

The Freethinker

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A RECENT rather tangled matrimonial affair in which a divorced clergyman was involved, has excited considerable attention in the press, and has drawn rather unwelcome publicity to the extremely confused attitude of the Church of England by Law Established, towards the whole question of divorce. For the cleric in question, the Rev. A. Wilson, was, in ecclesiastical jargon, the "innocent party," which, in non-ecclesiastical English, implies that his former wife, and not he himself, had committed misconduct—or whatever the particular ground for this divorce may have been. All that Mr. Wilson had to do with it was to suffer the consequences! One might have been pardoned for thinking that the sooner he forgot all about the whole unfortunate affair and—if he wanted to do so—got married again, the better it would be for everyone. But that is not the way in which the clerical (or in this particular case, Episcopal) mind works in the year of grace 1959. For in the words of an old song, "This was not the end of this shocking affair"—"shocking" that is, from the standpoint of their Lordships, the Bishops of our national Church.

What Was His Occupation?

The upshot was disconcerting, not to say disastrous, for the unfortunate clergyman. For when he did decide to remarry—and to add insult to injury, to a girl many years younger than himself—his ecclesiastical boss, His (Anglican) Lordship of Lichfield, peremptorily refused to allow him to earn his living in the Diocese of Lichfield where he had just been appointed to a prison chaplaincy at Stafford Gaol. The fact that Mr. Wilson's wife had not felt able to live with him—and is still apparently alive—evidently classed the vicar with criminals in the eyes of his Bishop! So much so, in fact, that it was quite impossible to allow him to mix professionally with the inmates of Stafford Gaol. The upshot was that the divorced cleric has now announced his intention of marrying again, despite the Episcopal prohibition, and of finally vacating his place as a professional worker in the Lord's vineyard. We can only say that we hope that, if he goes to his local Labour Exchange seeking work, he will be more fortunate than was a learned Roman Catholic cleric who quitted the Church of Rome a few years ago (for theological and not domestic reasons). The latter had considerable difficulty in explaining to the clerk behind the counter what precisely had been his qualifications for his previous job as Professor of Canon Law in a leading Roman Catholic seminary for the training of priests in the Arch-Diocese of Westminster. Joking apart, the lot of a middle-aged cleric who has to start life anew after a life-time spent in the secluded ecclesiastical world, is not an enviable one. And, if the Protestant minister (unlike his Catholic opposite number) has a family to support, I for one, will never join in the too facile chorus of denunciation if he lacks the outstanding moral courage necessary for such a plunge. In his personal future, I am

sure that everyone will wish this ex-clerical victim of clerical bigotry all the luck possible.

What Did Christ Really Say?

However, this, in itself not very important case, does possess a more general significance in drawing attention to the hopeless confusion which prevails in the Church of England, in particular on divorce, and more generally in reference to social and intellectual problems which affect the present-day world. Nor can this be regarded as merely a matter of ribaldry even to the readers of THE FREETHINKER, for we ourselves are, after all, nationally committed to the Church of England. While it is true that the majority of the natives of this country no longer adhere to this Church, an institution to which the Royal Family must belong, which is permanently represented in the House of Lords and which, perhaps more important than either, has virtually unlimited access to radio and TV, cannot fail still to possess a very considerable degree of influence in social and political no less than in religious and ethical questions. The British Secularist movement has officially recognised this fact by its self-chosen name. It recognises that the separation of Church and State in a secularly-conditioned society nowadays represents perhaps its leading aim. Hence the attitude taken by the Church on such important problems as divorce, birth control and the like, cannot be regarded as matters of little moment. For such domestic problems must, from their very nature, always be matters of importance. And, from the indisputable fact that the Church of England has boasted in the past of many eminent scholars and social workers, one might have been led to expect a more rational attitude from its bishops towards such problems than has, so far, been indicated by the pitiful ecclesiastical bungling in the case under review. The past and present attitude of the Church of England on divorce is supposed to be based directly on the words allegedly spoken by Christ on this subject in the Gospels. But what *did* Christ (if he ever existed) really say on this topic? And much more important to the modern world, what conceivable qualifications could this ancient Jewish predecessor of Billy Graham have, to discuss the most vexed and delicate problems inherent in a cosmopolitan, industrial society which did not even begin to take shape until many centuries after his lifetime—always supposing that is, that we are dealing with an historical character.

New Wine in Old Bottles

In the Gospels, the words ascribed to the titular Founder of Christianity on the subject of divorce are contradictory, as on so many other subjects. According to one account, he allowed divorce because of adultery and of that only. According to another, marriage, once contracted, remained forever indissoluble. (According to that learned, but somewhat heretical member of the Anglican Episcopate, the late Dr. Barnes, the former account appears to indicate an acquaintance with Roman

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Church of England and Divorce

By F. A. RIDLEY

Law, which it seems most unlikely that a wandering Galilean preacher like Jesus, could have possessed). The Christian attitude to divorce reflects one or other of these two conflicting accounts. The Church of Rome rigidly prohibits any divorce whatsoever of any marriage once contracted within the precisely conditioned limits laid down by the Canon Law. This Church does, however, permit the annulment of a marriage not properly contracted, but only of that. For example, contrary to popular impression Henry VIII did not ask for a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, but only for an annulment on the ground that his marriage had not been properly contracted. Contrarily, the Eastern Orthodox Church follows the more lenient account and permits divorce, but for adultery only. The Church of England, as in so many other matters, is at cross-purposes on this issue: the Anglo-Catholics take the Roman view as rigidly as Rome, the Protestant and

Modernist wings that of the Eastern Church—according to which, incidentally, Mr. Wilson could lawfully remarry. But the melancholy and disconcerting fact emerges, that only a few very advanced modernists in the Church to which we are all supposed to belong, have ventured to suggest the surely obvious fact that the contradictory *obiter dicta* of an ancient Jewish preacher, who lived in a primitive agrarian society, need not, and in fact could not, represent the last word on one of the most involved and delicate problems posited by our modern and extremely complex industrial society. Christ is supposed somewhere to have made the sensible, if rather obvious remark, that one should not keep new wine in old bottles. This remark, also ascribed to their supposedly infallible Founder, appears to apply very aptly to the current attitude of the Christian Churches, including the Church of England, to modern problems connected with divorce.

Psycho-analysis of Joseph's Dream

By VITALI NEGRI (U.S.A.)
(Concluded from page 259)

WHY WAS IT NECESSARY for Joseph to go to such extremes? Why did the solution to the problem entail the creation of a "divine" child? What was the significance of the "angel of the Lord." Why was the angel made to speak to Joseph in the dream? By whom was the angel commanded? Is there such a phenomenon as a prophetic dream?

To answer these questions we must go more deeply into the mechanism and meaning of dreams.

First of all, it should be understood that no dreams (outside those induced by the procedure of hypnosis through the voice and command of the hypnotist) can be invoked in the mind of a sleeping individual by an outside governing force. Whatever an individual expresses in a dream is the result of his own mental processes. When Joseph, in his dream, saw an angel and heard words issuing from the mouth of the angel, it was because Joseph himself produced the image and put the words into the angel's mouth. It was not an apparition "sent" from some outside source. It came from Joseph, produced and motivated by his great need to vindicate Mary. It was Joseph himself who set the stage, wrote the script, and enacted the scene.

But why the particular scene told to us in the Bible? Would not a solution of lesser magnitude have served just as well?

When Joseph became aware of Mary's plight, he, like others, could not have but wondered about, or perhaps known or suspected the identity of the father of Mary's child. If we go to rabbinical sources, as well as that of Celsus, we discover among other stories that which refers to the seduction of Mary by a soldier named Pandera (also called Panthera). We are not now concerned with the authenticity of such statements, but only with their problematical effect upon Joseph. Of a surety, one certainly cannot argue with the assumption that the pregnancy of an unmarried woman would not fail to cause a great deal of gossip and instigate many rumours—rumours which would undoubtedly reach the ears of Joseph.

As a result, Joseph, even if still desirous of Mary and of protecting her, could not but be torn by a certain ambivalence of emotions, during which recrimination, accusation and disillusionment must also have crowded in upon his thoughts.

Indeed, we are told so by Matthew when he says, Joseph was "minded to put her away privily," implying thereby

that he had determined consciously not to keep her as his wife. Yet we know by Joseph's dream that subconsciously he could not accept this decision, and that rather than admit to Mary's guilt or victimization (if the latter were the case), his desire to totally vindicate her (and himself in not rejecting her) enabled him to find a way which completely destroyed all the stigma and shame of human seduction. By "Divine Intervention" he obliterated all degradation and put in its place exaltation, adoration and ovation.

In dream analysis, this is recognized as a mechanism of the mind—a function called the "censor" which serves to protect the dreamer from the shock of reality by recourse to rationalization, distortion and elaboration. By this function Joseph freed himself from the necessity of accusing Mary. It should be mentioned that rationalization used in this sense, as when motivated subconsciously by strong emotional impulses, does not indicate rational, clear-sighted thinking, but a form of subterfuge in which one fabricates a seemingly "reasonable" explanation to suit one's own purposes. We do this consciously when we make a mistake, then seek to justify it by producing some extraneous excuse which in actuality had either very little or no connection with the original mistake.

Joseph could not hope to justify Mary's transgression without recourse to some outstandingly spectacular explanation. But by contriving that the explanation would proceed from the mouth of an angel, i.e. from a source not accountable to human law or opinion, Joseph achieved his purpose. The angel of Joseph's dream represented a symbol—a symbol of God's Will that Joseph should not be afraid. "Fear not," the angel said, "to take unto thee Mary thy wife."

Freud has called this form of symbolism, condensation. Here we find an entire religious concept—the supreme authority of God's power and jurisdiction over man-made or material laws—condensed into one image. The words of the angel were, in reality, the words of Joseph's desire which without the Godly authority represented by the angel would have had little effect either on Joseph or the world.

—NEXT WEEK—

REMEMBERING ZION

By F. A. RIDLEY

After Franco?

By COLIN McCALL

IT IS TWENTY-THREE YEARS since the Franco dictatorship was first proclaimed in Salamanca. The Bishop, Pla y Deniel, a strong supporter of the uprising, later received the Primacy of Spain "for services rendered". Recently, at the age of 82, he has been widely publicised for his condemnation of engaged couples walking arm-in-arm. But Spain, after being almost forgotten by the rest of Europe—except as a holiday resort—is generally coming back into the news. British and American reporters are again looking over the Pyrenees and wondering what is going to happen there. And ITV, in one of the finest programmes I have seen on that, or any other channel, recalled the most moving and disturbing event of the thirties (and perhaps of our time) the Spanish Civil War: the first stand against Fascism; the stand that, if supported as it should have been, might—as the ITV programme openly said—have prevented the Second World War. For later generations outside Spain, the World War obliterated the Civil War, and young viewers must have had their eyes opened. Now they will know what Picasso's "Guernica" commemorates. Perhaps it will take on a new significance?

The Franco regime "has lasted incredibly long for a country as politically unstable as Spain", says Luis Granada (a Spanish Catholic intellectual, writing under a pseudonym) in an interesting article, "Spain Twenty Years Later", in the American Catholic magazine, *The Commonweal* (June 19th, 1959). Today, the article goes on, "no one would dare predict how much longer it will continue". And, although "those outside Spain could perceive little variation in its political and social lineaments", there have been considerable changes in Spanish life since 1939. Briefly, Senor Granada indicates them. And then he looks ahead:

The day that, because of death, illness, or military or economic pressures, Franco relinquishes power, it is not impossible under certain international circumstances that a Communist regime will take over in Spain. But a "people's democracy" that would come to be much the same thing is more than probable. Its characteristics would naturally be: anti-Catholicism, anti-capitalism, anti-Americanism, probably a benevolent "neutrality" towards Russia, a very strict statist control, little or no freedom of the press or teaching. But, he adds: "There is a great mass of Spanish opinion that would like something quite different: liberty for Catholicism, but also for those who are not Catholics; personal liberty; limited power which leaves a margin for individual life;" and so on.

Liberty for Catholicism! Liberty for the Church that Senor Granada admits (he could hardly do other!) was "a wholehearted belligerent ally of the Nationalist side . . . and has since adhered without reservation to the victorious regime." "The Church in Spain could have been the instrument of national reconciliation and peace and it has not . . . Officially the Church has uttered no public protests against injustices on the part of the State, although it has offered uncritical praise for the regime and the Caudillo." Yet, let it by all means have liberty if and when the Franco regime should collapse! Generously grant it what it denied to others!

The truth is that Senor Granada is afraid. And he tells us that many Catholics (cleric and lay) are afraid. From its privileged position and its control of education, the Church has given the people religion *ad nauseum* and if Senor Granada is right (and he is writing as a Catholic) there is a seething and ever-strengthening underground

anti-clericalism that "cannot be expressed openly but which gets stronger by the day." "The future of religion in Spain is a cause of anxiety even for those who are most optimistic", he says. And:

The youngest elements, precisely those that have been educated under the strict control of the Church, are much less Catholic, much less firm in their faith in every case, than the preceding generations, who had been educated under conditions of much greater freedom and submitted to a wide range of influences.

In other words, the Church of Rome has overdone things. These are no longer the Middle Ages, even in Spain, but the Church has acted as though they were. The octogenarian Primate typifies this attitude. Not all the clergy are so reactionary, however. Many of them—the younger ones especially—see the danger ahead. Among the normally conservative Jesuits, for example, there is a large, *comparatively* progressive group. And Senor Granada tells us that the Order often doesn't "take a position on important issues because of different tendencies within the Society that cannot be brought into agreement." In Spain, he says, the hopes which the election of Pope John XXIII aroused "are difficult to credit". It was thought that he might look with disfavour on "inquisitorial procedures in the Church."

But, if the Jesuits are no longer so reactionary as they were a few years ago, another Order, Opus Dei, has taken their place. It is, in Senor Granada's words, "the most reactionary force that has existed in Spain in the last twenty years"—and that is saying something! Its influence has increased as that of the Jesuits and Catholic Action has declined, and it is now "present in the government and in nearly all the vital centres of the country." And, while in some ways a monarchy might be an improvement upon the Franco regime, many Spaniards fear that this would still be greatly under the influence of Opus Dei.

How far the Jesuit "progressivism" is an envious reaction to the success of Opus Dei, it is impossible for me to say. Certainly the Order founded "To the greater glory of God" has not always been able completely to subdue the sixth of the seven deadly sins. But there is a strong strain of worldliness among the Brethren of the Society of Jesus, and it may well be that they have analysed the Spanish situation more acutely than their rivals. Perhaps they hope to save something from the wreck?

For, sooner or later, Franco must go. If not by the design of men: at the behest of God—the God he believes chose him for the role of Caudillo. What will happen then cannot be foretold. But it seems likely that the Church will have to surrender its position of privilege. Should there be a liberalisation (as we all hope) Opus Dei will almost certainly decline. In that case, the Society of Jesus might emerge again as the dominant Catholic Order. Senor Granada is a Catholic, but a realistic and—I should think—a liberal one. His article not only shows insight into the Spanish situation; it serves as a warning against underestimating the resilience of the Church of Rome. It is an amalgam of many elements, some of which can survive a great deal of wear and tear.

A CORRECTION

In the quotation from Joseph McCabe in Mr. G. H. Taylor's *Chosen Question* last week, the phrase "something like a thousand years" should have read "something like a thousand million years."

This Believing World

At one time the names of John and Charles Wesley used to be uttered almost with the same awe that Methodists and other Christians still utter Christ Jesus, but this is not the case now. Both of these saintly Christian characters have been recognised—unlike Jesus of course—as “sinners,” as a writer in the *Methodist Recorder* sadly admits. Accordingly to “Nestor” in that journal, we should remember both “saints” were “children of their age,” and didn’t understand how women should be treated. In any case, even if one admits their poor characters in some respects, we still have their hymns, and Charles has, in memorable verse, told us of “the forgiving and enabling grace of God”—whatever that means. So after all, John and Charles Wesley slide back into the Methodist Pantheon.

★

By the way, it is interesting to note some of the texts John Wesley used 200 years ago when he was stumping the country for Jesus. They were, “Ye must be born again”; “For what is a man profited,” etc.; “Repent and believe the Gospel”; “What is your choice?” “I would that thou wert either cold or hot”; “If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink”; “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?,” and similar imbecilities. Even the Rev. Billy Graham would not have gone far with this kind of evangelism—and it proves how Christianity has also changed with the times.

★

As for Methodism, the Wesley type or the modern, the fact remains that in 1932 it had 840,000 members, and it has now under 744,000—though it boasts that 800,000 “have joined the Church” since. In any case, considering the rise in population in England, Methodists are rightly disturbed, and they are now planning “to overhaul, adapt, and direct all its organisations to get more members.” But surely the “organisations” are not to blame? What Methodism will have to do is to overhaul its *Christianity* which is completely out of date. And we doubt if that can be done.

★

A church said to be consecrated in 1423 is to be converted into a hostel for seamen by the Bishop of Rochester who has, therefore, incurred the wrath of “angry church councillors at St. Nicholas which stands in the shadow of Rochester Cathedral,” says the *Daily Express*. They are going to take legal advice, but the change will be made. After all, a hostel for seamen is far and away of more value to Rochester than an old church with a few worshippers. We often wonder whether some of the dates given for an old church’s “consecration” have any historic evidence? How many indeed in the whole of the country can boast of more than 500 years at the most?

★

The “news” in the Spiritualist world today is no longer such trivial things as materialisations, ectoplasm, levitations, and so on, but “healing” and “reincarnation.” The latter however is causing an ever-widening split in the Movement, for we understand more than any other subject it “gives rise to strong emotion,” though why this is so is not clearly specified. Perhaps one reason is that quite ignorant and unimportant people one meets who believe in it, claim that they were once Prime Ministers, great Generals, Kings, Queens—but never, never, lowly farm labourers, perspiring dustmen, or ignominious slaves.

Mr. Ashe replies to Mr. Cutner

Your issue of July 31st contains an article by Mr. H. Cutner on my *Sunday Express* series “Are the Gospels true?” I appreciate his interest.

Before the articles appeared, I assumed that an anti-Christian case did exist. When the readers’ letters came in, and I read the statements of that case by the half-dozen or so convinced anti-Christians among over a hundred correspondents, I began to wonder. Was this the best they could do? And now, here is Mr. Cutner. May I offer a few comments?

He devotes most of his space to my first article, which was merely a preface, and did not pretend to say much. All I tried to do in it was to study the plausibility of the Gospel birth-stories in terms of a single question. They imply a vague diffused Messianic expectancy among Jews and pagans in the latter part of the first century B.C.: was there or was there not such an expectancy? Undoubtedly there was. Mr. Cutner appears to concede as much, and the rest of what he says is irrelevant.

I would only add the remark that he does *not* produce the old claim that Matthew and Luke are chronologically irreconcilable. If this claim could be established, it would knock out the whole case and make all other argument superfluous. Since Mr. Cutner does not advance it, I am left to presume that it has been discreetly dropped.

The second article (on the gap in the life of Jesus) is passed over, except for a statement that the apocryphal gospels purport to bridge the gap. I am not sure that they do, but in any case I am afraid my answer is “So what?” The series was concerned only with the canonical four. The notion that the apocryphal texts have the same value, and were excluded solely by an arbitrary ecclesiastical ruling, is quite unfounded (cp. M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*).

My discussion of the Dead Sea Scrolls is not even mentioned. Well, well. Less than ten years ago the Scrolls were being paraded as the final answer to Christianity, and now, if a writer quotes them in support of the Christian account, he goes unanswered himself. What am I to conclude?

The third article (on the incredibility of the view that the Gospels are literary fabrications) is also ignored, except for a remark about miracles which misses the point. What I said was that the Gospel miracles are different in kind from the bogus marvels in other religious texts, and that such marvels are explicitly rejected in the Temptation stories.

The fourth article (on the dating of the Gospels) is also ignored, or rather evaded with the phrase “useless to discuss.” Again, what am I to conclude? My argument, by the way, is based on F. F. Bruce, *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* (1953 edition). Although this is a small and elementary book, I have yet to find anybody who can refute it or refer me to a refutation. My hostile correspondents, when challenged to do so, unanimously collapsed; one even refused to read it.

The fifth article (mainly on the Resurrection story in the context of comparative religion) is also ignored, totally.

With regard to the topic as a whole, Mr. Cutner demands “evidence which would stand up in a court of law.” This is a favourite phrase with such people as the Baconian critics of Shakespeare. In the present instance it is surely a perilous one to use: if a barrister dealt with his opponent’s case as Mr. Cutner deals with mine, how far would he get? But the demand clearly rests on special pleading. If the same critical criteria applied by rationalists to the New Testament were applied to other early historical records, most history before the Middle Ages would evaporate. One could “prove,” for example, that there was no such person as Alexander the Great, because his own tutor Aristotle doesn’t mention him. Opponents of Christianity who insist on applying such standards should recognise that to do so consistently would invalidate their own attempts at historical procedure.

I hope Mr. Cutner will realise that my comments are offered sincerely, open-mindedly, and without animosity. My habits of mind were largely formed by the great modern sceptics—Russell, Frazer, Gilbert Murray. I owe them an unrepayable debt, and simply cannot believe that their professed followers have so little to offer. I am not making the unfair demand that Mr. Cutner (who doubtless has better things to do) should involve himself in a long discussion. But could he at least refer me to a few books? Not Renan and Robertson; I have heard all that; but recent ones? A refutation of Bruce, and a refutation of Theodor H. Gaster’s work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, would at least be a start.

GEOFFREY ASHE

[Mr. Ashe is, of course, replying to Mr. Cutner’s first article on “Are the Gospels Really True?” Last week we printed Mr. Cutner’s second article, and we shall be pleased to print a further reply from Mr. Ashe, if such is forthcoming.—ED.]

THE FREETHINKER

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.; Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Dagenham Branch N.S.S. (214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham).—Friday, August 21st, 7.45 p.m.: MISS RUTH BALLIM (Committee of African Organisations), "Apartheid in South Africa."

Notes and News

WE REGRET that, owing to increased costs following the recent printing agreement, the price of THE FREETHINKER will have to be raised to 6d., from the issue dated September 4th. Subscription charges will also be increased to 35s., 17s. 6d. and 8s. 9d. for 12 months, 6 months and 3 months respectively, and, for the U.S.A., \$5.00 per year.

"IF YOU find yourself with time to spare at Euston Station"—says the Roman Catholic illustrated magazine, *Novena* (July-August)—"remember that the church of St. Aloysius is just around the corner in Phoenix Street." "Our Lord will be pleased to see you," it continues in its quaintly familiar style, and "You will find Our Lady of Perpetual Succour there too." It conjures up a picture of the travelling Papist slipping inside to say "How d'y'do" and "Pleased to meet you, too."

"SOMETIMES IT SEEMS that the enemy prevails, and that we have lost the day." This pitiful cry occurs in the Annual Report for the year ending 31st March, 1959, of the Evangelization Society, Northern Counties Branch, which reached us this year rather belatedly. But the Society knows that it is on the winning side and can say with David, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." It must be nice to know, too, "That in these days of in-

creased costs, the Lord, *through His own people*, will meet our every need." The italics are ours.

RELIGION AND POLITICS *do* mix, says the Rev. C. Guster-son, vicar of All Saints' Church, Sydenham, and he tells his parishioners not to be surprised if he openly supports one political party against another at the General Election. Mind you, as a Christian, he still says "that the Christian way of life is *the* life" but, "Till we have that we must choose between the various programmes put before us by the political parties" and "on balance some of us think that one political programme "is nearer to the Mind of Christ and some another . . ." (*The Kentish Mercury*, 17/7/59). If only that "Mind" had expressed itself clearly and unequivocally it might have saved a lot of trouble!

"CAN AN AGNOSTIC pray for faith?" asked the Dean of St. Paul's (*Daily Telegraph*, 1/8/59). Some would reject the idea with scorn, continued Dr. Matthews, but "the situation is not quite so simple as this." The agnostic is "aware of values"; there is love in the world, concern for the human race, beauty in nature and in art; there is truth in the world, and the claim of duty. When the agnostic "transcends the merely selfish standpoint he knows that these values deserve his devotion and his service. He can say 'I hope, I earnestly hope that they may grow and prevail in me and in the world.'" And, said the Dean, "it is only one step from hope to faith." The agnostic's prayer then, is a "cry," a "call": "Is anyone there?" But supposing there is no reply, Dr. Matthews; what then?

THE 150th Anniversary of Thomas Paine's death may have been overlooked by most papers (*The Observer* being a notable exception) and treated with scorn by one (*Daily Telegraph*, 9/6/59), but it was remembered by Freethinkers in many parts of the world. And the latest issue of *The Westralian Secularist* (No. 6, July) tell us that the Perth (Australia) Secular Fellowship met on June 7th to honour the great man's memory. Beside the simple and quite unreverent report of that friendly gathering, the *Daily Telegraph's* "Peter Simple" sarcasm seems strangely empty. "Once more," it said, "the skeleton of this sterile agitator is paraded by Michael Foot and others, through the indifferent streets. Once more his idiot judgments, are respectfully quoted . . . once more his withered epigrams are bandied about." And once more the Establishment hurls abuse at the upholder of the *Rights of Man!*

WE WERE very sorry to hear of the death, in Birkenhead, of Alexander Stewart, author of that splendid pamphlet, *The Menace of Catholic Action*. Mr. Stewart, a retired Merchant Navy officer, was, of course, a strong Protestant, but he was not afraid to associate with Freethinkers in opposition to the Church of Rome. One of the best meetings the now (alas!) defunct Council for the Investigation of Vatican Influence and Censorship (CIVIC) held, brought together Mr. Stewart, the late Joseph McCabe and Mr. F. A. Ridley, President of the National Secular Society, on the same platform. The Pioneer Press has just a few copies of Mr. Stewart's pamphlet left at 1s. plus 2d. postage, and we advise those interested to apply early.

WE WERE pleased to note that Mr. D. Joseph's article, "Religious Trends in France" (THE FREETHINKER, 8/5/59) was reprinted in the July issue of *The Liberal* (U.S.A.).

Summer Solstice Festivities 1959

By V. VILDOMEČ

(Western Germany)

THE AREA IN AND NEAR the Harz mountain range belongs to those parts of Germany in which age-old popular tradition has remained relatively vivid down to our own day. The preservation of many of the old customs which we witness now has resulted, however, from more or less artificial measures taken by various organisations.

A few days ago, one of the local Göttingen dailies mentioned that there would be a summer solstice festivity at the "Bismarck Stone" after sundown on June 21st. These neo-pagan rites having had a long and interesting tradition in Germany—especially since the founding of the Germanic Faith Movement in the 'thirties—the writer went full of expectation to the "Bismarck Stone." This is a circular structure built on a hill overlooking a part of the city of Göttingen and much of the surrounding region. It rather resembles Stonehenge, but was built, at a considerable cost, only in 1902 as a place of solar rites in the honour of Bismarck, the main supporters of the scheme having been students' organisations and individuals connected with the University of Göttingen. The actual event on June 21st 1959, was a complete disappointment. It was organised by a group of Sudeten Germans who had been expelled from Czechoslovakia in 1945-1947. There were patriotic songs. There was a fire up on the central part of the structure. There were persons holding paper lanterns on the steps. The hub of the programme, however, was a purely political speech stating the right of the Sudeten Germans to return to their homeland. The term for homeland ("Heimat") was actually used—except for articles, auxiliary verbs and similar empty words—probably more frequently than any other word. The speech contained the usual Central European political truths and half-truths. If one were to believe the impressions gathered at this festivity there is a strong desire among these Germans to get back to Sudetenland. This may add to the current political unrest in Central Europe. It certainly also shows the futility of such measures as the expulsion of 2-3 millions of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia in 1945-1947.

On June 27th, a few days after the actual astronomical summer solstice, another event took place near Göttingen. It was organised for members from the whole region by the Freethought Community (Freigeistige Gemeinschaft), Göttingen on another hill overlooking the Göttingen region. (We have to mention here that this organisation comprises some trends which would not be necessarily endorsed by British Freethinkers.) There is a large garden café called "Emperor Wilhelm Park" on this hill. Young participants in this solstice festivity had an opportunity to dance there to some very good music, before it got entirely dark. A score or so of young people with burning torches went then to a pile of wood prepared in front of the café in a meadow. Standing around the pile, they made a really interesting picture in the darkness. There assembled a crowd of several hundreds of persons. The pile was set on fire. There were songs, verses, folk dances. The rather extensive programme might have been performed on rigidly disciplined military or ecclesiastical lines, but this was not the case. The whole had a touch of spontaneity and improvisation which made it really attractive. The speech, delivered by a person from a rather distant place, was formally good. It was combined with verses. Because of a touch of lyricism, it would be difficult to give its full contents here. There were references to the pagan solar rites

of the old Teutons. The mysteries surrounding the night of the summer solstice and natural phenomena in general were mentioned, although, of course, for our pagan forefathers the limits of the mysterious were different from what they are for us. There was a patriotic touch in the speech, recalling that, 1950 years ago, a Teutonic military leader by defeating the Romans saved the Teutons from Romanisation and fusion with the aliens ("Verwelschung"). For the writer, who is a heretic especially in things concerning patriotism and the like, this was the only real cacophony in the whole event, as it turned his thoughts to a very mixed insular nation which managed to subdue a quarter of the world in spite of its own "Verwelschung". When the fire was burning low, some young men jumped over it. There was also a couple who waged the jump. According to an age-old Harz myth, the girl became pregnant as the result of jumping over the summer solstice fire. If the writer happens to be in Göttingen next year, he will not fail to report to the readers whether he saw her again there holding a fire-conceived baby in her arms! The poetic spell was broken by firemen who had been standing by during the whole ceremony; when the participants began to disperse, the firemen started to put out quite unpoetically with their hose what remained of the holy summer solstice fire.

Koestler as Hagiographer

By FRANK MAITLAND

I KNOW NOTHING about Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Up till now his name has been a vague one in my knowledge—the name of another of those religious cranks, of which India has produced so many. India and America, it seems, share this common social phenomenon. Recently Arthur Koestler wrote up Bhave in *The Observer* as "The Last of the Saints." There seems to be no pressing reason for this, outside journalistic interest. Bhave is an international figure, like the Shah of Iran, the Dalai Lama and Billy Graham.

All I know about Bhave comes from reading Koestler's articles. I leave aside all the asceticism, disciple-ism and mass following as part of the general ritualism of saintship, to look at the two practical consequences of Bhave's work—and also to take a look at Koestler now that he has entered the long ranks of hagiographers.

Bhave is not given to miracles. Nor to church-building. He is not much interested in creeds or rituals. All he is concerned with is God. Bhave was the adopted heir of Gandhi. He spent over five years in prison for taking part in civil disobedience campaigns. He is a teacher and organiser, an expert spinner, and, as he told Koestler, "Next to God, if I love anything best it is mathematics" apparently unaware that he keeps strange brain-mates.

Bhave's religion is of the simplest kind. A small land-owner gives 100 acres to be divided among the untouchables. It is a sign of God. "And God's will was there and they gave me 25 acres," says Bhave somewhere to Koestler. This reminds me of my days at Sunday School, when the treats and Xmas presents donated by the wealthy were always talked of as gifts from God, on the proposition that God alone could move the stony hearts of the rich and make them charitable. In the same spirit, a Roman Catholic gives 1s. to St. Anthony and when he goes round to an Irish building contractor next morning and lands a job, attributes this blessing to the intervention of the saint.

Bhave naively declares that the success of his movement is due to the will of God. So be it.

Bhave's movement—the Bhoodan—is concerned to persuade landowners in India to give up their land freely to the poor. They are to do this for the love of God. Koestler says that since 1951, around eight million acres have been given to Bhoodan, but only half of this is cultivatable land, and of this half "owing to technical difficulties only a fraction of it has actually been distributed to the landless." So it would seem that neither the love of God in high places nor the will of God are able to get round the "technical" difficulties. Moreover, the givers of this land number 700,000 making on the average the individual donation one of just under six acres of cultivatable land. It is clear, therefore, that what Bhoodan has accomplished so far is not a moving of the heart among the Princes and landed potentates, but a genuine communistic and co-operative movement among the peasants themselves. As a piece of practical socialism, this is all to the good, because, while schemes of this kind were merely utopian in the first flush of capitalism, at the present time, when the world is steadily progressing towards a socialist society, such movements are of practical importance.

Strangely enough, both Bhave and Koestler give the impression that Bhoodan is not an alternative to the large landowning system, but is an alternative to Communism. Koestler says:

"In the critical year 1951, the appearance of the irascible saint had started the turning of the tide against the Communists in Hyderabad province, the heart of India."

When Bhave found Bhoodan in Hyderabad, during the civil war in 1951, he told the Communist leaders, "I want to live in communism with God—because that is to live in communism with the poor." He told Koestler, "If I do not put my faith in the power of love and God, then I must abandon my belief in non-violence and follow the violent way of the Communists." Clearly, the Saint is opposed to "godless communism" and is not above playing the role of a leader of reaction. But, unlike the Pope, who believes in a holy war for the extermination of the godless, Bhave puts god in communism—and, like a good mathematician, solves the equation.

The most interesting remark that Koestler reports from his talks with Bhave is that Bhoodan is a movement of the heart, not the head. Bhave told him:

"The land which is given does not matter much in itself. It matters as a token of love and compassion.

When land is given, both the donor and the receiver are changed. The spiritual value is in that change." A remarkable passage, in which our Saint has the best of both the great world philosophies. He believes that the heart must be changed in order to change the material structure of society. But he also believes that the change in ownership changes the man. Here he is a good Marxist.

In the "spiritual value" of exchange, Bhave the saint touches the socialist, the Bhoodan meets the revolutionary. Of course, one individual change between individuals does not change them—and Bhave does not mean this, for he wants a mass exchange (even if it only embraces one-sixth of India). He wants a social exchange. As the Marxists have it, in changing the general mode of production, man changes himself.

Apparently Koestler and Bhave are at one in opposing the "violence" of communism. But when Bhave advised Koestler to go thou and do likewise, Koestler replied, "This is too much to expect from human nature." At least, Bhave has the courage of his belief in God and

campaigns to change the hearts of the Indian landowners. It would be interesting if Koestler and his fellow-radicals of all shades really started a Bhoodan movement in this country to persuade British capitalists to hand over their factories to the working people through a change of heart. But, of course, "technical difficulties" and "human nature" stand in the way of the will of God.

The Depravity of Human Nature

A COPY of the Annual Report of the Evangelical Alliance for 1959 has just reached me, and I was glad to see its sturdy championship of the kind of Christianity which was advocated for centuries as coming straight from Jesus Christ and God Almighty himself. Here there is no beating about the bush, no surrendering to "Modernism" with its rejection of the plain and unequivocal teaching found in the Precious Bible, the word of God, unchallenged and unassailable.

The Doctrinal Basis as adopted in 1846 for the Evangelical Alliance insists on "the Divine Inspiration and Authority" of the "Holy Scriptures". It upholds "the Unity of Godhead and the Trinity of the Persons therein"; the "Utter Depravity of Human Nature in consequence of the Fall"; and of course such commonplaces of the True Christian Faith as the Incarnation, Justification by Faith alone, the Atonement, the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, the Judgment of the World by Jesus, the Eternal Blessedness of the Righteous, and the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked. I am unfortunately not able to say which of these causes members of the Evangelical Alliance the more genuine delight—the Blessedness of the Righteous (who are naturally the Members of the Evangelical Alliance), or the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked. I should plump for the latter.

But really top of the bill, so to speak, is the list of great names who stoutly support all this. They include such people as Sir Henry Holland, C.I.E., M.B., etc., Lady Bates, the Rt. Hon. Ernest Brown, C.H., Sir William Dobbie, K.C.B., Lord Kinnaird, K.B.E., the Lord Bishop of Liverpool, the Lord Bishop of Rochester, and many other right reverend Bishops. On the Executive Council are a number of almost equally eminent persons, all of whom subscribe to an almost unheard of Fundamentalism—that is, unheard among the average, intelligent believer. Only one lady finds herself in this bunch of Christians—a rather remarkable fact. As a rule, Christian women are ten to one in the average congregation in church or chapel; but here, in this Evangelical Alliance, it is the male who predominates. Perhaps the reason is that a good Christian man recognises in himself—and not in Christian women—"the utter Depravity of Human Nature."

I must admit that I have never heard previously of the Evangelical Alliance, and I do not want to again. We are living in the year 1959, and this Alliance seems to think we are still living in the glorious days of St. Augustine, and things haven't changed. But if Freethinkers really believe that our fight for liberating human thoughts from this kind of drivel is almost over, they should think again. For indeed the Evangelical Alliance has never been short of money. Thousands of people still part with cash because they believe in mankind's Utter Depravity, and in Eternal Damnation.

H. CUTNER.

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CORRESPONDENCE

A CORRECTIVE?

Mr. Cutner's recollections (July 10th) as a Freethought critic, and his encounters at the Marble Arch, are interesting reminders of those early struggles, shared and witnessed by the present writer.

One notices that Mr. Cutner started his long pilgrimage as a boy whose mental outlook was clearly biased. "My employer delighted in reading pamphlets by Ingersoll to me." These were the days of religious sincerity and religious intolerance. Here was no sympathy with religious views of any kind: a most unfortunate environment in which to cultivate a balanced judgment. Ingersoll was a fine, a brilliant writer and orator, and his judgment of orthodox religion and the Bible deserve serious study, but a serious student must also read the other side. It was that pioneer scholar in Sanskrit studies, Professor Max Muller, who pointed out how acutely conscious orientalist were of the narrowness of conception that might arise from an exclusive nurture on the thought of the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans, and that from India especially we might derive the needed corrective to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact, more human.

R. J. JACKSON.

ROYAL RELIGION

The author of "This Believing World" has a few things to say about an article by Sarah Jenkins in the *News Chronicle* re. the film "The Nun's Story" in which she seems to take violent objection to the "boot kissing penance scene." While this grovelling is completely disgusting and obscene to me also, what actually is the difference between that and the hysterical adulation paid to this young woman they call a "queen"; particularly at the present time when she has performed the (so it would seem) miraculous feat of conceiving a child? I'll bet there are a very large number of the population in this country who would kiss her high-heeled shoes if they got the chance. I have noticed that most Freethinkers seem to soft-pedal a bit when they mention "Royalty" in their articles so let's have an article from say Mr. E. G. McFarlane in one of your issues.

ROBERT CLARKE.

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

Regarding the discussion of the term "Scientific Humanism" in your correspondence column, and as to whether the meaning is too broad or insufficiently implies atheistic secularism, I would suggest that the two words are necessary to convey the desired meaning adequately and that both are essential in practice in the modern world. It is apparent that without the scientific attitude we get misguided charity and that without goodwill we may get nuclear war or "1984." Of the two, humanity or goodwill is probably the more essential.

A quick, rough definition of a Scientific Humanist could be: One who put—1. Doubt before Dogma, and 2. Mankind before God—when faced with only the two alternatives in each case. That is, Curiosity and Goodwill are emphasised, and it is a matter of emphasis as much as precise meaning that is important.

I think that this definition would exclude all "Christian Humanist" and pseudo-scientific types of interpretations.

The difference between Science and Religion is not that one is rational and the other not—both can be rational, mystical, imaginative, dogmatic, etc., but that Science encourages curiosity and doubt; indeed is founded upon investigation of evidence while religious orthodoxy is founded, and indeed depends for its survival, on the absence of criticism and inquisitiveness. Thus the two are, and always will be, opposed. Humanism, as an Ism or system of belief as compared with Christian humanitarianism or humanity, asserts that human welfare is of prime importance and that no gods or creeds or race or colour must have priority over the interests of all Mankind. Hence a theist or deist is only a Humanist insofar as his god does not interfere with Man's noblest self expression.

D. L. HUMPHRIES.

NOT US

Discussing Roman Catholics in the fourth paragraph of "This Believing World" in THE FREETHINKER (17/7/59) you write: "And it looks from the way WE so often give in to them . . ." We! Who are we? Surely 'Protestant' and 'Freethinker' are not synonymous terms to be covered by the word 'We'!

VICTOR KILPATRICK.

"DEBATING" GROUP

Some time ago I got an invitation from an old "friend" of mine—who knew nothing of my "conversion" from Roman Catholicism to Freethought, to join a debating group in Dublin. The debates are mainly spent in making plans for the breaking up of groups like Protestant Action and the Communist Party.

The group was almost entirely responsible for the mutilation of posters and interference with canvassers in an election in which the Socialist S. O'Reirdan was one of the candidates.

S. M. (IRELAND).

DEMIURGE INTO DEVIL?

I have been studying very carefully a pamphlet by F. A. Ridley on *Christ and Satan* (reprinted from THE FREETHINKER), and found it particularly interesting. It suggested a line of research which could be profitably pursued by a historian of the development of Christian doctrine.

It has been generally assumed that Christianity overcame its earlier heterodox offshoots, and emerged a pure, triumphant doctrine and faith, free of pagan and idolatrous associations. F. A. Ridley shows that from 200 A.D. to 1100 A.D., Christian doctrine explained that Christ had been sacrificed on the Cross, to Satan, The Prince of Darkness. This, in turn, suggests an even more extraordinary doctrine that persisted through the centuries—the doctrine and teaching of the Gnostics. It was the gnostics who taught that the Demiurge, the Old Testament-Judaic-Creator-God, was the enemy of the Logos-Christ. Is it not likely then, that the original doctrine of atonement, about the year 200 A.D., was that the Demiurge had sacrificed the Christ on Calvary, but that in Christ's Resurrection, he had triumphed over the Judaic-God?

This doctrine was then modified and the Demiurge became Satan, The Prince of Darkness, to whom the Logos had to be sacrificed.

I do not state categorically that the Satan of the medieval Catholic Church was the Demiurge of the Gnostics, but the doctrine of Gnosticism has striking resemblances to it.

I would appreciate the views of experts on this theory.

AKIBA.

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