

The Freethinker

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THE EVOLUTION of the world today is proceeding at a constantly increasing and giddier speed, not merely in one domain, but in its myriad departments, each connected to its neighbour in manners infinitely delicate and complex. It is then essential that we should perceive clearly what is developing; for this we require a mental instrument of the finest and most accurate kind, yet of wide application. Here it is that Free Thinking, as independent as is possible for the human mind, becomes imperative; for thought in search of the truth, can tolerate no hindrance.

Let us look back. As far as I can judge, according to ethnological data, the knowledge and the beliefs of mankind in remote ages, at the dawn of written history, were simple, of the "obvious" category. A roll of thunder, an earthquake shudder, a flood, an epidemic, were all "obviously" the work of superhuman agencies, supernatural, hence divine. As might then be expected, everywhere and always, in every tribe there was to be found one of those gentlemen (and they still exist) who was wide enough awake to see that he had at his hand the means of living parasitically in comfort; a system which is still with us today; which by gaining an indestructible hold on the minds of men could also appropriate their material wealth. Twice at least this has occurred in history as we know it. Life was simple; men did their best using primitive methods to cultivate the soil, breed cattle, raise children; all under the direction of those knowing ones who were acquainted with the ways of the gods. This was to be found in Egypt, in Sumeria, more or less everywhere. If on the one hand, the priesthood, possessing intelligence above the ordinary, scrutinised the clear starry skies, the masses dwelt in darkness; for them the gods were enough. Then, behold, Greece arose, as Aphrodite from the seafoam; the great miracle of history; the only miracle, for nothing foretold the rise and the brilliance of the human reason to a point which was not to be attained again for fifteen centuries. There must be hidden within the human mind something unexpected, a potential of development perhaps without limits. Yet, unfortunately, in the bright interval that lay between the dark periods of human existence the embers of superstition were never extinguished and, with credulity in the methods of sorcerers, were ever ready to flare up and destroy the edifices of reason. Under the narcotic and evil influence of the trivialities of Christianity mankind went down once again in the darkness for fifteen centuries.

The Middle Ages

Let us glance for a moment at the effect of this disaster as described by the historian Burckhardt in his work *Civilisation in Italy in the Renaissance* in which he discusses the morals of Italian society on the eve of the Renaissance; he does not distinguish between morality

and religion for at the time of writing little differentiation was made. Today we observe that there is no relation between the two; that religion in fact tends to produce criminality. With this in mind, what Burckhardt wrote casts a blistering light on the effects of Catholic Christianity in the Middle Ages: "On the degenerate Church falls the heaviest responsibility to be found in history; this Church imposed as absolute truth, utilising all the means which power gives, a falsified and degenerate doctrine while, strong in its inviolability, its priests gave themselves up to the most scandalous immorality; to maintain its power over and against all, it dealt deadly blows to the minds and consciences

of the peoples, and drove into unbelief and revolt many gifted men who repudiated it on moral grounds". And again "the feelings of the upper and middle classes in Italy towards religion when the Renaissance blazed to its greatest brilliance were a mixture of anger and of scorn, detached from all that could be termed sacraments, consecrations and benedictions . . ." And further ". . . the exploitation of the masses by false miracles (such as were to be repeated at Lourdes and Fatima) combined with the scandalous conduct of the clergy was repugnant to any thoughtful spectator . . ." And to conclude his immense and superb work ". . . it is perhaps this convergence of ideas which has brought to maturity a marvellous harvest, that knowledge of the world and of man which in itself explains the great part which the Renaissance has played in the story of our civilisation."

The Renaissance

Machiavelli, who lived in the early years of the Renaissance, gives us in his *Discourses* (bk. 1, ch. xii) a picture by a contemporary witness of the state of religion in Italy at that time. Like Burckhardt, but less instructed in the subject, he confounds morality with religion; for him those who failed to display devotion were at least suspect criminals: in the *Discourses* then, morality and religion are to be equated. Concerning the Christian religion he said, "there cannot be a more striking proof of its decadence than to note the fact that the nearer people are to the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, the less religious they are." And so it is today.

Still bearing in mind the identification of religion with morality by these writers, the moral state of the Italian people on the eve of the Renaissance at the height of the Papal power is only too clear. Since then the Church has acquired great wealth in convents, castles and cathedrals, in lands, in jewels and in specie so that the clergy gained an economic power utterly incompatible with the poverty preached in its doctrine.

The Renaissance opened the path which leads to the knowledge of Nature's truths, which the Church soon saw was a supreme threat to her political and spiritual empire. In fact there is nothing more certain than that in the long run Science will gain the day. Let us compare

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Need for Freethought

—By Dr. J. V. DUHIG—

the two. Science allows the human mind to wander at its own sweet will; there are no "Trespassers will be Prosecuted" notices. Hence discoveries in all directions are possible for mankind's good; the Truth, scientific Truth, harms none. The intellectual integrity of Science is manifest; scientific data must be published so that they may be re-examined, confirmed or rejected or modified by whoever will. Religious dogmas, on the contrary, must be accepted as articles of faith without scientific analysis or knowledge even of the data on which they may be based. From this it comes that a hotch-potch of imbecilities devoid of reality are served up to the masses by the priests: crazy fancies of medieval monks sick in body and mind, worn by fasting, torn by ulcers, lacerated by flagellations and mutilations. Religious faith requires an effort of will opposed to reason in order to accept as truth what has no ground in sound evidence. For example the Resurrection. We are told that Jesus died without a doubt, yet two days later he rose again, and clerics have the effrontery to declare that this incident is the best attested fact in all history! Well, gentlemen and ladies, on what evidence, if you please? It is all there in the Bible, they reply. Oh, I say, this Bible is full of contradictions, confusions and lies. Is that all the evidence? And what

would, I wonder, have happened if they said Jesus has been, as so many are today, cremated?

Salvation in Science

Man's salvation is to be found in Science and Science alone; it is endangered by Religion. Science is Free Thinking or it is not Science at all. The struggle for Freethought, source of all that is truly good, beautiful and beneficent, is never at an end. Untiring vigilance is needed to hold and maintain, to advance and gain on behalf of Truth, Justice and Light against the Darkness of Religion which for centuries has done all it can to stifle and blind and deafen. History warns us that it will do so again given the chance. The battle is never ultimately won, nor completely lost. Every man must be able to use his reason as he thinks best without let or hindrance; and that is Free Thought. It is worth endless effort. Man's life becomes fuller and fuller, thanks to Science, and there is no room for all the absurd follies of the religions; their chants and their prayers and their ritual, their dressing-up, bowing and scraping before the non-existent. These are the motley trappings of dark ages out of which humanity is endeavouring to rise. Shake them off! Be free! Ecrasez l'Infâme!

Censorship

By LEONARD MARTIN

AS ONE WHO IS AGAINST CENSORSHIP for the intelligently mature, in general, except perhaps in time of war, when an uncensored statement may give useful information to the enemy, I often have asked, what is the object of it, and the obvious reply seems to be—fear. Just fear.

Fear of what? Fear of falsity or fear of what is only too true? As a rule, it is the latter. Falsity soon condemns itself, or should.

Most censorship, even in the so-called free, democratic countries, is aimed at what they term "pornography," which is only another word for certain aspects of sex; sex made to appear even more attractive or alluring than it is.

But of recent years some countries have begun to censor political news which is not in accord with, or is opposed to, the views of the party or section in power. This appears to be increasing, and is a matter of rule in all autocratic countries, whatever label this mental tyranny assumes or calls itself.

When one comes up against any movement, whether it has a religious or a political bearing, and knows little or nothing about it, it is a wise course to ask at the outset which side it is that is all for censorship, or disallows the expression of a contrary opinion, and which side allows such expression; and then, quite apart from the merits of that particular subject, it is safe to bank on the side that does not stifle views opposite to its own.

Considering it that way, freethought comes out of it very well, and the religious side, as a rule, not at all, or pretty badly.

In THE FREETHINKER, for example, you now and again see a letter from that doughty Catholic priest in Malta, and the columns are not shut against the expression of pro-religious views. Debates with those of contrary views are not tabu; in fact, they are welcomed. And how often is an invitation accepted? Is it fear once more; not fear of what is false, but fear of what is true?

But take the religious side. Who expects any anti-religious opinions to be allowed, even mild, expressions in any official Church periodical, or even, it seems only too obvious, in very few of any of the great secular daily or

weekly newspapers, although the latter are not supposed to take sides on this topic. Yet there the dice are always loaded against the freethinker.

So a visitor, let it be assumed, arriving from another planet, who knows nothing at all of our telluric beliefs or opinions on any subject, if he were intelligent, should conclude: As the freethinking side allows views opposed to it, but the religious side does not, *ipso facto*, I must think the former more in accord with what is true than the latter.

And this is altogether apart from the merits of the case, of course.

Yes, one of the reasons for censorship of opinions is that the censor, or censors, probably quite unconsciously, must have the latent fear that what is being expressed may be only too true, and as that aspect is not at all welcome or palatable, away with it, so that their own way of looking at it may prevail; and it does, in autocratic countries.

But what they overlook is that in the end what is true, or truer, must prevail, because untruth, as the old saw has it, has no legs; whereas many other and diverse, or even apparently irrelevant, factors lead in the end to the truer aspect.

It will be noted that "the truth" has been avoided. Is there such a thing? I doubt it, just because it is an absolute; and absolutes and the human intelligence do not seem to go together. All things, so far, appear to be relative, so that all we can understand are relative truths: things that are true according to our intelligence or the times in which we live. Other times, other relative truths, perhaps.

And another thought. The preoccupation of the Christian religion in particular with sin and doubt, which seem to be mentioned in most sermons, do they not give rise to the suspicion that they are always there, lurking in the basement, as it were? Does it not mean that in the end, these "believers" do not really believe what they advocate so strenuously? Well, why should what is considered so true, be doubted, even if unconsciously?

Our Oldest Cathedral

By F. A. RIDLEY

OVER THE PLAIN from Salisbury, some six miles or so from the modern Cathedral town, lies the most famous ancient monument in Britain, the broken circle of giant stones which marks the site of the oldest religious sanctuary—one might almost describe it as "Cathedral, pre-Christian variety"—of Stonehenge. The area, now chiefly given over to military manœuvres, appears to have been, for some now unknown reason, of high religious significance in remote antiquity. For not only Stonehenge but Avebury, that other—and in some people's opinion, more impressive—prehistoric sanctuary is also situated in the same neighbourhood.

Avebury has even been dubbed the "Cathedral," with Stonehenge as its subordinate "parish church." While upon the southern edge of the Wiltshire Downs, unknown but probably also prehistoric hands carved the giant White Horse above Westbury, which still towers over passing trains on the main line to the West. Who exactly was responsible for these now carefully preserved monuments, is anybody's guess, and many speculations have been advanced by both learned and unlearned persons. But it seems to be established that both the once fashionable theories that Stonehenge was originally erected (built is hardly the precise term!) by the Celtic Druids and that the White Horse over Westbury was cut out on the hill by King Alfred, to celebrate his victory over the Danes, at Ethandune (doubtfully identified with the village of Edington just below it) are invalid.

It appears fairly certain that both Stonehenge and Avebury date from a more ancient era than that of either the ancient Britons or their Druid priests known to us from the surviving descriptions of Julius Cæsar in the first century B.C. By which time, it is hardly open to doubt, Stonehenge at least was already an ancient monument. And no doubt the Romans, who carved their names on the already ancient Egyptian pyramids, regarded and preserved it as such. (In the barbaric Dark Ages which followed upon the withdrawal of the Romans from Britain, Stonehenge was probably even more effectually protected by the magical awe which these terrifying pillars inspired in the German barbarians).

As I stated here recently, I visited Stonehenge *en route* from Bristol to London. Rather curiously, my last article announcing this fact appeared simultaneously with the announcement that fresh archaeological research has thrown fresh light on the date, though not apparently yet on the original authors of this ancient solar sanctuary. A closer examination of the surviving pillars, plus the fortunate excavation of some antlers of prehistoric deer in the neighbourhood have now, it appears, narrowed down the date of the original circle, then of course, far more complete than now, to the 16th century B.C. and perhaps even to its first half—i.e., 1600-1550 B.C. Assuming such to be the fairly exact date, the oldest (pre-Christian) Cathedral (or parish church) still extant in this island, is about 3,500 years old and antedates its far more elaborate Christian successor, a few miles across the Plain at Salisbury, by about 2,800 years. That the gaunt prehistoric sanctuary on Salisbury Plain had a religious, even though not a Druidic origin appears still to be almost certain; as unhappily appears to be the older conjecture that human sacrifices were periodically offered at the immemorially ancient solar festivals of the Summer and Winter Solstices upon the cunningly and precisely

calculated altar, on which the first or last rays of the rising and setting sun marked the exact moment of sacrifice. But who the creators of Stonehenge were, still, despite all the voluminous research and conjecture that have been devoted to this so intriguing a problem, appears a complete mystery. Like that other historical puzzle, the identity of "The man in the Iron Mask," Stonehenge still preserves the secret of its origin; though here the "Mask" is made up, not of iron but of still tougher and more elusive Time!

I think I am correct in stating that nothing (or its next door neighbour!) is really known about the actual state of Britain round about 1600 B.C. when slaves, under the orders of their priestly task-masters set out on the long march to haul by hand (or were horses already then domesticated?) the giant boulders from South Wales, whence it is the unanimous view of the experts that the blue stones still standing in the magic circle must have originally derived. (They do not appear to have existed anywhere else at that geological era). At that remote time, Britain consisted mostly of forest and prairie, as indeed, it still did fifteen centuries later when Julius Cæsar first invaded and described it. It can have only been very sparsely populated, and tribal society does not by then seem to have been suppressed by any powerful centralised state endowed with the necessary coercive power to undertake such a formidable task as the transportation from South Wales to Salisbury Plain. Such states were already in existence in Egypt where far more spectacular pyramids (or most of them) were already built, and in the Middle East, but how Neolithic tribal society, with presumably only primitive stone tools and a numerically severely limited labour force, could have performed the feat, is still not at all clear. If the Druids, as depicted by Roman authors, were still primitive, their prehistoric Stone Age predecessors must surely have been more primitive still? Where did the priests (or witch doctors) who were responsible for Stonehenge, conscript their labour from? Was religious (or magical) fanaticism the operative driving force behind this arduous undertaking?

It does not appear that the Neolithic "cathedral" could have been due to the assistance of more highly evolved foreigners. Such people existed in 1600 B.C., as we know from contemporary Egyptian records, but they have left no traces in the vicinity of Stonehenge. The Egyptians never seem to have got anywhere near Britain; the Greeks and—much earlier—the Phœnicians undoubtedly did, but hardly as early as 1600 B.C. And, as noted above, they would surely have left some traces of their presence? As for the Druids, even if they were pre-Celtic as has been suggested, there is no evidence that they go back anything like so far and, for that matter, their technique was not apparently very advanced. The mystery of Stonehenge remains.

So, its mystery still preserved, and its origins unsolved, the ancient Solar Sanctuary still towers above the surrounding Plain. But, to recapture something of the awe which it inspired, one should pass across the Plain in the uncertain light of evening, when the shadows enshroud the giant pillars set up by ancient witch doctors in the fear-haunted days of long ago. Then one feels something of the acute fear the grim circle must have originally inspired: that primitive emotion of fear which, in the words of the ancient Roman Freethinker, "first called the gods into being"—*all the gods!*

This Believing World

One of the Christian lies which has been going the rounds for nearly thirty years in all kinds of Fundamentalist journals is the "conversion" of a Mr. Ralph E. Underwood, an American "militant Atheist," who in his "amazing confession" tells us how with a friend he founded in 1931 the Godless Age Publishing Co., in San Francisco, and the official organ of the "American branch of the International League of the Militant Godless." His friend became so depressed that he contemplated committing suicide, but refrained from doing so because—wonder of wonders!—he "actually found God!"

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The inevitable result was that Mr. Underwood also found God and Jesus "the Christ," and he even had a "terrible" vision of standing before God (but why terrible?)—a vision which was in fact quite "real," that is, he really saw God. We have had this "confession" sent to this office a number of times, and we can only assure readers that there is not a word of truth in it. Nobody in America except Mr. Underwood ever heard of the "Militant Godless" or his monthly magazine, *The Godless World* which is as much a myth as Aladdin's Lamp. We even suspect that both Mr. Underwood and his pious friend are also both myths, created for the benefit of the Christian fools who are ready to believe anything, and for such journals like *The Redemption Times*, a "Full Gospel Magazine," packed with evangelical nonsense and responsible for this "confession." But can we ever catch up with this Christian lie? Never!

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We were glad to see that neither Parliament nor the BBC was cowed into submission lately by the passionate protest of Mr. William Teeling M.P., who is a Roman Catholic (and who naturally puts Rome before almost everything) against the broadcast which the Bishop of Southwark is to make next month on behalf of "Family Planning," the more polite way of referring to Birth Control. That broadcast will take place, and we are glad to note that the Church of England—or at least some of its members—now agrees on the necessity of Family Planning.

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But the way, these Roman Catholic religionists act and talk is, as if they were already masters of England; and from the way we so often give in to them, it looks as if they are. It would not be unfair to say that in these days the Church of England and Protestants generally tremble before Rome. In any case, whether the Church of Rome succeeds or not, it always get full publicity, and that is something.

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A brilliant idea in what used to be the Nonconformist *News Chronicle* has been suggested by a Roman Catholic reader, and printed in special bold type by that journal. It was for the whole country to adopt "the patron saint of travellers," St. Christopher, and make his day, July 25th, a "National Road Safety Day," or "the nearest Sunday," each year. There would have to be, of course, more than plenty "special church services," as well as those on TV and the radio, and all this could go on right into the peak of the "travelling season." In this way, the Church of Rome would be, so to speak, the leader of a great publicity campaign ostensibly for "road safety," but really for the Church of Rome.

The way Roman Catholic "saints" are put forward by their Church is very amusing. The idea behind them is, first, that they once lived and are now still living in "Heaven;" and second, that they can easily "intercede" with God Almighty, or Jesus, or both, or even with the Virgin Mary, on this or that—and all modern Roman Catholics really believe this drivel. But St. Christopher is admitted even by believers to be a "legendary" hero, which simply means that he is a myth, that he never had any real existence. Still, a letter by a Roman Catholic simply dare not be rejected these days by our national newspapers, it *pays* to boost up the Roman Church.

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The "Daily Express" asks whether "this" will make you "wince" in church—"this" being an attempt to put the Church of England's baptism and confirmation service into modern English, and also to "civilise" some of it? A book on the question has just been published by the S.P.C.K. for 7s. 6d.—though whether it is worth that sum is another problem. The modern version of baptism leaves out the "dearly beloveds," the "Holy Ghosts," the "sins," as far as possible; but after comparing the old with the new versions, we simply cannot see the use of substituting one kind of religious twaddle with another. Both make you wince. And in addition, some of the articles boosting up religion which have lately appeared in the *Daily Express* do more than make you wince!

The Rubaiyat

It is fascinating to speculate just how much of his own scepticism Fitzgerald infused into his wonderful translation of *The Rubaiyat*. In my own copy, the Editor, in the course of a very interesting short biographical sketch of Omar, quotes Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) as describing the poet as "a Freethinker, and a great opponent of Sufism." Certainly the whole spirit of his marvellous verse is a splendid bitter-humorous protest against the vanity and futility of the transcendental view of life with its absurd eschatology and impudent claims to possess the definite answers to the mystery of human existence.

Omar saw the drama of the human situation against the backdrop of a mindless, inscrutable Universe, utterly indifferent to the prayers and petitions of men; and it seems this terrible consciousness of the inevitability of death and devouring time, of human life with all its miseries, joys and fears, all the noblest and best promptings of the human heart as but "One Moment in Annihilation's Waste" laid tremendous hold on his imagination. But with it is enjoined courage, philosophic resignation and stoical calm, a reminder that life must be lived and destiny accepted without bootless repining; for Truth, Beauty and Goodness, whether seen in the splendours of human achievement, in a summer's day or the laughter of a child, are not less so because they must, for all of us, one day end in oblivion. Not the unspeakable barbarism of the Pauline view of life being valueless existence beyond the realm of death and decay.

I suppose every man must interpret *The Rubaiyat* according to his own temperament and subjectivity, seeing in this or that quatrain what he imagines to be the quintessence of Omar's spirit. For myself I love best in him that wonderful and moving mood of bitter-sweet resignation and regret so instinct with that poignant sense of the *lacrimae rerum*, that sense of tears in human things which one finds in really great poetry. Goethe well said that poetry was given to man to make him content with his lot; and how superbly do works like *The Rubaiyat* lift us out of the shams and hypocrisies, the strident silliness and brainless triviality that makes up so much of our modern society. Who amongst us can resist lines like these:—

Ah, Moon of my Delight, who know'st no wane,

The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:

How oft hereafter rising shall she look

Through this same Garden after me—in vain!

Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* is an imperishable little classic, and a veritable *vade mecum* for Freethinkers. I only hope Mr. Cutner's timely appreciation of it serves to stimulate many readers of this journal to re-open it again, and often, this Centenary Year.

ALFRED ALMOND.

THE FREETHINKER

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All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.
- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- London (Finsbury Square, E.C.2).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and C. MCCALL.
- London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Saturday from 6 p.m. and every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.
- London (Tower Hill).—Every 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).—Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 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, 6.30 p.m.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, July 19th, 6.45 p.m.: J. ROBINSON, "What is Anarchism?"
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 19th, 7 p.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D. "T. H. Huxley and Agnosticism Today".

Notes and News

The Sun of Vancouver, British Columbia, recently (25/6/59) exposed the "Archbishop" of the Canadian Temple of More Abundant Life as a man with a "record of multiple marriage and child abandonment." "His Grace the Most Reverend Monsignor William Franklin Wolsey"—who appends half-a-dozen letters to his name and "claims a list of ranks, titles and decorations which fill more than four printed pages of a church pamphlet"—runs a most lucrative concern. Known as Archbishop John and regarded by women devotees as the Living Christ, he has attracted "thousands of followers" to his church many of whom pay ten per cent of their earnings in tithes. No wonder the church's assets are listed in excess of \$1,500,000. And no doubt many of Wolsey's followers will continue to regard him as their spiritual leader despite the Vancouver Sun's exposure!

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EVERYWHERE it is the same. Public worship is declining—except perhaps in the U.S.A., on which a comment later. The Belfast Telegraph (15/6/59) records the latest lament of the Rev. F. M. Hay in Derry's Strand Presbyterian Church. Although Sunday in Northern

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged £235.14.3; Mrs Goldsmith, 5s.; W.H.D. 2s. 6d.; D. Joseph, £1; J.H.D., 2s. 6d.;—Total to date, July 10th, 1959, £237 4s. 3d.

Ireland was not yet so commercialised as in other parts of Ireland, it was slowly but surely "becoming the busiest day of the week"; and not with people on their way to church! At the Siege of Derry, said Mr. Hay, their forefathers had "had two rings of defence—a stout outer wall of lime and stone and a still stouter wall of faith in God." These two, he added, "were indispensable in every age and generation." Apparently most Ulstermen differ from the Reverend.

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WHETHER Mr. Hay could learn from the First Unitarian Society of Salt Lake City, Utah, we don't know. Here, however, is an announcement for his consideration. "Church Picnic: No classes—no adult class. But a big Picnic, Sunday, June 21st, 1.30 p.m., N.E. corner, Fairmont Park! Bring basket lunch! Ice-cream and pop furnished! Games and stuff! For adults too! A grand place to get acquainted! See you there!" We really do wish we could go, especially to see what the "stuff" is. We wouldn't have minded attending the Annual Unitarian Canyon Breakfast on the following Sunday, either. For one dollar only (50 cents, children). "All you can eat!"—Ham, Bacon, Eggs, Orange Drink, Hot Cakes, Syrup, Milk and Coffee—served "anytime" from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. That would have put us in a good mood to hear the Pastor, Dr. Harold Scott, at eleven!

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WHEN HE was in Manchester a few years ago, the Rev. William Gowland gained some publicity with various campaigns, including talking to the chaps in the pubs and to the ladies of easy virtue in the streets, hoping, we suppose, to bring both to God—or at least the local Methodist church! Now head of an Industrial Mission at Luton, the Rev. Gowland is advising the minister of Shillington (Bedfordshire) Methodist Church, the Rev. Anthony Wells, in an experiment to attract farm workers to the churches (London Evening News, 15/6/59). The technique hasn't altered very much. "Together with Deaconess Sister Audrey Benson, the young ministers spend every day trudging across ploughed fields and talking to farm workers over a pint of beer in the local." Mr. Wells seems to have imbibed more than just the beer. His comment to the Press: "So far the result has been extremely satisfying" has the authentic Gowland touch.

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BUT, WHILE Messrs. Gowland and Wells are trying to attract the farm workers, the Belfast Telegraph (15/6/59) reported concern at the Methodist Church Conference in Ireland because "more men were not coming forward for work in the home field" (our italics). There was, in fact, a shortage of candidates for the ministry. The picture thus emerges of a shrinking number of ministers to minister to the needs of a shrinking number of people. Most people don't want to be ministered to anyway.

—NEXT WEEK—

WASHED IN THE BLOOD OF THE BULL

By F. A. RIDLEY

On Determinism

By NICHOLAS TOON

FURTHER TO MY ARTICLE ON "Freedom and the Will" (13/3/59), I should like to add a few remarks on this vital topic.

Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, in his letter commenting on the article, assumes that we are "thinking robots," and asks if there is a snag in his assumption. I don't altogether like the word "robot" in this connection; although, of course, electronic machines capable of playing chess and generally of a crude form of reasoning have been built (I believe some of these machines can also simulate "nervous breakdowns"!). Still, biochemists have synthesised organic compounds, and I have no doubt at all that we shall one day be able to produce living organisms in the laboratory. I cannot see a "snag" in universal determinism; the assumption of non-determinism, on the other hand, presents insuperable difficulties. For the view that Nature is not determinate in all her aspects involves the assumption that parts of the Universe are capricious and are not governed by natural laws. This view is illogical, to say the least.

People are apt to think of "free will" as freedom from known, *external* constraints; whereas there are also *internal* constraints, which may not be known. Making a conscious choice may be described as a voluntary action, but why we make the particular choice we do is determined (ultimately, at any rate) by factors over which the will has no causative control. Further, it does not follow, because we can *imagine* ourselves having acted in a way different from how we actually did act, that we could *in fact* have acted differently. Human behaviour is, indeed, far more predictable than people generally realise; as the psychologist Dr. H. J. Eysenck has shrewdly observed, many people have been delayed because of a mechanical breakdown of the train, but very few because the driver suddenly decided to get out and pick daisies. It is as certain that our consciousness, a part of ourselves, is determined, as it is that we ourselves are determined; we cannot choose to be born. Also, I am convinced that our conscious thoughts originate in the unconscious mind, which thus determines them, inevitably, in strict accordance with unchanging and inviolable natural laws. We cannot think effectively without the use of words or symbols to express our thoughts; yet that most of our thinking goes on unconsciously, without the use of words, is shown every time we strive for a word to express as nearly as possible the thought that occurs in our minds. Thoughts seem to spring up spontaneously, particularly in a train of reasoning. One feels almost that one's brain is thinking for one; as somebody said, "I don't think; it thinks."

As man created God in his own image it was natural that he should create a God who was a free agent, not bound by natural laws but capable of violating them at will, and that man, too, favoured in God's eye, should be conceived to be superior to the insensate forces of Nature, at least so far as his "soul" was concerned. But as we have indubitably evolved from animals, from whom we would withhold the character of "free will," it becomes imperative to ask at what point in the evolutionary process we are supposed to have acquired it? The concept of man, and of man alone, having a supernatural "free will" ordained by an Almighty Deity was a tenable one as long as the doctrine of the immutable fixity of species as enunciated in Genesis was held to be the correct, "revealed" account of our origin. As we can no longer adhere to this latter erroneous idea, no more can we countenance the

former, which depends on it. Biologically considered man is not something special; he is remarkable only in the extent to which he has developed in brain power far ahead of his closest rivals, the anthropoid apes, and this overwhelming superiority of intellect—while in itself astonishing—is nevertheless explainable on natural grounds. In short, by what conceit dare we say that behaviour in man and behaviour in other animals are categorically different from each other? That Nature is not determinate in all her spheres? It would be introducing a hiatus into Nature to make such a gross and arbitrary assumption.

To some people the idea that we are not absolutely free agents is a horrible one, and undoubtedly to these people their repugnance is sufficient reason for rejecting it. They accuse the determinist of "fatalism." Yet in a philosophical context this word is meaningless. Whatever will be will be; whether out of necessity or pure chance. As a natural phenomenon, man must exhibit an empirical character, and he must be bound by inviolable natural laws just like every other phenomenon; he cannot claim exemption from them. Surely, if a being existed who knew everything about us, he would be able to predict our actions exactly, as the effects of antecedent causes. The thought is not a horrible one, because it means that we are consistent and reasonably logical creatures who are not likely to behave erratically all the time, but who will exhibit certain uniformities of thought and deed. Indeed, the contrary notion is truly horrible: we should never know what we were going to do next, and our lives would be impossible. I personally am convinced that our actions are causally determined in just the same way as are all the other events in Nature—because I cannot believe the opposite. It is true that we are not simultaneously aware of their determination, but this only means that they are *apparently* free to us. It seems to me that the view that the Universe is governed by its own internal autonomy is unavoidable, at any rate as a tentative assumption. As regards the bearing of this view on everyday life, in particular "moral responsibility," I would stress that it is not so much that we have got to delete the word "responsibility" from our language as that we must redefine it and, so to speak, look at it in a new light. The reason why we have a criminal law at all is because human beings are not always guided by reason in what they do; the "responsibility" of men is limited.

"They'll Swing"

"THERE'S BEEN A SLIP in the administration somewhere," said Councillor Frank Hill of Watchet, Somerset, when the *Daily Express* reporter awakened him from his Sunday (June 7th) afternoon doze. There surely had! The children were actually swinging in the recreation ground despite a council edict that the swings should be chained up on Sundays. "Well that's the limit!" was another of Mr. Hill's exclamations. "Good show!" said 78-year-old Councillor Tom Peel, who had opposed the ban, while the council groundsman insisted he hadn't received any orders to chain up the swings. "Until I do, they'll swing" he added, and "Why shouldn't they anyway?" Because—as the *Daily Express* ironically hinted, it was a step towards that dreaded "Continental Sunday."

Life with the Layabouts

By G. H. TAYLOR

"I HAVE LONG CONTENTED," said the large, brown-bearded one, surveying me over his pint, "that the Universe is a self-contained voluntaristic monon throwing out free-will quanta in all directions." He was about to resume with the pint but interrupted himself to add a footnote. "This does not, of course, invalidate the essential unity of the discrete monads which constitute Existence. It remains a Universe and not a Multiverse." He now dipped into the pint.

"It's space travel, you know," explained his small nondescript henchman, insinuating himself into the conversation. "He knows all about it."

"Mind you," continued the Beard, obliterating his disciple with a subtle turn of the body, "the metaphysical substratum which I am proposing is attached to its modes in a noun-verb relationship, and the modes appear to the perceiving subject as like to like, spirit to spirit. In this way my three basic categories presume and entail one another."

I got out my slide rule and made some rapid calculations. "By the Law of Similar Triangles," I countered, "you are .35 of an inch out."

"Who cares!" he snorted. "The essentially indeterminate character of willing, percolating down to physical nature itself, precludes accuracy. You cannot chain the *elan vital*. We are living in a higgledypiggledy world."

I borrowed the price list from the bar and drew a quick sketch of it. The giant bearded mastermind ignored it but his insignificant follower was thrilled. He offered a contribution to the discussion. "There's a man who's been to Venus," he preambled, "and when they asked him . . ."

"You will no doubt be wondering," went on the Brain, "where, in my system of Philosophy, the Ultimate Absolutes can be fitted. We have to consider their exact orientation in my tri-causal Universe. I refer to Truth, Beauty and Goodness."

"They would stand in anti-causal sequence," I ventured, "to their material concomitants."

"You have a penchant," he said with a rather contemptuous curl of the lip, "for stating the obvious. You have, of course, read Professor Zwumpf on the Ingression of Absolute Values?"

"Yes," I lied, "he looted it lock, stock and barrel from Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*."

"I could have corrected him on several points," smoothly observed the Philosopher, accepting a proffered pint from his slave, "and I can show you where the Hegelian Triadic System collapses like a pack of cards."

"That I *must* see," I replied, borrowing the barmaid's apron, on which I did a lightning sketch of Hegel's Triads.

"You'll find a few snags," I added, dragging the barmaid in his direction. She and the slave were taking a keen interest.

"Once they've got to Mars," said the latter, "they'll be on the moon in no time."

But the Metaphysician was ruminatively scraping the bottom of his barrel-like mind. "The diversity of the spiritual units," he said, "must be set against the background of their foundational oneness. These local centres of free-will constitute an Uncertainty Principle. I do not, as you see, invert Hegel in the Marxist fashion. I turn him inside out."

With a deft twist of his expansive hand, he knocked Hegel for six. I must say Hegel took it very well. He had

been used to that sort of treatment for years. I made the required adjustment on the barmaid's apron.

"Your view of Hegel," he explained, "is by my method made correct. It will give you a perfectly level and stable perspective. Try it."

I tried it. "Look into my eyes," I said to the barmaid, "and tell me where they now are in relation to my boots."

She became preoccupied with her decision. The Intellect finished his pint.

"The alternative," he resumed, "is a dead block Universe. One deprived of all content. Void and meaningless. Completely empty."

"Nothing in it!" explained his slave cheerfully.

"As empty as this glass," said the Master, urging it towards him.

"You're wearing shoes," said the barmaid after due consideration.

"The compound of contradictions we call the Universe," he propounded, keeping one eye on another approaching pint, "resolves itself, unaided, into a metaphysical monstrosity."

"Like you!" interposed the impertinent barmaid, but if he heard he did not heed.

"Flogging the old universe again?" asked a bright-looking layabout nearby, who was impatiently waiting to sell a ticket for *My Fair Lady*.

"Why shouldn't he?" I retorted, rising to someone's defence—possibly the heckler's. "Why mustn't he talk about the Universe? It's the only thing he's got to live on."

"The average man," said the Metaphysical Monster, looking down from his height on some specimens of that order, "is living in the pre-thought stage of evolution. He is thoroughly analysed and indexed in my system." He shuffled farther along the bar, followed by his faithful appendix, he of the half pint.

"You secularists," he went on, frowning sternly at his fan, who had given signs of beginning to speak, "take too narrow a view. My vision is eclectic." (I got the slide rule ready.) "It takes in a comprehensive ideology of the whole nomenclature of existence *per se*."

"You mean, then . . ."

"Not so fast," he said, holding up a huge palm. He had been caught in the middle of his drink.

"Not so fast!" reiterated his supporter knowingly.

"I should think not, indeed!" said the barmaid, retrieving her apron.

"My theory," he continued, "will accommodate all speculations of Becomingness out of Nothingness, wherein essences flow into eternal progression from infinite recession."

There was a triumphant croak from his companion. "It's better than rockets," he opined. "Safer."

Pausing only to close his eyes in silent suffering, the Messiah delivered himself again, the disciple blinking happily in his considerable shadow. "The pre-established Harmony is guaranteed by the postulation of a primary Entelechy principle, transcendent and yet immanent, and a safeguard against the deprivations of the materialistic hypothesis."

A barman leant over confidentially. "Expert on libraries, y'know," he confided, while the great one was clearing his glass for the next drink. "Also museums and art galleries. Free shelter in the bad weather, you see."

Ernest Newman

The death of Ernest Newman leaves a gap among outstanding supporters of Freethought which it will be difficult to fill. Ever since it was decided to enlist distinguished men and women in a Committee of Honour approving the international congresses, Newman was always ready to help to the best of his ability, for he brought to bear on theology the same remarkable powers of critical analysis which made him the leading musical critic of our time.

In 1949 in a letter supporting the congress to be held in Rome (he was then 80) he expressed his conviction that freedom of thought was now wanted more than ever before, and in a letter of November 18th last, affirming his adherence to the World Union, he wrote: "I am afraid I can be of no practical use to you . . . my illness has left me in a very bad state . . . but you may rest assured that I am still, and will always be, with you and my old associates in the field of freethought."

So to-day, Farewell!

C. BRADLAUGH-BONNER.

MEETINGS IN THE CITY

FREETHINKER readers will have noticed that the National Secular Society is now holding weekly meetings at Finsbury Square, London, E.C.2. This is an historic spot in the City where, in fact, John Wesley and the early Methodists preached. And nearby, is the site of the original South Place Chapel, now superseded by the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square.

The first few N.S.S. meetings have drawn much larger audiences than any of the religious groups who meet there. Pity, for example, the poor Catholic Evidence Guild speakers, who seldom have more than half-a-dozen listeners and the fundamentalists, who fare little better and have obviously been making a special effort to get more of their supporters along. Some of the Christian speakers are quite competent, but most are pathetic or downright boring. After a few minutes even their own colleagues cannot maintain an attitude of polite interest.

However, they hand out literature, and one of their publications, *Power and Freedom*, is about the silliest concoction of quackery and drivel imaginable. One is amused by the way its chief distributor refers to his "scientific training" when on the platform. At the N.S.S. meetings the behaviour of some of these people has been a revelation. When it comes to malicious spite and intolerance they are on the same level as their Catholic brethren, but our speakers have proved capable of dealing with them.

It is hoped to continue the meetings during the Summer months and FREETHINKER readers who live or work in the City will be very welcome at Finsbury Square every Wednesday at 1 p.m. It is one minute from Moorgate Station and five minutes from Liverpool Street. W. J. MCL.

CORRESPONDENCE

A TRIBUTE

I have been a reader of THE FREETHINKER for many years. Mr. Cutner has a strong point of view; he speaks and writes very plainly and personally. I think his articles serve their purpose of pointing out in plain, unvarnished language, forms of deceit and humbug in a way that few "scholars" could or would have had the courage so to do.

Mr. Brooks has evidently been laying in wait for Cutner with his verbal quibble, but my admiration for the latter is unaffected by this specious personal attack.

Admittedly, Mr. Cutner has a way of touching pretentious and defenders of fanaticism on the raw.

I have a large library of works of scholarship, but I take in THE FREETHINKER for its bold, courageous attitude towards religious and even non-religious humbug. ROBERT F. TURNEY.

"GETTING MARRIED"

Re, the comments of Mr. S. W. Brooks on my article on the B.M.A. pamphlet *Getting Married* (3/7/59). I certainly did not say or imply, that sexual harmony is only possible if one obtains a marriage certificate. Neither is this peculiar idea mentioned in Dr. Chesser's article, which Mr. Brooks quite obviously hasn't read, or his letter which appeared under the caption of

"Twaddle" would have never appeared at all.

It seems quite obvious to me that sexual harmony is much more likely to be achieved in a stable relationship such as marriage (with or without a certificate) than in a casual one. I am quite prepared to believe that Dr. Chesser meant just this, and no more.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

ST. JOSEPH

May I say with all due deference and respect, that the writer of "Notes and News" has missed the essential point in his notes on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.

There is another St. Joseph on March 19th. Who is he? Joseph of Arimathea?

The point is that the date of St. Joseph the Worker is on May Day, the day appropriated by Socialists and Communists. The Roman Catholic Church through the Pope has adapted and adopted this May Day, no doubt to detach the ordinary Catholic voter from any Socialist contact. Your writer does not mention this in his paragraph.

W. D. K.

[The "other" Joseph is in fact the same one!—ED.]

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that the Leicester Secular Society announces the death of a valued member and friend, Mrs. Lydia Cooper, who died on July 5th, at the age of 77 years. Mrs. Cooper, an active member of the Society for many years was the wife of Jim Cooper, Secretary of the Leicester Rationalist Trust, and she will be sadly missed by all of us.

A Secular service was conducted by Mr. G. A. Kirk, President of the Leicester Secular Society at the Gilroes Crematorium.

C. H. H.

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