the methods of rational debate; and showed at each step how the logical deduction from what seemed to lie behind the known facts must be confronted with experience. The speech was well reported in the *Manchester Guardian* (5/1/56) from which the above extracts are taken.

On Tuesday, 3rd January, the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru, had inaugurated the 43rd Annual Session of the Indian Science Congress at Agra. Science, he said, had entered people's everyday life so much that it would dominate them more and more in the future. It was, therefore, of great importance in what atmosphere and temper scientists worked and how far scientists helped the world's thinking in a certain direction and how far they gave it wrong direction. The scientist, he continued, looked and searched for truth, and in his search he could not be afraid of consequences even if the search sometimes took him "to look into the pit of hell." But however objectively the scientist might function, he could not isolate himself from the joys and sorrows of the world and possible dangers to the world from his activity. The world, said Mr.

Nehru, had to be approached "in a temper of science, temper of reasonableness and temper of peace." (*India News*, 7/1/56.)

In two letters accompanying N.S.S. subscriptions we are forcibly reminded that the fight for freethought is by no means won. Mr. Stanley Wilson of Lossiemouth, Morayshire, describes himself as a "voice in the wilderness," and tells how he was recently asked quite seriously: "Are ye nae feart ye'll be struck doon?" Not content with leaving the assault to their deity, three Trinidad Hindus cuffed and knocked out the President of the Fyzabad (West Indies) branch N.S.S., Mr. John Jules. We are pleased to say that Mr. Jules has now recovered, but we draw the attention of readers to the savage thoughts and actions that religion stirs in men.

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

By COLIN McCALL

MR. EDMUND WILSON is one of America's foremost literary critics; he will also be known to many readers as the author of that fine study of historical socialism, *To the Finland Station*, and the provocative *Europe without Baedeker*. But go to any of his published works (I think I can claim to have read nearly all of them) and, whatever the subject, it will be illumined by a keen intellect and a broad judgment. He is perhaps the outstanding liberal critic of our time, never forgetting that there is a world of things as well as a world of words. It was with enthusiasm, therefore, that I heard of his book on *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (W. H. Allen, 1955; 10/6d.). As always with Mr. Wilson, the enthusiasm proved justified.

This is a comparatively short book (159 pages) based on contributions to the *New Yorker* magazine. It is above all, easily readable and clearly understandable—merits not always appreciated these days—and it should appeal to the wide readership that the publishers hope for. It lays no claim to original research: Mr. Wilson is not equipped for that, though he does read Hebrew. Instead it attempts to give the background of the Dead Sea scrolls, to communicate a sense of their archaeological importance, present some of the theories concerning them, and view them, free from religious prejudices. Mr. Wilson has no religious beliefs and is consequently spared the "inhibitions" of both Jews and Christians; their "reluctance to take hold of the subject and to place it in historical perspective."

On the Jewish side, he detects "a fear of impairing the authority of the Masoretic text" (the earliest text of the Hebrew Bible, apart from a few fragments) and "a resistance to admitting that the religion of Jesus could have grown in an organic way, the product of a traceable sequence of pressures and inspirations, out of one branch of Judaism;" whereas on the Christian side, it is "as Dr. Brownlee says, the fear 'that the uniqueness of Christ is at stake,'" and with it, belief in God's special act of salvation. "These new documents have thus loomed as a menace to a variety of rooted assumptions," says Mr. Wilson, and "How gingerly, in many quarters, the approach to the scrolls long remained has been shown in a striking way by the disturbing but air-clearing effects of the writings of Dupont-Sommer." Professor A. Dupont-Sommer is in the tradition of Renan and, like his great predecessor, was formerly an abbé. He has no religious affiliations now, and for Mr. Wilson—"an inquirer in the same situation"—"it is pleasant and reassuring to find that the great secular seekers for truth as well as the Teachers of Righteousness may establish their lasting disciplines."

"Teachers of Righteousness" is a reference to one of the scrolls, the Habakkuk Commentary, which Dupont-Sommer dates 41 BC and in which he attempts to identify "two figures who are never named and who are evidently of great importance in the history of the Dead Sea sect"—the Essenes? One of these is a Teacher of Righteousness: the "Elect of God;" the other is his persecutor, a Wicked Priest or "Prophet of Untruth." Here is fruitful ground for daring—and sometimes wild—speculation, as Mr. Wilson instances. I am glad he makes it clear that the Teacher of Righteousness does not necessarily signify a particular person but "may have been a general title that was given to a succession of Messiahs." I think this may be important, though we are told that the documents from the Dead Sea cave "do seem to refer to a specific man." Needless to say I am not qualified to pass judgment, but I have learnt the value of honest scepticism in dealing with Biblical and allied matters, and I welcome this quality in Mr. Wilson's essay. "The literature of the subject [the Habakkuk Commentary] is enormous, and it is impossible to summarize it briefly. I have tried merely to give some idea of the difficulty of determining the actual events—and one cannot always be sure they are actual—that are dealt with in these late Hebrew writings."

There, of course, is the rub. To my mind, the Bible is totally unreliable for purposes of historical verification: that must be sought elsewhere. But where? Josephus? Pliny? Philo?—yes, but they must be treated with some caution and cross-checked wherever possible. The first-named, for instance, states that most of the Essenes lived to be over a hundred and that, however tortured, they never cringed or shed a tear, but smiled in their agonies. Hyperbole of this type is suspicious. He says, too, that "they adopt other men's children, while yet pliable and docile, accepting them as their kin and moulding them in accordance with their own principles." Philo, on the other hand, says that there are no youths or children among them: only the mature are admitted. Pliny tells us they did not admit women, but Josephus explains that one branch of the sect did permit marriage. In fact, we do not know a great deal about the Essenes, but the manuscripts of the Dead Sea library are presumed to belong to that mystic sect. The snag is that none of the documents yet discovered names them as such. In the remarkable *Manual of Discipline* and in other fragments, the priests are always the "sons of Zadok." It is thought that the title "Essenes," meaning "Holy Ones," may have been used only by outsiders. "But if definite events and the actors in them are hard to pin down as history, the doctrines and the mystical symbols are not so easily to be mistaken," writes Mr. Wilson. "These are not in all cases consistent," he continues, "—they must belong to a religious movement that extended through some two and a half centuries; but it is obvious that a certain theology not only runs through all this group of late [Hebrew] apocryphal documents and the literature of the Dead Sea sect, but extends to the New Testament, also."

It is disturbing for Christians to learn that such doctrines and rites as salvation and damnation, the Last Judgment, baptism, and possibly Communion, "must have been developed gradually and naturally, in the course of a couple of hundred years, out of a dissident branch of Judaism." Yet learn it, they must. And that Jesus—if he lived—"may well have found prepared for him, by the teaching of the Dead Sea sect, a special Messianic role, the pattern of a martyr's career, which he accepted, to which he aspired." In short, supernatural Christianity must give way to natural Christianity.

The chief fascination—and importance—of the Dead Sea finds is the light they throw upon the evolution of Judaism and Christianity, two religions that have profoundly influenced the social history of mankind. The monastery uncovered at Qumrān, says Mr. Wilson, "is perhaps, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity." Freethinkers have long insisted that the Christian religion, like all others, must be considered from an evolutionary standpoint if it is to be explained. They will agree with Mr. Wilson that it is essential for civilisation that "the rise of Christianity should, at last, be generally understood as simply an episode of human history rather than propagated as dogma and divine revelation." Study of the Dead Sea scrolls will help us do this. Not least will Mr. Wilson's admirable book, which conveys to the reader the thrill of archaeological discovery, the painstaking methods used for preserving the tens of thousands of fragments, the problems of deciphering, and the historical importance of its subject.

### INSTEAD OF THE BIBLE

(concluded from page 15)

The story of Job shocks the heart of every good man. In this book there is some poetry, some pathos, and some philosophy; but the story of this drama called Job is heartless to the last degree. The children of Job are murdered to settle a little wager between God and the Devil. Afterwards, Job having remained firm, other children are given in the place of the murdered ones. Nothing, however, is done for the children who were murdered.

The book of Esther is utterly absurd, and the only redeeming feature in the book is that the name of Jehovah is not mentioned.

I like the Song of Solomon because it tells of human love, and that is something I can understand. That book, in my judgment, is worth all the ones that go before it, and is a far better moral guide.

There are some wise and merciful Proverbs. Some are selfish, and some are flat and commonplace.

I like the book of Ecclesiastes because there you find some sense, some poetry, and some philosophy. Take away the interpolations, and it is a good book.

Of course, there is nothing in Nehemiah or Ezra to make men better, nothing in Jeremiah or Lamentations calculated to lessen vice, and only a few passages in Isaiah that can be used in a good cause.

In Ezekiel and Daniel we find only ravings of the insane. In some of the minor prophets there is now and then a good verse, now and then an elevated thought.

You can, by selecting passages from different books, make a very good creed, and by selecting passages from different books you can make a very bad creed.

The trouble is that the spirit of the Old Testament, its disposition, its temperament, is bad, selfish, and cruel. The most fiendish things are commanded, commended, and applauded.

The stories that are told of Joseph, of Elisha, of Daniel and Gideon, and of many others, are hideous, hellish.

On the whole, the Old Testament cannot be considered a moral guide.

Jehovah was not a moral God. He had all the vices, and he lacked all the virtues. He generally carried out his threats, but he never faithfully kept a promise.

At the same time, we must remember that the Old Testament is a natural production, that it was written by savages who were slowly crawling towards the light. We must give them credit for the noble things they said,

and we must be charitable enough to excuse their faults, and even their crimes.

I know that many Christians regard the Old Testament as the foundation and the New as the superstructure, and, while many admit that there are faults and mistakes in the Old Testament, they insist that the New is the flower and perfect fruit.

I admit that there are many good things in the New Testament, and if we take from that book the dogmas of eternal pain, of infinite revenge, of the atonement, of human sacrifice, of the necessity of shedding blood; if we throw away the doctrine of non-resistance, of loving enemies, the idea that prosperity is the result of wickedness, that poverty is a preparation for Paradise; if we throw all these away and take the good, sensible passages, applicable to conduct, then we can make a fairly good moral guide—narrow, but moral.

Of course, many important things would be left out. You would have nothing about human rights, nothing for investigation, for thought and reason; but still you would have a fairly good moral guide.

On the other hand, if you would take the foolish passages, the extreme ones, you could make a creed that would satisfy an insane asylum.

If you take the cruel passages, the verses that inculcate eternal hatred, verses that writhe and hiss like serpents, you can make a creed that would shock the heart of a hyena.

It may be that no book contains better passages than the New Testament; but certainly no book contains worse.

Below the blossom of love you find the thorn of hatred, on the lips that kiss you find the poison of the cobra.

The Bible is not a moral guide.

Any man who follows faithfully all its teachings is an enemy of society, and will probably end his days in a prison or an asylum.

What is morality?

In this world we need certain things. We have many wants. We are exposed to many dangers. We need food, fuel, raiment, and shelter; and besides these wants there is what may be called the hunger of the mind.

We are conditioned beings, and our happiness depends upon conditions. There are certain things that diminish, certain things that increase, well-being. There are certain things that destroy, and there are others that preserve.

Happiness, including its highest forms, is after all, the only good, and everything the result of which is to produce or secure happiness is good—that is to say, moral. Everything that destroys or diminishes well-being is bad—that is to say, immoral. In other words, all that is good is moral, and all that is bad is immoral.

What, then, is, or can be called, a moral guide? The shortest possible answer is one word—Intelligence.

We want the experience of mankind, the true history of the race. We want the history of intellectual development, of the growth of the ethical, of the idea of justice, of conscience, of charity, of self-denial. We want to know the paths and roads that have been travelled by the human mind.

These facts in general, these histories in outline, the results reached, the conclusions formed, the principles evolved, taken together, would form the best conceivable moral guide.

We cannot depend on what are called "inspired books," or the religions of the world. These religions are based on the supernatural, and according to them we are under

obligation to worship and obey some supernatural being or beings. All these religions are inconsistent with intellectual liberty. They are the enemies of thought, of investigation, of mental honesty. They destroy the manliness of man. They promise eternal rewards for belief, for credulity, for what they call faith.

This is not only absurd, but it is immoral.

These religions teach the slave virtues. They make inanimate things holy, and falsehoods sacred. They create artificial crimes. To eat meat on Friday, to enjoy yourself on Sunday, to eat on fast-days, to be happy in Lent, to dispute a priest, to ask for evidence, to deny a creed, to express your sincere thought—all these acts are sins, crimes against some god. To give your honest opinion about Jehovah, Mohammed, or Christ is far worse than to maliciously slander your neighbour. To question or doubt miracles is far worse than to deny known facts. Only the obedient, the credulous, the cringers, the kneelers, the meek, the unquestioning, the true believers, are regarded as moral, as virtuous. It is not enough to be honest, generous, and useful; not enough to be governed by evidence, by facts. In addition to this you must believe. These things are the foes of morality. They subvert all natural conceptions of virtue.

All "inspired books," teaching that what the supernatural commands is right, and right because commanded, and that what the supernatural prohibits is wrong, and wrong because prohibited, are absurdly unphilosophic.

And all "inspired books," teaching that only those who obey the commands of the supernatural are, or can be, truly virtuous, and that unquestioning faith will be rewarded with eternal joy, are grossly immoral.

Again I say: Intelligence is the only moral guide.

Col. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.  
(Boston Investigator, 1898)

## Correspondence

### A REPLY TO MR. CUTNER

I read with much amusement, Mr. Cutner's review of Keith's book. Mr. Cutner says that people like "Lunn and Dewar" are dismissed by scientists as hopeless "fossils" but neither gives name nor authority for such a statement. One has heard all this wild statement before at street corners from orators.

You will no doubt have heard of Haeckel's frank admission of falsifications of diagrams in *Das Menschen-Problem* (1907). When challenged by Dr. A. Brass of the Kepler Bund, Haeckel admitted in *Munchner Allgemeine Zeitung* (January 1909) "a small number of my embryos are really forgeries in Dr. Braso's sense. I should feel utterly condemned and annihilated by the admission, were it not that hundreds of the best observers and most reputable biologists lie under the same charge. The great majority of all morphological, anatomical, histological and embryological diagrams are not true to nature but are more or less doctored, schematised and reconstructed."

In the *Augsberger Post-Zertung* for March 23rd, 1909, a statement signed by thirty six scientific men representing nineteen universities, botanical laboratories, etc., of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, protested at Haeckel's "want of conscientiousness in popularising scientific facts." A full account can be found in the pamphlet *Im-Interesse Der Wissenschaft* published by the Kepler Bund at Godesberg in 1909. Obviously your columnist either does not know of these things or deliberately keeps them from the faithful who peruse your pages. So Haeckel, the "great populariser of Evolution on the continent," was a self-confessed forger, and has accused others of being in the same boat. All Mr. Cutner's talk about the "blight of Christianity" is mere eyewash, in the light of this.

In "Essays On Evolution" (p. 193) by Professor E. B. Poulton, the writer says of Huxley, the "great populariser of Evolution in

England," "Although no one strove so nobly and against such odds in its (Nat. Selection's) defence from unfair attacks, Huxley was at no time a convinced believer in the theory he protected."

Huxley himself states (*Man's Place in Nature*, p. 100). "I accept Mr. Darwin's hypothesis, subject to the proof that physiological species may be produced by selective breeding." This has never been done. On p. 175 of the same book (Everyman's Library Ed.) Mr. Huxley has some trenchant things to say about the "scientists" who make such *ex cathedra* pronouncements about the Dewars and Lunn as Mr. Cutner has done.

If Mr. Cutner will consult Dewar and Finn (*The Making of Species*, p. 378) he will find these pregnant words: "Men of science not infrequently charge the clergy with adhering to dogma in face of opposing facts: it seems to us that many of the apostles of science are in this respect worse offenders than the most orthodox of Churchmen." Propretic words indeed!

A penetrating study of the mind and work of Charles Darwin is given by R. E. D. Clark in *Darwin—Before and After* (Paternoster Press). Mr. Cutner would do well to study this well documented, factual case. Mr. Clark by the way, is a research scientist at Cambridge—not a parson.

I suppose the facts I have given would not be suitable for *The Freethinker* but there is no harm in asking you at least to satisfy yourself that Mr. Cutner in his review has omitted to mention some things that may weaken his case.

R. McKEOWN.

[Mr. Cutner hopes to deal with the points raised as early as possible.

—ED.]

### FEBRUARY 4th

Before the date of the N.S.S. Annual Dinner was announced I had hoped to attend as usual to meet my friends in the movement. I regret that I shall now be unable to do so, and am wondering how those who made the arrangements could have overlooked the fact that 4th February is the anniversary of an event that aroused widespread sorrow only two years ago.

I am sure that very many of your readers will prefer to recall their memories of "C.C." quietly at home, perhaps in the company of a few friends who share their admiration of him, however much they would otherwise have liked to join in a festive gathering of freethinkers.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

[We think that, for the benefit of prospective guests who, like Mr. Morris, respect the memory of Chapman Cohen, we ought to comment on the above. It was necessity and not disrespect that fixed the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on the 4th February. The significance of the date was not overlooked, but very heavy bookings made it the only one available. Some readers may prefer to recall their memories of 'C.C.' quietly at home, on the other hand many may feel that 'C.C.' would prefer us to perpetuate an event to which he always gave his support—which, indeed, owed much to him. Of one thing we are sure: were he living, he would be with us. But let him speak for himself. In *The Freethinker* twenty years ago he said, "The way to meet the shock and disruption of death is to bathe anew in the stream of life, and to live one's normal life as well as one may." (*The Freethinker*, Feb. 2, 1936.)—Ed.]

### IMPOSTORS?

Mr. Barrowman's indictment of the Labour Party may be partly true, but there's another side. I've known many Labour M.P.'s. and certainly they are not a pack of impostors. As he says, "The Freethought movement is composed of all shades of political belief," which indicates that needless offence should be given to none by a Chairman at a Freethought meeting, who should not take advantage of his position. 'T would be wiser and fairer to refrain from such aspersions of a partisan character; especially when such pronouncements are unbecoming, unnecessary, and apt to offend many Freethinkers.

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

### OBITUARY

On Christmas Eve, 1955, Bradford Branch N.S.S. lost a valuable member in Mr. Frank Bland, whose untimely death at the age of 39 was due to coronary thrombosis. At the request of the deceased the remains were cremated at Bradford on 28th December, with a secular service read by the Branch President, Mr. H. Day.

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