

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI—No. 25

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IT WAS G. W. FOOTE who said baptism was a good thing when administered with soap.

We are now to anticipate healing by prayer, with medical attention thrown in as a makeweight.

This was stated at the recent Lichfield Diocesan Conference by a Dr. McColl of Wrexham, who said that in the near future there might be "a unified scheme of work

up and down the country between doctors and clergy on matters of healing". The Bishop of Lichfield then announced a meeting at his house between some doctors and clergy who would "take counsel together". In the discussion which followed it was piously hoped that soon the services of clergymen would always be at the disposal of "a doctor in difficulty".

The Bishop said great attention was now being given by the Chaplaincy Council of the Church Assembly to the training of hospital chaplains: it was the policy of the Council to press for full-time chaplaincies whenever possible, but the standard laid down by the Ministry of Health was that, except in certain unusual circumstances, no hospital could have a full-time chaplain unless Anglican patients occupied 750 of its beds on the average.

Prayers on National Health?
A full-time chaplain, according to the report of the Bishop's conference speech in the *Staffordshire Sentinel* (31/5/56), received a definite stipend paid by the hospital, and a part-time chaplain was paid according to the number of beds for which he was responsible.

If the proposed Doctor-Clergy Co-operation Scheme comes into effect on a national scale, the essentially parasitic character of the Established Church will run true to form. Faced with a populace who, in nine cases out of ten, have no practical interest whatever in this Church, and seek every means to intrude itself on their attention, and, more particularly, on their pockets. Bluntly speaking, it now offers its outdated "God" as a cure for disease. This is not in itself anything new. From the witch doctors and the tribal Josh right down to the "prayers for the sick" in our own day, "God" in some form or other has always been supposed to include in his imaginary repertoire the power of healing. If healing followed the incantation, then "God" did it; if the victim died, then it was a punishment for sin, or it was "God's will".

What is new is the idea that the services of God should now be available to our lucky citizens through National Health. Not that he will directly receive payment. God wouldn't know what to do with a stipend. The clergy will act as his mediators, and will spend it for him.

Payment by Results?
Nor is it the intention of the clergy to submit their contribution to the practical test of results. Yet such a test would be quite simple to operate. Let the two components of the

Co-operation Scheme be isolated, tested separately, and then in combination. If the clergy went to work on the job unaided we should soon have a new Coroner's Verdict: "Death from Spiritual Healing."

What sort of entries would go into the religious records? We suggest that where doctor and clergyman had both been in operation, the following would be the acceptable version:

CASE 1: *Died from natural causes.*

CASE 2: *Got well by supernatural agency.*

In other words, the clergy would certainly point to results. And favourable ones would be claimed.

The story is told of a ship sinking. "Can any of you

pray?" asked the captain of the passengers. "I can," replied the saintly one. "Get on with it, then," called the captain, "we're a lifebelt short."

What the Doctors Think

The attitude of the British Medical Council towards "spiritual healing" has been made quite plain by a report recently published as a half-crown booklet (*Divine Healing and Co-operation between Doctors and Clergy*). This was the work of a special committee and it is well worth noting that three Roman Catholic doctors were invited to join this committee and all three declined. (It is well known that the B.M.A. do not give credence to the "miracles of Lourdes.")

The committee was appointed by the B.M.A. to prepare this memorandum for the Archbishop's Commission on Divine Healing. The upshot of their report was summed up in the *Manchester Guardian* headline (11/5/56), "Spiritual Healing Found Wanting". There was, it said, "no evidence that there is any type of illness cured by 'spiritual healing' alone that could not have been cured by medical treatment".

The report makes every allowance for the effect of suggestion on psychogenic disorders, but as for cures of organic diseases by "spiritual" means, "The evidence suggests that many such cases claimed to be cured are likely to be either instances of wrong diagnosis, wrong prognosis, remission, or possibly of spontaneous cure".

In organic illness the abolition of pain might easily be mistaken for a cure, and the case duly reported as one of divine healing. A sufferer from toothache, for instance, may be induced to forget it through hypnosis. But this does not arrest the decay. Or he may have his attention diverted from his pain by some other interesting activity (e.g. sexual intercourse, sudden important news, a TV programme, or even by becoming absorbed in a book). But this is not a cure. It is only the alleviation of symptoms.

In cases of "remission" the symptoms disappear for a time. Thus, to quote the medical Report, "The 'miracle' may be reported in the press, but later the patient relapses and the relapse receives no publicity but remains the secret of the patient, of his friends and of his doctor".

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Doctors and Spiritual Healing

—By G. H. TAYLOR—

Lourdes

This, says the Report, leaves little room for "miraculous" cures of organic disease by "spiritual healing". Spontaneous (that is, unexpected) cures, whether here or at Lourdes, which could not be explained by existing medical knowledge, were very few, and it was better to acknowledge that they were at present inexplicable on scientific grounds. But, says the Report:

"The cases claimed as cures of a miraculous nature present no features of a unique and unexpected character outside the knowledge of any experienced physician or psychiatrist."

In a footnote the Report says, in connection with Lourdes, that in spite of the immense pressure of popular enthusiasm the number of attested cures claimed as miracles over the years has been exceedingly small—not even one a year.

No medical institution could survive on that record!

The Power of Suggestion

The Report gives much prominence to the importance of suggestion as a factor which can work for the improvement of diseased conditions. Obviously emotional life has a direct bearing on physical wellbeing. In cases where suggestion contributes to recovery it may have a religious

basis or a secular one. It may operate on faith in the efficacy of some intrinsically worthless object of superstition, or some quack remedy, or some supernatural concept or some object of faith. But, says the Report, to treat certain forms of depression by the laying on of hands or resort to spirit media, or by suggestion, when scientific treatment is available, is to do the patient "the gravest injustice". Referring to some cases which without sufficient investigation are diagnosed as epilepsy but which appeared in fact to be cases of hysteria, the Report tells us that an impressive religious service, equally with psychological treatment, might bring benefit, but this was not a cure of epilepsy.

A Secular Treatment

It is not necessary that the object of faith should have anything to do with religion. If Lourdes proves the Virgin Mary, then a case reported by Leuba proves the efficacy of Scottish blood, though done under religious auspices. McDonald was a Scotsman and he was a drunkard.

"I don't believe you're a Scotsman!" McDonald flared with indignation. "You must have some Irish blood!" McDonald was incensed with wrath. "No true Scotsman would behave as you do!" It was enough. McDonald discarded his alcoholic habit.

He was duly booked as a convert to Christ.

What Does "God" Mean?

By G. I. BENNETT

A FEW YEARS AGO Watts and Co. published a book entitled *The Four Pillars of Wisdom* by Sir Sheldon Dudley, outlining the principles of clear thought. One of those "pillars" was Semantics—or the study of the meaning of words, and the precise use of language. I have been turning the pages of Sir Sheldon Dudley's book again; and whilst I do not notice that he anywhere discusses the word God in this section, it is one of those terms certainly deserving of consideration by all who would think rationally and to some purpose. Few words have been more on the lips of men than it, or found their way more often into print. Perhaps no other word has been so much associated with human hopes, fears, aspirations, and consolations. Few words admit of a greater variety of interpretations, and perhaps none has been so unvaryingly used in so loose a way.

If I say I believe in God what do I mean? No one can properly say; and probably, put on the spot, I cannot really say myself! I recall the efforts of a certain peace fellowship, a year or two ago, to make the terms "God" and "good" interchangeable in a declaration of theirs, those who did not like the word "God" being free to substitute mentally the word "good"! Apparently the fellowship realised, as the statesmen of the world do not yet appear to realise, that an affirmation of belief in God in an official document can be divisive, instead of promotive, of human unity.

We have all heard that God, when he embarked long, long ago on his prodigious work of creation, made man in his own image; but the more discerning have perceived that the situation is really *vice versa*—that it is, in fact, men who have made, and still make, God in *their* own image. H.G. Wells in his *Conquest of Time* felt constrained to protest against "any prevaricating use of the word God". "That word," he said, "implies a personality or it implies nothing." What, after all, is the point of praying to a God that is an abstraction, and as impersonal as the forces of Nature? And who can be so fatuous as to imagine that a Being that simply set the great wheel of the universe

in motion, as deists think, and has allowed it to revolve by its own momentum ever since, would be the least interested in us, individually or as a species, and our egocentric notions and conceits? Only a God shapen as man, with man's psychological make-up, would in any case be petty enough to feel any pleasure or displeasure, according as he is worshipped or ignored by humble mortals like ourselves.

Actually, many people dig themselves into monotheistic entrenchments, motivated by the urge to make some sense of the world and of the universe of which they and we are part. Faith in the existence of God makes intelligible what would otherwise remain unintelligible—or so they fancy. They do not see that the term "God" is really a symbol of our ignorance—a gap in our knowledge and understanding that we, mankind as a whole, are not honest or courageous enough to face. Nor do they appreciate that the concept of God is no wise an answer to the question that presses on men's minds, and to which it purports to be an answer: why we are here, and what meaning in the scheme of things have our fleeting three or four score years of terrestrial existence. Not that we should look for an answer where none is to be sought or found. Neither the subtleties of theology nor of metaphysics can give us one worth a moment's consideration. What we cannot explain in the light of our knowledge and experience of life it is better we should not try to explain.

Did the universe always exist, being the product of creative intelligence? Had it no beginning, and will it have no end? "Inconceivable!" says the religious apologist. But is it? If it is, for instance, inconceivable that the universe had no cause, why then, by the same token, it is inconceivable that a deity who constructed the universe—"out of nothing", as the saying goes—had no cause. Are we to accept the theist's premise that the universe had a beginning, and possibly may have an end, but that God (assuming his nebulous reality), in his starry firmament men call Heaven, had no beginning and will have no end?

But let us stop. Theology clearly gives us no illumination. Rather does it obfuscate and involve us in needless difficulties. To withhold belief from that for which there is no positive evidence is not only good sense it is a condition of science, and of all true intellectual advance.

"I Challenge"

By H. CUTNER

Editor, THE FREETHINKER.

Sir,—In your issue for March 16th, H. Gutner says of "The Gospel writers": "They did not trouble with the 'original' Hebrew because, for one thing, it is doubtful whether they could have read a line of it, and for another, copies must have been very scarce."

Is this an example of "Free Thinking" in the realm of Intellectual Supermen where Personified Reason reigns with the assurance of Omniscience? Or is Assumption really the "Faith" of the Rationalist? What evidence can H. Gutner produce in support of his assumptions? Can he prove that "They did not trouble with the 'original' Hebrew"? On what evidence does he assert that "it is doubtful whether they could have read a line of it"? And why the "must" in "Copies must have been scarce", instead of a positive statement that "Copies were scarce"? There is nothing Rational about the Speculation of this "Free Thinker" when he resorts to such terms of Uncertainty as his "Possibly", "At Least", "Perhaps"!

Never mind the Gospel writers. Can H. Gutner read a line of Hebrew in the "original", compare it with the Greek of the Septuagint translation, and then give the correct English equivalent of the Hebrew and Greek words with which he is so much concerned? I hold no brief for Romanism but, in H. Gutner's quotation out of context, is he fairly representing what the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says about the word translated "virgin" in Isaiah 7, 14? Does his partial quotation actually represent the "modern theology" of the Church of Rome or merely "modern theology" opposed by Rome's theologians?

I challenge H. Gutner to prove his assertion: "He never troubled to find out that the Greek translator of Isaiah had used the wrong translation which in Hebrew was merely 'young woman'." Let him name the Hebrew word, the Greek word of the Septuagint, and prove his case. Come, Mr. Gutner, and let us see if you have as much sense in your head as there is in the five heads on the façade of the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester!

Yours respectfully.

D. SUTHERLAND LOGAN.

[Mr. Logan's own remarkable accuracy is proven by his spelling of our contributor's name.—Ed.]

I AM VERY PLEASED indeed to print the above letter in full — it is so completely packed with the Christian virtues of humility and love, and so typical of the "give the other cheek" attitude to one's enemies. When a pious Christian gets on the war rampage, he has no difficulty whatever in disposing of the "beautiful" teachings of Christ Jesus. Perhaps I ought to say of *some* of these teachings — without which man cannot be saved.

Mr. Logan has no doubt read *Holy Willie's Prayer* in spite of the fact that Burns wrote it in hot anger against just his kind. I should advise him to read it again.

Now, the burden of Mr. Logan's cry is my unadulterated ignorance; and I can assure him that his is by no means the first attack on a Freethinker couched in such saccharine terms. They were very plentiful during the heyday of Protestantism in the nineteenth century, and we had even a number of very reverent unbelievers who never liked the way in which Thomas Paine, for example, went for the "truth" of the Bible. Well, it is not the privilege of all of us to go through a university — and yet not a few of the world's greatest scholars were self-taught. I plead guilty to not knowing Hebrew and Greek and, for that matter, Latin. I preferred learning French and German. But it is a pleasure to record that eminent scholars have given us very often superb translations of books some of us are unable to read in their original languages and — bless Mr. Logan's heart — we can go to these. At least I can.

He does not like my remarks about the Septuagint. What do I know about that famous holy work? Can I compare it with the Hebrew Bible? Can I prove that the Gospel writers (who are generally painted for us, by the way, as illiterate fishermen) never knew Hebrew? And, of course, why have I the impudence to qualify some of my remarks

with "possibly", etc., when I have such "positive" knowledge? How dare I resort to such "terms of Uncertainty"?

Mr. Logan appears to have very little knowledge of Freethought and Freethinkers. Let me therefore assure him that in this journal at least, I write as I please in terms of Uncertainty or not. As to whether my scholarship is adequate may well be a matter of opinion and one which even Freethinkers may dispute. That is for me to meet. And if Mr. Logan felt how wretched it was, he should have made it quite clear. He is not altogether sure as to what I know, or may know, or not. He very timorously asks me whether I am "fairly representing" the quotation I gave from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* about the "prophecy" in Isaiah — surely he ought to have looked it up and if I had deliberately "misquoted" it, it was his duty to say so and thus show me up as a liar? Why did he not do so?

Then there is the very old discussion as to whether the Gospel writer knew what the word "virgin" was in Hebrew and in Greek. I can only presume here in terms of Uncertainty that Mr. Logan knows very little about the discussion, and how it has persisted through the centuries with good, pious and armed Christians attacking on every conceivable opportunity unarmed Jews for daring to dispute the Church's translation. He appears to believe that he is a sort of Knight in Shining Armour battling with a despised Infidel for the sake of Christ Jesus and his Virgin Birth for the first time. Nobody had ever done it before.

It may therefore surprise him that the Isaiah prophecy was discussed by Justin Martyr in the second century as well as by St. Jerome in the fifth, to say nothing of Thomas Paine in the eighteenth (in his *Age of Reason*). That it is believed to be a true prophecy by people like Mr. Logan is not surprising — though in my own limited experience I have found that almost all my married lady friends, while stoutly protesting that they are good Christians, begin to laugh when the Virgin Birth is mentioned. They believe the Bible through and through, but they have to laugh at the Virgin Birth.

The Gospel writers, whoever they were (and they were *certainly* neither Jews nor illiterate fisherman), with one or two exceptions (and these may be interpolations) *always* quoted the Septuagint. Every New Testament scholar makes that clear admission. They did *not* quote the Hebrew Bible for prophecies or anything else. The Rev. Dr. Giles, in his *Hebrew and Christian Records* says (p. 348): "The quotations from the Old Testament are invariably copied in the New Testament from the Greek Septuagint, and in no instance translated afresh from the Hebrew."

The Septuagint was in fact the Bible of the Christian Church for many centuries, and the first Latin translation, that known as the Old Latin, was made from the Greek Septuagint, and not from the Hebrew. In fact, for at least a couple of centuries it was also the Bible of the Jews in Palestine and in Alexandria. Perhaps Mr. Logan knows where the Hebrew Bible, that from which the Septuagint was made, was during that time, for nobody else does.

In any case, Hebrew has two words for "young woman" — *bethulah* and *almah*. *Bethulah* means in addition a "virgin". But the word in Isaiah is *almah*; and so, as the Gospel writers wanted to rope in the story as given by Isaiah, which they evidently did not understand, for it has no more to do with a prophecy of Jesus than it has with marmalade, they swallowed the faulty translation in the

This Believing World

As far back as 1928 the question of putting up a statue to Robert Owen in Newton was discussed, and this was at last done a few weeks ago. The statue and a commemorative plaque were unveiled by Lord Williams, who is the President of the Co-operative Union. Owen is rightly described as one of the greatest of Welshmen, and Lord Williams gave a most eulogistic account of Owen's work as a social and factory reformer, educationalist, and philanthropist. Indeed, he went further, for he "denied that Owen had no religion" — and "no one who loved his fellow men and little children as he did could be other than a Christian".

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It was easy for Lord Williams to make these assertions, for not one of his audience would ask for proof, or would even take the trouble to find out what Owen really thought of Christianity. For him, *all* religions were false, and not only was he an out-and-out determinist but, as far as it was possible in his day, he was an atheist. And he wanted — these are his own words — "to terminate for ever the order of the priesthood". In truth, he considered that "the intellects of men have been deranged" through believing (among other things) "that there is a Being who made and who governs the universe and all within it". Owen may be a great Welshman, but he was also an utter unbeliever.

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And for the record, there was his son, Robert Dale Owen, who in his debate with O. Bachelor made mincemeat of that Christian's arguments on God and the Bible. He was also the author of *Moral Physiology*, one of the first pamphlets advocating contraception, and for publishing which, a Christian court sentenced 70-year-old Edward Truelove to four month's imprisonment. But poor Lord Williams is only following the modern trend of turning, for example, Thomas Paine, Bradlaugh, and Blatchford into genuine Christians "without their knowing it". It is, of course, pitiable, but then that is the Christian way.

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The "Daily Mirror" tells its millions of readers that "Britain, possibly due to its climate, has always been a breeding ground for prigs, prudes and crashing bores". Fudge! The big cause for all this is the one true religion straight from Jesus Christ and the Bible — Christianity. In fact, the *D.M.* actually admits this when we are also told that "they spawn in our old public schools and in the damp cloisters of far flung cathedrals". And it further adds to our contention when it quotes the "Scrooges" — people like the Rev. D. Soper, the Rev. J. C. Gibson, and Prof. Burleigh of the Church of Scotland, against Premium Bonds.

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Even at this day there are millions of Methodists who never play cards, never go to a theatre or cinema, never drink beer, and would scorn to raise a laugh on the Lord's Day. Is not "our Lord" the greatest anti-gambler the world has ever seen? And are not most of our religious M.P.s bitterly opposed to Premium Bonds? It is not climate but Christianity which has made so many people prudes, prigs and bores.

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In the U.S.A., the Knights of Columbus keep up a spate of advertising which proves that it is almost as easy to sell religion this way as it is to sell slimming tablets. One of their latest headings is, "But do you really *understand* the Bible?" — and they rightly point out that as the Christian world is "divided into conflicting opinions", and "learned

Bible scholars take different meanings from the same words", the Bible is not quite as "simple and clear" as some people think. Any old how, the only body which really understands the Bible is, of course, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Knights offer to prove this with a pamphlet — which we make bold to declare will *not* contain the heretical admissions found buried in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

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The truth is that if only people will read the Bible as they would any secular book they would have no difficulty in "understanding" it. It is a collection of fairy tales and myths; there is literally no history whatever in it except for a few "kings" of Israel and Judah, and perhaps in the story of "Jewish" prisoners of war taken into captivity. But one thing can be said for it — the Bible has been and still is the source of all the Churches' wealth. It is still the greatest money spinner in the world. And it will continue to filch money from the faithful so long as people believe in the Knights of Columbus and similar pious bodies.

"I CHALLENGE"

(Concluded from page 199)

Greek, which is *parthénos*, a virgin. Jesus had to be like so many other pagan deities, born of a virgin; and utterly misunderstanding the Isaiah story, and seeing the word *parthénos*, they must have whooped for joy at the way God himself provided such a wonderful prophecy in the Holy Bible of the Jews. Had they known any Hebrew, they would never have dared to use it. And from the day the Jews were given a Hebrew Bible, they have never ceased to protest against the falsification in the Septuagint.

And so we come at last to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* which, it may surprise even some of our own readers to learn, was an attempt to tell as much truth as was possible by Catholic scholars — and many of them were really scholars. So here is the quotation which will (I hope) further shock Mr. Logan:

Modern theology does not grant that Isaiah vii, 14, contains a real prophecy fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ; it must maintain therefore that St. Matthew misunderstood the passage when he said: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, etc. (C.E. xv. 451).

Here it is clear that the *C.E.* recognises that "modern theology" admits Matthew made a mistake.

As I pointed out in my article on Prophecy, there are no prophecies whatever in the Hebrew Bible of a Saviour called Jesus Christ except those put in by European translators in fraudulent headings. The pious hopes of the Jews for another David or a descendant of David were never fulfilled. And no persecution, even with gas chambers and torture, by the gentle followers of Jesus, ever made them think differently.

I am sure Mr. Logan will still pin his hopes for Grace and a Hereafter on quotations from the Septuagint. As Mrs. Margaret Knight so eloquently put it — we cannot hope to do anything with his type of mentality; only with those "on the fringe" so to speak. It is as well, for some "converts" would not be worth having.

—NEXT WEEK—

HOW THE BIBLE RATES WOMEN

THE FREETHINKER

41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. 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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.
Bristol (The Downs).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m. Mr. D. Shipper (Cardiff) Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.; Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
Orpington Humanist Group.—Sunday, June 24th: Ramble. Meet at Sevenoaks Station, 11.26 a.m. Train leaves Charing Cross, 10.34 a.m., Orpington 11.10 a.m.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.
West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: Various speakers.

INDOOR

London Anarchist Group (Malatesta Club, 32 Percy Street, W.1).—Sunday, June 24th, 7.30 p.m.: KAPILAVADDHIO BIKKHU, "Anarchism and Buddhism".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 17th, 11 a.m.: J. SONNTAG (Editor, the *Jewish Chronicle*), "British Jewry Today".

Notes and News

MR. E. G. MACFARLANE, a schoolmaster of Dundee, who has contributed to these columns, has made a vigorous protest to the Dundee City authorities against an intended official parade of schoolchildren under their teachers on part of the Queen's route when she visits Dundee. Mr. Macfarlane demands exemption from "duty", and also protests from the standpoint of a parent (he is withdrawing his children) and as a citizen who regards the affair as monarchist propaganda.

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THE Friendship Liberal League of Philadelphia announces the purchase of a Thomas Paine Memorial Centre, which is to house the offices of the League. It will also be used for reading rooms, a library, forums, and serve generally as a freethought cultural centre in the area. It will open in September.

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With the affiliation of the League for Religious Freedom of New York and the Freie Gemeinde of St. Louis, the youngest as well as the oldest freethought societies in America have joined forces with the American Rationalist

Federation. The nine charter member groups of the American Rationalist Federation are: Freisinnige Gemeinde of Chicago, Freie Gemeinde of Milwaukee, Jefferson Freethought Society of Milwaukee, Pioneers of Independent Thought of Chicago, Czech Rationalist Federation of Chicago, Friendship Liberal League of Philadelphia, League for Religious Freedom of New York City, Freie Gemeinde of St. Louis, Rationalist Society of St. Louis.

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THAT brave old champion of the beauties of South London—as against those of North London—William Margrie, has again issued in a well-printed volume, his *Poets of Peckham*, which can be had from 24 Nigel Road, Peckham Rye, London, S.E.15, price 5s. It has had appreciative eulogies from Robert Lynd, Wilfred Whitten and Eric Wainwright (duly reproduced) and is full of good things in rhyme and jingle, not only by the 80-year-old London explorer himself (Mr. Margrie is President of the London Explorers' Club) but by other South Londoners. We wonder how many of our older readers remember his *Maggots and Men* and *Roses and Kippers* which, before the war, delighted us with their wit and humour? South Londoners should rally around their veteran champion and enjoy his unpretentious little work.

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OUR well-known contributor, William Kent, who, apart from his excursions into other subjects, is one of the foremost authorities on London, wishes to return to London and would like to get into touch with any reader who knows of some rooms to let. Mr. Kent has been quietly living in the country nursing a return to health and is most anxious to get back to work. His present address is Culpho Cottage, Islington, via St. Germans, King's Lynn, Norfolk.

Review

THE SPRING NUMBER of *The Plain View*, edited by H. J. Blackham (2s. 6d., from 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8), is a particularly interesting number because it deals in four closely reasoned chapters with the philosophies of the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties, and with contemporary society as a whole. It takes the point of view that "the old polar opposites" are more or less obsolete. Where do we find Anglican v. Calvinist and Papist; Whig v. Tory; Conservative v. Radical; Tractarian v. Liberal; Free Trader v. Protectionist; Socialist v. Tory Democrat; Rationalist v. Christian? Some of these "opposites" no doubt do still function violently here and there, but with nothing, for the most part, of their original evangelistic fervour.

It would be a very difficult task to epitomise in a paragraph or two these clever articles which may well be angrily denounced by some partisans even though they appear to the present reviewer full of sweet reasonableness. We are all Socialists now, or even Tories, may be true—in parts; but of course there is a wide cleavage in other parts. The curious reader is well advised to find out for himself exactly where all the parties in our modern society can agree, and in this he will find much in this number of *The Plain View*.

As usual, it also contains some first class reviews of important books even though one cannot always agree with the reviewer. The guiding motif in *The Plain View* is Humanism, and a very good one it is. H.C.

"Much that passes for religion to-day is absolute nonsense, and is being rightly rejected by a generation whose passion for truth and scientific accuracy is most stimulating".—Rev. Huxley Williams, Christ Church, Brondesbury, London.

Ido — A Second Language for All.

By TOM LANG

DOES the ordinary man need a world-language? In fact only a small proportion of the earth's people have so far taken the trouble to learn an international language. Why is this? I think the reason is that the average man has not yet realised the immense advantages which a world-language would bring—increased understanding and friendship between all peoples, a world-cinema, a world broadcasting system transmitting in the world-tongue, the whole world's literature made available to all mankind. And, above all, the saving of countless years now wasted on the study of natural — and dead! — languages at school (mostly neglected and forgotten after leaving school).

The international language movement has been built by far-sighted people who see the ultimate, as well as the present, advantages to be gained by adoption of a world-language. It is often difficult to persuade the man-in-the-street to learn a world-language, because he may expect too much in the way of an immediate practical return for his effort. Actually there is a great deal of value in learning a world-language *now*. Firstly, we prove the practicability of the world-language, producing evidence to convince the Governments and peoples of the world that this is a highly practical proposal. Secondly, we open up for ourselves wider horizons, making possible personal contacts and pen-friendships with Freethinkers and others across the seas. Thirdly, we can enjoy the considerable literature and interesting magazines available in the world-language.

What Kind of World-Language?

Let us consider what are the features which we should require in the world-language. First of all, neutrality. Only a neutral language, as distinct from a national language, will command the support of all nations and peoples. There is not the remotest chance of English, or any other national tongue, ever becoming a second language for all.

The second requirement is, I suggest, internationality. By that, I mean that in choosing the words of the language, we should select for each meaning a root which most closely resembles the one understood by most people. For instance, the word for "Wind" in the German, English, French, Italian and Spanish languages respectively is WIND, WIND, VENT, VENTO, VIENTO. Hence we can derive the international word VENTO, easily understood by all the peoples concerned. The languages of Europe have far more in common than many people realise, owing to their descent from the same parent-language. This factor greatly aids the construction of a planned world-language, with an easy-to-learn vocabulary based on the major languages of Europe.

The third feature we require is regularity and order. The horrors of noun declensions and irregular verbs are painful necessities in Latin, but we gleefully scrap them in the world-language. All frills, irregularities and ambiguities are cut out, so that the world-language can be learnt in about one-sixth the time needed to learn a national language.

Fourthly, only the 26 letters of the English alphabet should be used, and the complications of new invented letters, with or without accents, should be avoided. The world-language needs to be simple and straightforward. The words should be spelt as pronounced, and the language should sound pleasant and euphonious.

The Development of Ido

After studying many systems, I am satisfied that Ido

meets all these requirements and fully merits adoption as the world-language. When its predecessor Esperanto was invented, it was a big step forward from the primitive schemes previously proposed. But Esperanto was the work of one man — Dr. Zamenhof, a fine idealist and world-language pioneer — but still only one man, who could hardly be expected to produce the world-language in its final perfected form. The world-language Ido is, however, far from being the work of any one man. Ido was adopted by the "Delegation for the Adoption of an Auxiliary International Language", an international committee of scholars and linguists, after long and searching consideration of the problem. Among the eminent members of the delegation were Prof. Otto Jespersen (University of Copenhagen), Prof. W. Ostwald (Nobel Prize-winner for Chemistry), and the mathematician Prof. Louis Couturat of Paris.

Under the direction of the *Akademio di Ido* the world-language has been further improved and developed since its adopted by the delegation. New words have been added as found necessary, minor improvements have been made, until today there is a stable language with a full vocabulary for every modern need.

Advantages of Ido

Ido has no accented letters, and so can be printed with ordinary types, written on any typewriters, and telegraphed to any place in the world. Ido has no arbitrary or invented words — all words are taken from the major European languages to give the maximum range of internationality. Some 70 to 80 per cent. of Ido words are intelligible to an English speaking person at first sight.

Ido has streamlined the earlier forms of world-language, and has reduced grammatical rules to the minimum. A main principle of the language is UNA-SENCESES, that is, each word has one fixed meaning, for ambiguity in a world-language would be inexcusable. Each prefix and suffix also has one fixed meaning, so that from each root-word a "family" of derived words is obtained by using prefixes and suffixes, e.g., ADMIR-O, admiration; ADMIR-AR, to admire; ADMIR-ANTO, admirer; INSTRUKT-AR, to instruct; INSTRUKT-ISTO, instructor; INSTRUKT-IVA, instructive.

Ido has abolished the accented letters of Esperanto, has widened the vocabulary to meet modern needs, and has adopted the most international word-forms. So far as it is possible to make a language simple, consistent and logical, this has been done in Ido.

It is interesting to compare the earlier language Esperanto with the modernised and more international world-language Ido — as in the short passage rendered below in both languages.

Esperanto:

Mi ricevis viajn proponojn por liveroj kaj viajn specimenojn, kaj sajn asoj tre kontentigaj. Mi ne satas forlasi miajn kutimajn liverantojn kun kiuj mi havis generalajn longajn kaj agrablajn rilatojn; sed car la prezoj kiujn vi prezentas estas iom pli malaltaj, mi mendas per tiu el letero cent risojn da papero, kaj eble mi estos estonte ebla sendi al vi mendojn por pluaj mercajoj.

Ido:

Me recevis vua propozi por furnisi e vua specimene, qui omna semblas tre kontentigiva. Me ne prizas abandonar mea kustumala furnisanti kun qui me havis generale longed agrebla relati; ma pro ke la preci quin vu ofras es

kelke plu basa, me komendas per ica letro cent rismi de papero; a forsan me povos future sendar a vu komendi por plusa vari.

Ido is supported and diffused by a strong Ido movement centred on LA UNIONO POR LA LINGUO INTERNACIONA IDO, with headquarters in Belgium. The usefulness of Ido is shown by the large number of national Ido sections and groups, a considerable Ido literature, and a variety of magazines and journals published wholly or partly in Ido.

Further information will be supplied on request by the Hon. Secretary, International Language (IDO) Society of Great Britain, 25 Oakwood Drive, Leeds, 8.

[We have now had three articles on International Language, one for Interlingue, one for Esperanto and one for Ido; and there, for the time being, the matter must rest. —Ed.]

REVIEW

"Love in the South Seas"

By BENGT DANIELSSON (translated by F. H. Lyon). George Allen and Unwin. 16s. net.

IN SPITE of its title and sensuously suggestive dust-jacket, this book is not an ephemeral romance but a purely scientific narrative, the result of an immense amount of research in ancient manners and customs of the Polynesians, with present-day observations by the author. He had been the only Swedish member of the remarkable Kon-Tiki Expedition; their raft was wrecked on the Karoia coral reef, and two years later the author returned to Karoia. He tells us:

"Faced with the many contradictory views on Polynesian culture and the number of obvious errors in the literature of the subject, one inevitably asks oneself whether there is any possibility of finding one's way to the truth and establishing what conditions were like in the old days. It is particularly difficult to get a clear picture of the natives' sex and family life. The British anthropologist Williamson calls the material we have at our disposal on this subject 'contradictory and confusing'... The cause of this unexpected hiatus in South Sea literature can hardly be bigotry, for few modern anthropologists suffer from this complaint, but is rather an easily understood reluctance to face the practical difficulties and the long task of collecting and analysing all the material required for a study of this kind. I myself should probably never have dared to undertake it if my curiosity to find out what conditions really had been like in the good (or bad) old times had not been stimulated by the continual conflict between Polynesian and European ideas of life of which I had so often been a witness at different places in Polynesia where I had lived. This book, therefore, has in a way come about of itself, and even if it has not taken me more than a year to write it, I can say without exaggeration that I have consciously or unconsciously been preparing and collecting material for it during my studies and travels in the South Seas in the last seven years."

This quotation is given to introduce a scholarly informative work with a purpose — which is presented in so lucid and fascinating a style that there is not a dull page in it. The author's account of the mischief made by meddling Christian missionaries — mostly of the Calvinistic and Roman Catholic brands — will be readily appreciated by all Freethinkers. All the author's statements are verified by references listed at the end of the volume and the work is enriched by numerous illustrative plates. The last chapter, entitled "Something for Us", should afford much encouragement to those of us who are against the unnatural marriage system in this country. He concludes:

"The most conspicuous difference between conditions in Polynesia and in the West is the islanders' appreciative attitude towards sexuality. This, unfortunately, is most unusual with us. While in Polynesia religion and sexuality live happily side by side, our Christian churches have often branded the sexual impulse as something base and sinful... this idea still determines the action of an astonishing number of people... As the sexual impulse is strongest in youth, and in our modern

society most young men have to wait too long before marrying on account of the long training for their professions, the demand for absolute continence is unreasonably severe — which is proved by being so little obeyed.

"Further, it is in the highest degree illogical to demand of a person that he or she shall be continent up to marriage, and then suddenly, almost overnight, become a skilful lover. Strict continence, therefore, is seldom an ideal preparation for married life. It is, of course, impossible to give complete freedom to young people, as in Polynesia, in a society where venereal diseases rage, maintenance difficulties are great, and so-called illegitimate children are a serious problem, to name only some of the obstacles. But it should be possible openly to allow a restricted and conditional freedom when preventive technique has once been perfected. The risk of such an experiment degenerating into anti-social promiscuity seems decidedly less than the dangers caused by the present secretiveness."

Equally, or even more, important is our author's claim for extra-marital liberty.

"Can it be that the many divorces, separations and infidelities of today are due mainly to our form of marriage being so onerous, and to the profound need of change in every individual not being provided for? As we in the West have now been trying for nearly two thousand years, without any appreciable success, to act in accordance with the Christian moral code of marriage, it is perhaps time to try the other alternative, i.e., to adapt our moral code rather better to human necessities. To allow certain regular extra-marital connections, in the Polynesian style, may perhaps seem to be a dangerous concession which could easily lead to complete moral dissolution. I wonder, all the same, if the gulf that now yawns between doctrine and actual life is not much more dangerous, as the result is clearly nothing but falsity, hypocrisy and contempt for accepted standards. A rather freer moral code which is observed must, from all points of view, be preferable to strict rules which are constantly broken.

"Where so many abuses exist, surely radical measures are needed. If anyone should doubt this, it is enough to recall such well-known facts as that the number of divorces and illegitimate children is continually increasing, that unfaithfulness is growing more and more common, that thousands of illegal abortions are undertaken annually and that rape and frigidity are serious problems."

The author's last words make clear the purpose and aim of his book:

"But before we try to carry through any reforms we must first obtain a better knowledge of the causes of these abuses, and this knowledge can only be acquired by profound studies of the sex and family life in our own and other societies. It is just because customs and ideas in Polynesia are so unlike those existing in our society that a study of them will particularly well help us to see the problems in a new light and give us fresh ideas for solving them."

This is no work for puritans and prudes, but for healthy-minded Freethinkers and Free Lovers. ELLA TWYNAM.

Facts for Freethinkers XI

THE SPANISH CONCORDAT

A SOLEMN CONCORDAT was on August 27th, 1953 signed at Rome and Madrid between the Vatican and Franco, and it now governs the relations between the R.C. Church and the Spanish State. Contracting party for the former was Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli, formerly Papal Secretary of State under Pius XI, and previously Papal Nuncio in Munich and Berlin, a professional diplomatist), who appointed as his representative and signatory the pro-Secretary of State for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. For Spain the contracting party was Gen. Franco, formerly commander of the Spanish Legion in Morocco, who led a successful rebellion against the second Spanish Republic (1931-6) and was victor in the Civil War of 1936-9. He appointed as his signatories his Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Spanish Ambassador at the Vatican.

A previous Concordat between the Spanish Monarchy and the Vatican was signed in 1851 but was abrogated by the Republic of 1931.

The present Concordat may almost be styled medieval, so completely does it integrate the Spanish nation with the Church, and so extensive are the privileges that it concedes to the R.C. Church. It is the highwater mark of the present Catholic offensive against modern secular civilisation. Cardinal Wolsey or Thomas à Becket would have thoroughly approved of it.

In Article 1 the R.C. Church is explicitly recognised as "the only religion of the Spanish nation", and is to be treated as such.

Articles 2, 3, 4 and 5 guarantee official recognition of the Church in Spain and recognise it as a "perfect society"; that is, one fully competent in its own sphere, its decrees to be enforced by the State and its feast days to be observed as public holidays.

Other Articles regulate the mutual relations between Church and State. The Spanish hierarchy is to be appointed after consultation between the Vatican and the Spanish Government. Divorce and civil marriage are forbidden. Catholic education is compulsory in all schools and colleges. All publications contrary to Catholic dogma and morals are forbidden. The clergy are exempt from military service and the criminal courts can only try clerics with the permission of the Bishop. Provision is made for religious teaching over the air. The State recognises Catholic Action.

Non-Catholic religions are governed by three clauses. In Addendum 7 to Article 6: "The profession and practice of the Catholic Religion, which is that of the Spanish State, shall enjoy official protection. No one shall be molested for his religious beliefs or in the private practice of his worship. No other external ceremonies or manifestations other than those of the Catholic Religion shall be permitted."

Article 27 contains this: "The children of non-Catholic parents shall be dispensed from such lessons [i.e. Catholic teaching] at the request of their parents or guardians." An amendment to Article 1 allows the legal toleration of the Muslim religion in Spanish Africa.

On October 26th, 1953, Franco addressed a special message to the Spanish Parliament on the Concordat, which concluded by stating that its fundamental purpose was "to ensure a fruitful collaboration for the greatest good of the religious and civil life of the Spanish nation". F.A.R.

THE BBC AND ATHEISM

Further Developments

THE EXCLUSION of the N.S.S. General Secretary's talk from the TV programme "We the British" has, we are pleased to note, received mention in the press. Letters from Mr. McCall were printed in *The New Statesman and Nation* (June 2nd) and *The Observer* (June 3rd), while *The Socialist Leader* (June 2nd) also made reference to the affair. *The New Statesman* has subsequently printed an article entitled "Religion on the Air" by Mrs. Margaret Knight and a letter signed by Messrs. J. Reeves, M.P. (Rationalist Press Association), H. J. Blackham (Ethical Union) and J. Henry Lloyd (Humanist Council). And the same three signatories contributed a similar letter to *The Observer* (June 17th) above a second one by Mr. McCall replying to a critic. Then the earlier editions of the *Daily Mail* of June 2nd brought the story to a rather different public—the public, in fact, at whom Mr. McCall's original talk was aimed. Mr. Philip Purser, the *Daily Mail* TV critic, reported a conversation with the Secretary under the

heading "BBC barred us on television say atheists". After stating the facts about the talk and its exclusion, Mr. Purser continued:

Said Mr. McCall yesterday: "We were very excited at the prospect. It would have been the first time we have been given an opportunity to reach the viewing public with our opinions. Non-believers throughout Britain arranged to look in. I invited all my atheist friends to view with me. We sat right through the programme and listened to the Bishop and all the other religious speakers. My talk never came."

"I was paid five guineas for my talk, so I have no complaint on that score. My objection is moral. I think at least I might have been warned in advance that my contribution was not going to be used."

That is a faithful and fair report for which Mr. Purser and the *Daily Mail* deserve our thanks. But the final sentence revealed the attitude of the Corporation: "The BBC made no comment on his protest yesterday."

On June 12th, however, the BBC broke its silence with the following letter:

Dear Mr. McCall,

"We the British" 22nd May 1956

Mr. Rex Moorfoot is at present on leave and in his absence I am replying to your letter of 25th May.

First of all I would like to apologise for not informing you before the Television broadcast of our decision not to include your filmed statement in it. We took this decision when the programme was being finally compiled, and it was clear that there would not be time to include in it all the material we had collected. It was for this reason that several other contributions besides yours had to be omitted; but Mr. Mayhew did take account of a statement that the prevailing opinion in philosophy and amongst philosophers today was unfavourable to religion, when he reached the conclusion "that there has been a decline over recent decades in our religious faith".

With regard to the contractual position concerning your filmed statement, I understand from your letters to the Press that you appreciate that we were under no legal obligation to include your contribution. When we filmed you at Lime Grove I did try to make it clear to you that we were then only at an early stage in preparing the programme, and that it might not be possible to use it when the programme took its final shape. We were sorry to have to take this decision, and I must apologise again for not letting you know about it before the programme was broadcast.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) JEREMY MURRAY-BROWN,

Television Talks.

Since this, other popular dailies have inquired about the matter and it is possible that it will receive further notice. Rather surprisingly, it has already reached Ireland in the form of A Catholic News-Letter from London in *The Standard*, June 8th, under the heading "A Fair Deal for Atheists?" After referring to the two Catholic priests who are staff members of the BBC, the writer continues:

It is true that there are also many atheists on the staff of the BBC. But at least they are not employed as such. There is no salaried position of Atheist Adviser or Director of Atheistic Programmes.

This disgusts many of Britain's atheists, one of whom writes this week to the *Socialist New Statesman and Nation* to ask: "When will the BBC give unbelievers a square deal?"

This plaintive query comes from Mr. Colin McCall, Secretary of the National Secular Society. He says that arrangements were recently made for him "to present, briefly and simply, the case for atheism", in a BBC television programme.

But the programme was eventually presented without Mr. McCall's contribution. Instead, he says disgustedly, it became "virtually a vehicle for Christian propaganda".

The lighter side of the BBC's sanctimoniousness was revealed through the pages of *Woman's Sunday Mirror*. "Fashion compères," it announced, "at Lime Grove TV studios have been warned never again to describe a dress as 'divine'. A BBC directive says that the word must be used only to refer to the Almighty."

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