

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXVIII—No. 31

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

SOME TIME AGO I had the pleasure of reviewing in this paper an entrancing and most instructive travel book on Portugal by my esteemed friend, Oswell Blakeston. Since writing his *Portuguese Panorama*, Mr. Blakeston has extended his travels to the South Atlantic, from which has emerged a most interesting book on St. Helena, and now a new book on Finland has appeared by the same author. You have read them? Perhaps not. Then do so at once, since I do not know a contemporary author who describes his travels with so light a touch, while managing to convey such solid and often surprising information.

## Portuguese Panorama

In his Portuguese narrative, Mr. Blakeston not only gave us a fine piece of *reportage* on the flora and fauna of the Lusitanian peninsula, but also lifted the veil on the naked clerical-fascist dictatorship of that astute disciple of the Jesuits, Dr. Salazar, who has ruled this westernmost European outpost of the "free" world for the past quarter of a century with the spiritual aid of Our Lady of Fatima, who paid her most recent terrestrial visit to Portugal in 1917. Not to mention some incidental assistance from a ubiquitous political police which enjoyed the advantage in the '30's of being trained by special S.S. instructors straight from the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin. Dr. Salazar's is now the oldest established fascist regime in Europe—a clerical fascism of the Dolfuss variety in pre-war Austria rather than a secularised fascism like that sponsored by Hitler and by that other ex-pupil of the Jesuits, the late Dr. Goebbels. For, as already noted, Heaven has imparted its celestial blessing to Portugal by conferring upon that immemorably Catholic land the rare honour of a personal visitation by the Virgin Mary herself "Our Lady of (Portuguese) Fatima" in succession to "Our Lady of (French) Lourdes," who this year celebrates the centenary of her celestial apparition on the northern slopes of the Pyrenees. We may, perhaps, permit ourselves to wonder whether Our Lady of Fatima will be able to rejoice in Heaven at the centenary (A.D. 2017) of her appearance to the shepherds of Fatima? Not if some of our nuclear alarmists are to be believed!

## Our Oldest Ally

The fact that Portugal is now a fascist police-state, where the recent comic opera Presidential election was held under police supervision, does not apparently prevent the "free" British press from periodically describing Portugal as "our oldest ally," an interesting chronological allusion which Mr. Blakeston did not fail to recall. We have since been reminded of this historical fact by the recent State visit of H.M. the Queen to the Portuguese Republic, following upon the previous visit of the then Salazar nominee as President to this country. (His successor, another Salazar nominee, has just been nominated after the recent farcical election. But though all facilities were denied to the opposition candidate, General Delgado, and though his meetings were systematically broken up by the police, it is

extremely significant that even official figures gave him 25% of the total vote; it would not be surprising if he actually polled the majority.) On the occasion of the State visit of Her Britannic Majesty, the "Defender of the (Protestant) Faith," to this stronghold of political Catholicism, we were frequently reminded of the historic connections between England and Portugal, which stretch back to the 14th century to John o' Gaunt, Shakespeare's "Time-honoured Lancaster," and which include stirring episodes in the military annals of the Duke of Wellington and his "Lines of Torres Vedras" in the Peninsula War. However, I never saw any reference to a more intriguing and, perhaps, more important episode in

Anglo-Portuguese relations: I refer here to the famous Methuen Treaty (named after its British signatory, Lord Methuen) of 1702, under which port, the staple vintage of Portugal, was henceforth admitted duty-free into England, whereas French wines, hitherto fashionable in aristocratic British society, were still heavily taxed. The result of which was to work not only a revolution in the drinking habits of our old nobility, but also to produce a considerable effect upon the course of English history throughout the following century. For port induces gout, and it was from this complaint that many of England's leading statesmen died prematurely, which was not without effect upon the subsequent evolution of English history. The best known examples were the two famous Pitts, the Earl of Chatham and William Pitt the younger, both of whom descended into premature graves due to their excessive addiction to Portuguese wine. (It has even been alleged that the famous last words of the younger Pitt, "My country, how I leave my country," were, in reality, rather different and were addressed to his butler and ran, "Jenkins, more port; for God's sake, more port!")

## Port, Sardines and Our Lady of Fatima

Port, I believe, is still Portugal's principal export; but for some time past it has had to compete for this distinction with the local sardine industry, since presumably the prayers of the faithful annually lure vast shoals of these small but tasty fish into the nets of the Portuguese trawlers. Now, however, a new and most formidable competitor to Portugal's wine and sardine exports has appeared—the cult of Our Lady of Fatima, which now brings hordes of pilgrims to the obscure village where the three shepherd children saw the Holy Virgin in 1917, not once, but repeatedly during that year; and where the sun entered the acrobatic business and started careering about the sky. After an apparently shaky start, the Fatima cult is now semi-officially endorsed by Rome and has become not only theologically orthodox but extremely profitable for the poverty-stricken and backward land in which Our Lady vouchsafed to make her most recent appearance. Pilgrims come in and relics go out, no doubt to both the theological and economic satisfaction of Dr. Salazar, who was formerly a pupil of the Jesuits and a professor of

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### Port, Sardines and Our Lady of Fatima

—By F. A. RIDLEY—



economics before becoming Prime Minister in 1932. Along with 18th century port and 20th century sardines, Our Lady of Fatima is now the Third Person in Portugal's economic Trinity!

#### Muhammed and the Russian Revolution

The historical background to the Fatima apparitions is more complex and interesting than was that at Lourdes, for Fatima was named after Muhammed's daughter, presumably during the Moorish occupation of Portugal in the Middle Ages; and Fatima actually held, in the estimation of several heretical Muslim sects, a position somewhat similar to that of the Virgin Mary in Catholic theology. Was there an older Muslim cult at Fatima long before the Christian goddess appeared in that salubrious spot? It seems not impossible, though I have not so far come across any evidence for it. Did Muhammed's daughter inspire a local tradition of celestial appearances amongst the medieval Moorish inhabitants long before 1917? Pro-

bably we shall never know, but it is an interesting speculation in comparative religion. Be that as it may, the Church has known how to make political capital out of the Fatima apparitions which predicted the Russian Revolution in that self-same year. Just as at Lourdes, the celestial visitor obligingly assisted the Pope in the theological definition of the Immaculate Conception and Papal Infallibility! And in 1958, Rome is as preoccupied with Communism as it was in 1858 with Papal Infallibility. Rome does not waste its miracles! Meanwhile, due to the intercession of the Virgin of Fatima, the liberal and masonic republic which was the Portugal of 1917 is no more. In its place has come the clerical fascist regime of Salazar, which has restored the dead hand of the Church, and under which Portugal remains the poorest, most illiterate and most superstitious land in Europe. But, thanks to Our Lady, it remains "our oldest ally" and part of the "free" world!

## Neither Cold nor Hot

By LESLIE HANGER

WHEN THE UNKNOWN AUTHOR of the Book of Revelation, that work of most concern to those who understand it least, wrote his apocalypse, Laodicia was a wealthy and prosperous city. Situated at the junction of important trade routes and the centre of a very fertile district, it was famous for its money transactions and the sheep bred in the surrounding countryside, from which they produced fine soft wool which found a ready market. Close to the city was a medical school whose reputation was esteemed throughout the Roman world, and last, but by no means least, Laodicia was famed as the home of several sceptic philosophers, who held their own among the intellectual giants of their day.

It is not surprising therefore that the fiery author of the famous Apocalypse found the Laodicians lukewarm in their devotion to the new God Jesus. They saw little profit to be gained in his wishful vision of his God charging at the head of his heavenly cavalry to destroy the Roman Empire; such fratricidal strife would deal a death blow to their commerce. It were wiser to preserve the "Pax Romana" at any cost.

No doubt the sceptic philosophers had left the city with a tradition that the new religion found hard to penetrate. Scepticism questioned the possibility of any definite knowledge or religious doctrine new or old, and was reluctant in any way to accept authority or public acclamation as proving the truth of an opinion. Accepting the customs and law of the land whilst avoiding all extremes and doubting the possibility of final knowledge, they practised a mental imperturbability in search of an individual happiness that was all that could be reasonably desired.

The author of Revelation had no interest whatsoever in peace or happiness in this world. His main desire was revenge on the Roman Empire followed by the end of the world, a fitting conclusion, with the elevation of himself and those who agreed with him to the New Jerusalem. He thirsted for strife, and far from seeking the conversion of the Empire, he longed for its destruction, which he foresaw in a wishful vision. His picture of New Jerusalem was a garish and opulent city, such as a desperately poor and ignorant man would dream of, possessing none of the architectural beauty that would appeal to the artistic Greeks. Had there been some mention of a water supply or drainage system, perhaps the Laodicians would have shown more enthusiasm, but as things were, they were

inclined to prefer the reality of their own fair city to an ornate vision.

It would not be wise to praise the wisdom of the sceptical Laodicians too highly, however, bearing in mind the celebrated story concerning Phyrrho, the founder of the sceptic philosophy. Phyrrho, having the misfortune to fall into a ditch, lay supine while his disciples disputed as to the wisdom of expending energy on extracting him and finally, by use of arguments their master had taught them, decided against it, leaving Phyrrho in the ditch!

All Freethinkers are sceptics, but we must not allow our scepticism to lead to an inactive or negative tolerance or we shall be left in a ditch of our own making. The Laodicians who were neither hot nor cold were first overwhelmed by the much hotter Christians and finally destroyed by the still more fiery Turks. Scepticism was not enough; men of tolerance and restraint were overwhelmed and forgotten in the debacle of the collapse of Roman civilisation. Only a chance reference has kept alive the memory of the Laodicians.

Were Freethinkers to adopt dogmas and a set creed they would find organisation a much easier task, but to do so would destroy the very reason for their existence. Freethinkers are faced with the very difficult problem of forming a strong yet flexible policy that will give their organisation a firm basis without making it impervious to new ideas or narrowing its scope and appeal.

Unlike our "St. John the Divine," we must not expect to find our New Jerusalem descending out of the skies in our lifetime. Our path to victory will be long and progress slow; hard work and patience combined with scepticism must formulate a progressive and evolutionary policy backed by a militant spirit.

### BIBLE QUIZ

1. Who fixed the headings of the chapters in the Authorised Version?
2. Give the titles of the Bibles so named from typographical errors.
3. Give the titles of the Bibles named after persons.
4. Which is the longest chapter in the Bible and the shortest?
5. How often does the word Jehovah occur in the Bible? Is the number in hundreds or in thousands?

(Answers on page 247)



# The Plays of Nigel Dennis

By G. H. TAYLOR

*Two Plays and a Preface*, by Nigel Dennis (1958: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson. 224 pages. 18s. net). Obtainable from the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.

REVIEWING the Royal Court Theatre production of *The Making of Moo* in these pages last August, I said: "Religious people for years to come are going to be very angry with this satire." That phase is now in progress. The play opened at a handsome new theatre off Broadway, the Rita Allen Theatre, on June 11th, as its baptismal production. Some of the reviewers attached to mass-circulation newspapers immediately brought out the usual splenetic adjectives, so that readers in their millions should know that their regular paper was still on the side of Jesus and taking no chances with any anti-religious ticket, especially in these days when such a ticket can so easily be confused with Communism. However, Brooks Atkinson, perhaps on Broadway the most influential of these critics, saw possibilities with a stronger cast, and the extent of his condemnation was that "Nigel Dennis is being beastly about religion." I doubt if the playwright would deny it. It is rather a beastly subject.

The tastefully produced volume under review contains the two plays Nigel Dennis has already written (one senses that there are more in the oven) and a Shavian-style preface of some fifty pages from which THE FREETHINKER has already been privileged to reproduce extracts (THE FREETHINKER, March 7th, April 11th, May 16th). But the Preface should be read in its entirety as an integral part of the book, a dramatic essay which lights up the author's original outlook.

The first of these plays, *Cards of Identity*, is the dramatised version of the novel which had quite a champagne reception at the hands of such newspapers as *The Times*, the *Sunday Times* and *The Observer*, among others. As a play, the scenes cleverly alternate between Upstairs and Downstairs, the inhabitants of the latter being those whose identity has been changed by the former. It is as though we are taken on a swing in and out of the "Libido" region. Upstairs, the Conference of the Identity Club sparkles with dramatic ingenuity, the changing situations touched off with wit and maintained at a high level of humour. A distinguishing characteristic of Nigel Dennis is the facility with which he conquers tragedy with a laugh.

Several people who saw *Cards of Identity* on the stage have remarked to me on the dramatic effect of the lengthy speech by the whisky-priest, Father Golden Orfe. In it occurs this gem: "You see in me a great sinner. He is clinging to the Cross. Nearly all the great sinners nowadays cling to the Cross. We hope that if the Cross could speak it would say, 'This supports me more than it supports you.'"

Both these plays offer fine opportunities to the players and to the producers. If these opportunities are taken, and the playwright's purposes correctly interpreted, there follows an intellectual banquet for the audience and the flavouring is of humour and wit.

As the first no-holds-barred satire on religion to be shown on the Western stage, *The Making of Moo* is ruthlessly blasphemous; any producer who either tried to tone it down, or to spoil it by clowning, would be doing a grave disservice to his art. For these characters become fanatically serious people, going about their bloody business in grim earnest. The laughter is in the audience, not in

the characters. The Moovites are not *trying* to be funny; they *are* funny. We laugh *at* them, not *with* them, in the spectacular second act which created so much controversy when the London production was running.

These characters are somewhat of the Shavian type, serving the purposes of the dramatist, and certainly not less credible than Shaw's. Some critics have expressed surprise that they could have become so murderous between Act I and Act II; these people should read the sub-title, "A History of Religion." That all the evolution of Mooism should take place in one generation is one of the privileges of the stage. Nigel Dennis is an atheist who regards all religions as just a lot of Moo, and his play is a condensation and caricature. What is permissible in T. S. Eliot and Grahame Greene cannot be denied when it is done from the other angle. Eliot's religious heroine is martyred nude on an ant heap. Are devotees so martyred? Not very often, one imagines. Ycet it is as forgiveable as Nigel Dennis's Holy Frederick who dips his finger in the splashing bucket of human blood. And the horror is set against laughter. *The Making of Moo*, said Kenneth Tynan in his *Observer* review, brings for the first time the full gaiety of blasphemy to the stage.

Some of the American critics have displayed appalling ignorance of what the play is about, regarding it as a sort of carnival piece for the Students' Rag Day. The fault here is that freethought propaganda is not sufficiently widespread. The dissemination of freethought could create a cultural milieu in which the play would be not only excellently received, but also excellently understood.

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## Wisdom Well

Leave me, O comical little men, with your talk about eternity; go and try to live a single happy and rational day.—JAMES THOMSON ("B.V.")

"Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,  
Wearing out life's evening grey;  
Strike thy bosom, Sage, and tell  
What is bliss, and which the way.

"Thus I spoke, and speaking sigh'd,  
Scarce repress'd the starting tear,  
When the hoary sage reply'd,  
Come, my lad, and drink some beer."

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

It has been repeated often enough that vice leads to misery; will no man declare that misery leads to vice?

—LANDOR.

Despite the philosopher who, as a genuine Englishman, tried to bring laughter into bad repute in all thinking minds, I would even allow myself to rank philosophers according to the quality of their laughing—up to those who are capable of *golden* laughter.—NIETZSCHE.

Life is too serious to be taken seriously.—CHAPMAN COHEN.



## This Believing World

**It had to come, of course**—that blessed word "Unity" in a TV programme. Mr. Anthony Greenwood, M.P., an ardent Methodist himself, questioned on the ITV religious programme the other Sunday three Bishops—the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Bishop of Western New York, and the Bishop of Kurunagala (Ceylon)—on "Why so many Churches"? And, to their credit, all three bravely faced the problem, all regretted it, and none produced any answer. Nor did Mr. Greenwood. Of course, it *may* be a good thing to see the many-sided Jesus in his many different Churches, but perhaps *if* only the Churches would unite. . . . If we may be allowed a comment, there is just as much chance of East and West uniting in the political field as there is of the Christian Churches uniting in the religious one. Fancy Calvinism and Romanism uniting!

★

**But "unity" or not, the Churches are not dead**, according to another three Bishops dealing with this question on ITV. They are certain that the Churches were never more alive. One of them indeed claimed he used to attend Free-thought meetings in his youth—but where were Free-thinkers now? It is they who are dead these days. These Bishops mostly minister to "native" races and they know as much about Freethought as the humblest illiterate coolie. That is, they know nothing at all about it. What a pity that ITV *dare not* invite them to meet Freethinkers in an unscripted programme.

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**For twelve years, according to the "Sunday Pictorial,"** Pastor Kemp, the Minister in charge at All Souls' Church, Wolverhampton, fooled his congregation that he was fully ordained, a Bachelor of Arts, and a Doctor of Divinity; and he managed to borrow a few tidy sums from some of his adoring parishioners as well, which may never be returned. In addition, scores of people have been married in the church. Are they legally married? Of course. Says the *S.P.*—"All the marriages are legal because a registrar was present." It's the registrar who makes the marriages legal, not the Church—not, indeed, *any* Church.

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**The "Daily Express" which**, like most newspapers, often has some sound common-sense things to say on topical subjects, but, also like many of our newspapers, fails miserably when invading the field of theology. The other day, commenting on the Bishop of Coventry's words, "Our ability to communicate the Gospel is weak; a 1958 approach is needed," the *D.E.* said, "The language of the Bible is strong, vigorous and timeless. But the language used by clergymen is often vague and pompous." Many things in the Bible are undoubtedly strong and vigorous—but "timeless"? Is the strict injunction, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"—is that "timeless"? Is the story of Jesus being carried up in the air by a Devil and put on the pinnacle of the Temple—is that "timeless"?

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**The truth is, of course**, our clergymen simply *dare not* preach the Bible as it stands. They have to be "vague," for it would never do to let modern 1958 people see the imbecilities with which the Precious Word is packed. A real 1958 approach would make mincemeat of the Gospels. Does the Bishop of Coventry really believe that when Jesus was crucified, crowds of Jewish "saints" arose from their graves and went back to their one-time homes and relatives? Does even the pious *Daily Express* believe that nonsense?

**Discussing the question of atom-bombs** and the destruction of the world, the Archbishop of Canterbury has written: "There is no evidence that the human race is to last for ever, and plenty in Scripture to the contrary effect." Quite true, perhaps, but it is no consolation for the still living to be told that they might all be wiped out with bombs *now*. However, Dr. Fisher had to drag in Jesus somehow, so he added: "I am not being unfeeling. Christ in His Crucifixion showed us how to suffer creatively."

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**This wonderful sentiment** should help us to bear our extinction with equanimity. Think of it, we ought now to be pleased because Christ taught us to suffer "creatively." We do not profess to know what this typical Christian "vagueness" means, or even if it has any meaning at all. Is it not sheer nonsense, even though uttered by our premier Archbishop?

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**So the Pope, following thousands** of other priests through the ages, exalts virginity in women above everything else; and knowing the warped mind of so many celibates, we need not be surprised. But where would the Popes and their priests come from if all women were to agree with him? We might never have had Christ Jesus, or his Apostles, or even the Church Fathers and the Jesuits. It is really too shocking to think about. However, the women backsliders might have produced . . . our nuns, so saddened and even miserable! Would that be the aim of virginity?

### FOR NEWCOMERS

#### Christian Arguments

*Many Atheists were no doubt once Christians. Yet just as a man may lose his physical sight, so he may lose his spiritual sight, and the result is that he becomes an Atheist.*

The man who becomes physically blind does not deny that there are things to be seen. He does not say that what he previously saw was not real but only an illusion. How, then, could the Atheist deny the existence of what he had already experienced? The truth is: the Atheist does not become "spiritually blind," but simply grows out of the God-belief just as one grows out of the belief in Santa Claus.

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*In pretending to disbelieve in God the Atheist is lying to himself in order to justify reckless and unethical behaviour.*

Now, what possible motive can there be in pretending not to believe in something which has terrible powers of vengeance and reward? To know that such a Being exists, and then deliberately to give it offence, just does not make sense. In any case, unbelievers compare most favourably with believers—when we look at the prison statistics.

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*The Christian religion took doctrinal shape in the hands of the Christian Fathers, who were nearer to the divine events than we are. Do you think you know better than they?*

Frankly, yes. The difference between what they knew and what is known today is contained in the whole story of our civilisation bringing knowledge of which the Christian Fathers had not the slightest inkling. What could they know of Biblical research, travel, biological evolution or astronomy?

G.H.T.

### NEXT WEEK

#### MIRACLES GALORE

By H. CUTNER



# THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s.; half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. (In U.S.A.: 13 weeks, \$1.15; 26 weeks, \$2.25; 52 weeks, \$4.50.)

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY and CORINA.
- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.
- London, March Arch.—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

## Notes and News

A RECENT documentary at the National Film Theatre, London, showed a typical day's activity at Lourdes. The second part of a trilogy on "Lourdes and its Miracles," called the "Pilgrimage," was well worth seeing, though distressing to any sensitive nature. There was, of course, the simple, touching faith of the horribly crippled, pitiful creatures on the stretchers and trolleys. By contrast was the complete matter-of-factness of the attendants and the clergy. Has the sacrament gone right in the shivering, quivering mouth? The priest peers closer down the throat. O.K.? Then on to the next. The long line of trolleys makes its way to the *piscines*, dividing into two streams according to sex. And, into the baths, where half a dozen ladies douse the females (from babies to the aged) and half a dozen men douse the males. Shrieks (the water must be cold!), Kiss the Madonna (or should we say "Immaculate Conception") and then, away and next please! Meanwhile a man kisses the spot where Bernadette prayed; hymns are sung, responses chanted; the day proceeds. At night comes the real spectacle. On comes the neon lighting, outlining the basilica; the candles are all lit and the singing, candle-light procession begins; a myriad lights zig-zagging their way in the darkness. The grand finale to the day. Tomorrow? It will be the same: the twisted, spindly legs, the quivering lips, the dousing, the singing and the praying. Faith, they say, can move mountains; certainly it can build them.

COMPARED to Lourdes, London is something of an also ran, but St. Peter's Italian Church, Hatton Garden, held its annual procession in honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on Sunday, July 20th, and mustered a mile-long procession, thoroughly organised and complete with three-colour programmes priced 6d. "Thine we are, O Virgin, thine we wish to be." To the non-Catholic, it was, in fact, the usual colourful, nauseating spectacle.

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WE have never pretended to understand all the niceties of Catholic theology, but the Pope's recent pronouncement on virginity and marriage must, we feel sure, have put quite a strain even upon those who claim to do so. For Christian women, he said, "virginity is like living as an angel. It is a state which by its excellence is superior to that of matrimony." But, he went on—and this we cannot see—this superiority "in no way diminishes the beauty or grandeur of conjugal life." No doubt his audience of 60,000 girls of Italian Catholic Action accepted the two statements as words of wisdom. Even so, it would be interesting to discover how many of the girls, as they grow up, choose to live like angels!

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OUR friends of the Ethical Union are holding a weekend Conference at High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts., from Friday evening to Sunday, September 19th to 21st, at which the speakers will be Professor Hyman Levy, Mary Hoad, Mary Brown (of the *Daily Mirror*), H. J. Blackham and Stephen Schenk. Members of the National Secular Society and readers of THE FREETHINKER are invited to participate, the inclusive charge being 53s., or, from tea-time on Saturday, 29s. 6d. each; coach 3s. 9d. each way, if required. The full programme may be obtained from Mr. M. L. Burnet, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8.

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WITH its usual indecent haste, the Sunday press provided the public with a personal story about the latest murderer to be hanged in Britain. This time we have the *Empire News and Sunday Chronicle* to thank for serialisation of "Peter Manuel, the Son I Knew" by Mrs. Bridget Manuel. We mention it here because the first instalment (July 13th) corroborated Dr. J. V. Duhig's statement ("The Problem of Catholic Criminality," THE FREETHINKER, 4/7/58) that Manuel had "a very devout Catholic mother." When asked if she would tell the police if her son told her he had committed murder, Mrs. Manuel answered, "No... if ever Peter made such a confession, I would go out immediately and, as a devout Catholic, seek guidance from my spiritual adviser. Whatever the priest advised, I would do."

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OUR good friend in Australia, Mr. Collin Coates, is a frequent writer to the local press and to the clergy. He is particularly active in opposing every effort to introduce religious instruction into the Western Australian State school system. In a letter addressed to a clergyman he had met and, through him, to the Archbishop of Perth, he asked: "Which is it proposed to stress in what goes by the name of 'religious teaching'—the specifically religious or the moral? Ethics, he said, "should be within the competence of lay men (and women) to teach; only on matters of theology can the clergy claim to speak with any authority." Going on to show the disparities that must arise from science and theological instruction, Mr. Coates ended:

"Among the wisest words e'er said are these:  
'Man cannot climb while on his knees.'"



# Homosexuality, the Need for Reform

By D. SHIPPER

IN THE WOLFENDEN REPORT (para. 62) we find: "We accordingly recommend that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence." As I have long been in full agreement with that recommendation (and believe a majority of freethinkers are, too), I was interested to note the formation of the Homosexual Law Reform Society (Secretary, 219 Liverpool Road, London, N.1).

Having studied a summary of some of the weightier arguments in favour of legal reform, I would like to place on record my support and give some of the reasons listed by the H.L.R.S.:

1. Having studied the evidence for three years, the Wolfenden Committee agreed upon the recommendation by 12 to 1—an overwhelming majority. Every reason normally given for retaining present law is examined in detail in the Report and rejected. Fears expressed about the effects of legal reform are shown to be the result of lack of information.

2. Lesbianism, fornication and adultery are not punishable by law, but homosexuality is singled out. The Wolfenden Report emphasises that there are no grounds for regarding homosexuality as more socially harmful than these other acts and that it is unreasonable, unjust, and out of touch with modern knowledge to continue this legal discrimination.

3. Homosexuality is not a disease (again emphasised by the Wolfenden Committee) and legal reformation should consequently not lead to widespread adoption of homosexual practices. It is the sexual orientation of a minority of otherwise normal human beings, and in those countries where legal reform has been effected no increase of any kind has taken place.

4. Homosexuality has no connection with offences against juveniles. Such crimes are as likely to be committed by heterosexuals and would be unaffected by legal reform regarding the sexual choices of consenting adults. (Para. 57 of the Wolfenden Report states: "We are authoritatively informed that a man who has homosexual relations with an adult partner seldom turns to buys. . . . Our evidence, in short, indicates that the fear of the legislation of homosexual acts between consenting adults will lead to similar acts with boys has not enough evidence to justify the treatment of adult homosexual behaviour in private as a criminal offence, and suggests that it would be more likely that such a change in the law would protect boys rather than endanger them.")

5. Intelligent opinion is already firmly in favour of legal reform and the Executive and Honorary Committees of the H.L.R.S. include famous names from both the rationalist and ecclesiastical worlds, besides notabilities from many walks of life. Reform has been approved by *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Observer*, *Sunday Times*, *Reynold's News*, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Lancet*, *New Statesman*, *The Economist*, *The Spectator*, and the *Church of England Newspaper*.

6. Present law encourages blackmail and police methods often regarded by unbiased people as distasteful. The Report presented striking evidence of this, which has been confirmed by subsequent correspondence in the Press.

7. Maladjusted homosexuals most in need of expert medical attention are the ones least likely to seek it while in fear of the legal consequences. The H.L.R.S. point out

that many might be less neurotic and socially dangerous if they felt free to fully discuss their condition with those likely to help.

Medical research into causes and treatments is hampered whilst much evidence is withheld for fear of prosecution. Medical men agree that adequate treatment for homosexuals cannot be provided in prison and that the prison atmosphere is hardly conducive to a cure.

8. In view of these considerations (as well as the more technical available to modern medical research), the H.L.R.S. believe in legal reform. Further exercise of a law so many responsible people consider unjust is nothing but an indefensible continuation of an old prejudice. It is planned to appoint a deputation of experts who will offer to have discussions with the Home Secretary and to prepare an authoritative and challenging pamphlet for circulation to M.P.s and others with influence. If enough financial support is forthcoming a London office will be opened. The list of those on the Executive and Honorary Committees (still expanding) is too long for publication here, but a selection will give some idea of the breadth of representation: Prof. A. J. Ayer, the Bishop of Birmingham, Sir Robert Boothby, M.P., Phyllis Bottome, the Bishop of Bradford, Prof. C. D. Broad, Dr. J. Bronowski, Lord Chorley, Prof. G. D. H. Cole, Dr. Alex Comfort, Canon Collins, R. H. S. Crossman, M.P., Desmond Donnelly, Victor Gollancz, Grahame Greene, Fr. Huddleston, Sir Julian Huxley, Lt.-Col. Marcus Lipton, M.P., Dame Rose Macaulay, Sir Compton Mackenzie, Ethel Mannin, Kingsley Martin, Dr. Nathaniel Micklem, Lady Pakenham, J. B. Priestley, D. N. Pritt, Q.C., Sir Herbert Read, Earl Russell, Rev. Donald Soper, Philip Toynbee, Eirene White, M.P., Ralph Vaughan Williams, the Archbishop of York, Prof. J. Z. Young.

In my own opinion freethinkers should find the above worth supporting in their connection with the H.L.R.S.

## Galsworthy on Freethought

From a little known book of essays by John Galsworthy called *Castles in Spain*, the following passage might be of interest to Freethinkers: "And if this novelist (Galsworthy) may for a moment let fall the veil from the face of his own (philosophy), he will confess: That human realisation of a First Cause is to him inconceivable. He is left to acceptance of what is. Out of Mystery we came, into Mystery return. Life and death, ebb and flow, day and night, world without beginning and without end is all that he can grasp. But in such little certainty he sees no cause for gloom. Life for those who still have vital instinct in them is good enough in itself, even if it lead to nothing further; and we humans have only ourselves to blame if we alone, among the animals, so live that we lose the love of life for itself and as for the parts we play, courage and kindness seem the elemental virtues, for between them they include all that is zeal in any of the others, alone make human life worth while and bring an inner happiness. Somerset Maugham, in his *Summing Up* expressed somewhat similar views, though in different language.

In an earlier essay, *Six Novelists in Profile*, he concludes: "Humanism is the creed of those who believe that, within the circle of the enwrapping mystery, men's fate is in their own hands, for better for worse; and these six novelists, by their natural absorption in all things human, and their great powers of expression have furthered a faith which is becoming for modern man—perhaps—the only possible faith." The novelists were Dickens, Turgeniev, de Maupassant, Tolstoi, Conrad and Anatole France.

C. H. NORMAN.



# Do We Survive?

By H. CUTNER

The Editor of the Spring Number of *The Plain View* (Stanton Coit House, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8. Price 2/6d.), Mr. H. J. Blackham, must be congratulated on giving us the complete discussion (first broadcast in 1953) between two "sceptics" and two Christians on "The Question of a Future Life". One would naturally have thought that the two unbelievers, Prof. Nowell-Smith and Prof. Anthony Flew, might have had very little difficulty in meeting the two Christians, Prof. MacKinnon and Fr. Turner, S.J., but for about 17 pages of solid talk, the problem dragged on and on; and I could not help remembering what Disraeli once said of Gladstone (I think), "inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity" as I read this wordy "discussion".

The two main issues (as enunciated by Prof. Nowell-Smith) were "What is it that survives?" and "What reasons have we for believing in survival?" and I hope that I am not in the least unfair to the brilliant disputants if I say that at the end of the "wrangling" I was not a bit wiser on either of the two points. All the two believers had to do was to bring in *evidence* that we really did survive and, if possible, it was up to the two unbelievers to show that the evidence was completely untenable. But this would have been a little too simple, for of course there is no evidence whatever for survival, and nobody knew this better than the Jesuit. He said, "The essence of doctrines of personal survival, and it is these doctrines we are concerned with, is that they should assert that we shall exist after our deaths". But Fr. Turner went on,

Now this is obvious enough, and I for one think it is more than a little odd—I think it is even a little evasive—to discount the question of personal survival in a discussion like this in favour of the question of the quality of eternal life; to think that the former question is somehow vulgar or trivial or misplaced, the latter being a sensitive and serious and proper one. And so on *ad lib*.

And Prof. Flew "entirely agreed". He felt obliged to tell his hearers again that,

We do need to make it clear that we are discussing tonight the question of a future life for people—you, me, MacKinnon, Nowell-Smith and anyone else. The sort of future life which I could and should be personally interested in, with fear, or hope, or perplexity.

Obviously, if he had not made it clear—particularly after Prof. Nowell-Smith had also made it clear—listeners might have fallen into the terrible error of not knowing what they were all talking about. In any case, Prof. Flew went on to refer to "Aristotle's rather perplexing doctrine of the immortality of the intellect", and "the equally perplexing Buddhist doctrine that souls are merged in the Whole or Nirvana". These may be "immortality of a sort", but not *personal* immortality or survival which is what they had to discuss. Here Prof. MacKinnon weighed in with "although the two questions"—whether we do survive and what the after life will be like—"are properly distinguished they are not quite distinct", and "Kant was not entirely wrong to relate very closely the issue of immortality to the whole problem of moral obligation". How far we got by dragging Kant in, I am not sure, but a little later, Fr. Turner implied that Prof. Flew "imputed" a motive, "that the reason for talk about the soul is that it is a manoeuvre to evade" something or other; whereupon Prof. Flew hastily said that he was sorry—"Of course I should not have suggested that dualist talk was just a manoeuvre". After which Fr. Turner gave us two

solid pages of talk and naturally not a scrap of evidence for survival. Prof. Flew had said, "People are what you meet"—and clever Fr. Turner tartly answered "You know that is about as useful a thing to say as to say that grass is green".

There is really not much need to go on dealing with or criticising this kind of thing. It is true that Prof. Nowell-Smith mentioned "authority", and Prof. MacKinnon answered that for him, "the most obvious preliminary answer was to say that it is the authority of faith". And this gave him the opportunity to talk (as a good Christian) about the authority of faith which "of course claims to take a man further". Authority meant "the authority of revelation, of what death essentially is and of what, in the love of God, it may become". And naturally, Fr. Turner dragged in "the Incarnation of Christ", as well as the Resurrection of Christ, so that at the very end of this "discussion", Prof. Flew came to the conclusion that "MacKinnon and Turner rest their faith primarily, though certainly in the case of Turner not exclusively, on their convictions about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ". What a pity that the two Christians had not said so at first. We might even have been spared the "discussion".

It has been my misfortune to *listen* very often to similar religious discussions broadcast by the B.B.C. or on television, and so it was quite a pleasure to read this particular one word for word, enabling me to dwell a little longer upon these professorial arguments. And I wonder—does this kind of thing go on in our great universities?

For those who are interested in philosophical theology, the article by Mr. R. Harré on "Souls" gives an excellent resumé of some of Plato's ideas on the subject; and Dr. Eliot Slater's lecture on "The Biologist and the Fear of Death" is perhaps the best I have ever read on Euthanasia and kindred questions.

Mr. Blackham deals with the problem "Why do People Want to Survive Death?" most admirably and, as always, *The Plain View* gives us some first-rate reviews. But the real gem of humour is the intellectual discussion on survival which Mr. Blackham so cleverly managed to reproduce for us. For that he deserves all our thanks.

## ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUIZ

1. Miles Smith, the Bishop of Gloucester—one of the translators.
2. The Idle Bible (idle instead of idole in Zech. 11). The Bug Bible (bugges instead of bogies in Psalm 91). The Placemaker's Bible (placemaker instead of peacemaker in Matt. 5). The Printers' Bible (printers instead of princes in Psalm 99). The Unrighteous Bible (unrighteous instead of righteous in Cor. 6). The Vinegar Bible (vinegar instead of vineyard in Luke 20). The Wicked Bible (the word *not* is omitted from the seventh commandment).
3. Coverdale's Bible, Cranmer's Bible, King James's Bible, the Mazarine Bible, Sacy's Bible, Tyndale's Bible, Wyclif's Bible.
4. The longest chapter is Psalm 119. The shortest is Psalm 117.
5. The word Jehovah occurs 6,855 times.



## CORRESPONDENCE

## A CRITIC OF CRITICS

Mr. Cutner seems to be getting it in the neck, but I like his style. I suppose this proves to his critics that I, too, am ill-mannered. However, when Mr. Anderson quotes Raynor Johnson as asking "How can we account for lungs, eyes, etc., etc., being formed for their functions before they were needed, to account for intelligence in nature, surely the answer is that they were not formed, and could not be formed, before they were needed. I don't think many learned men would deny that eyes must have evolved in response to the continued action of light. Surely the eyeless fish in the ocean's depths provide negative proof of this. Mr. Anderson is not unimaginative when he can say that particles of matter can be part of a man's brain one week and part of a fish's brain the next. But even so, why that should make memory impossible I don't know. I have read Mr. Brooks's letters and Mr. Cutner's replies and I cannot agree that Mr. Cutner was unduly severe. Nobody is trying to withhold Mr. Brook's right to doubt, but when he dries to draw an analogy between the legend of Drake's drum and the legends of Buddha he is talking nonsense. Drake's existence does not depend on drums or legends, as any child knows. The rest of Mr. Brooks's letter illustrates his version (if the last sentence is anything to go by) of a moderate, controlled article, devoid of bad taste, juvenile sneers, exaggerated descriptions, and supercilious remarks about other people's ignorance.

C. O. SYMES.

## WOMEN IN BONDAGE

I must protest against the inaccurate statements made by Colin McCall in his review of my book, *Women in Bondage*, in your July 18th issue. I did not say that the only happily married women are those with a slave mentality, but that to accept femaleness—a very different and much more subtle thing—happily one must have a slave mentality. Mr. McCall might be surprised to find how many civilised women, married and otherwise, go through a lifelong conflict in trying to reconcile themselves to a female destiny that cuts dead across their interests as human beings. What is the hackneyed problem of "Marriage v. Career" but just this?

Neither did I say that women should be as lean and muscular as the male in order to run faster, but primarily in order to regain the power, possessed by nearly every other female animal, but lost by women, of being able to resist the male if they wish. I suggest that it is a bad thing for one's human dignity, confidence and self-respect to have to go through life knowing one can be raped.

Mr. McCall must not judge everything from the standpoint of Britain. The millions of African and Asian women who bear a child annually, and the European countries where contraception is forbidden prove it is by no means "rubbish" to say that the male sex wants from woman complete submission to sexuality and a child a year. Only a minority of women, even today, are not forced into this position.

I am sorry Mr. McCall finds my attempt to awaken society's conscience about what women are blithely expected to put up with "laughable," and my insistence on the evil of menstruation tiring. May I suggest that however "tired" he is, he cannot possibly be as tired as many women are of experiencing it?—or as tired as I personally am of the non-stop insistence of "scientific authorities" (usually male) that the thing is "healthy" when it obviously is not?

Why do I not indict God for women's condition, Mr. McCall asks plaintively. Has he never heard of free will? If, as modern physics and biology indicate, there is free will in the movements of electrons and in the development of living cells, it is surely not fantastic, even to a freethinker, to suggest that there is free will in the evolution of plants and animals—that life as we now know it is the result of millions of past acts of individual choice? We are evolving into a near-toothless race because of our choice, over centuries, of soft foods. Similarly women's female burden, worse than that of any other species, may be the result of man's sexual over-indulgence. In most other animals the male's use of the female is kept in check by her sterile period. Only in man and some primates has this been overridden and perennial "love-making" and hence perennial physical readiness for pregnancy, established.

Why does God allow this, Mr. McCall again asks. Could it not be that a supremely moral force, unlike human dictators, places no value on compulsory obedience? If we want to hinder God's—or if the freethinker prefers it, evolution's—purpose, we are allowed to. But to do so carries its own punishment. Over-

specialisation has placed other species on the evolutionary scrap-heap. Man's too great interest in sex has virtually excluded half the race from participation in full human development, and may, unless we do something about it, prove our downfall.

V. M. HUGHES (Miss, NOT Mrs., please).

[Mr. McCall writes: I am all for awakening society's conscience, but I do not like Miss Hughes's emotional and exaggerated method, which I think is noticeable in this letter. I expected the retort about being tired, but several women who have read the book agree with me on this point. I cannot admit her distinction between acceptance of "femaleness" and marriage; surely the latter state is essentially the acceptance of femaleness on the part of the wife. On leanness and muscularity, let me quote: "After puberty a girl cannot normally keep up with a boy in walking and running, and cannot lift such heavy weights. In most sports she cannot compete with him and cannot defend herself against him in a struggle... man's greater strength and agility... is useful every day of his life—in catching trains, carrying luggage, moving furniture, gardening." I consider my comment fair.

I have heard of free will but do not accept it, and I cannot discuss it here. But I must apologise to Miss Hughes for presenting her with a husband against her will.]

## N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23RD, 1958.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Ebury, Hornbrook, Johnson, Moore, Taylor, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Corstorphine and Gordon.

New members were admitted to Edinburgh, Manchester, Merseyside, and North London Branches which, with Individual Members, totalled seven. Correspondence was dealt with from Commonwealth Relations Office (in connection with protest about the South African Treason Trials), Wolverhampton Justices (in connection with colour bar dance hall), and J. A. Ritchie of New Zealand (request for literature, etc.). Ministry of Housing 1957/58 rating relief tables were summarised and discussed, and letters from a Midlands member (regarding R.C. activity) and H. Day were considered at some length. Mr. P. F. Moore made certain suggestions concerning propaganda that it was agreed to bear in mind and implement if possible. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, September 3rd, 1958.

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