

# The Freethinker

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I THINK THAT WE ARE ALL AGREED that knowledge of science, whether exact, natural, human or social, is undoubtedly the most effective means of developing in man's mind the technique and procedure of free enquiry and free thought. Now today we are faced by a situation, which we can call exceptional, the essential elements of which are as follows:—

(a) There is a vast increase, apparently without limit, in scientific knowledge; let us say, in the volume of the results of scientific investigation and their technical applications.

(b) On all sides there is developing a greater and more urgent need for men of science and technicians.

(c) At the same time, with almost the violence of a volcanic eruption, there appears a general desire to learn, assimilate and master the results of science.

These factors would seem to present a most fertile ground for the growth of the scientific spirit, which is the source of freethinking; we should be able to discover in this wish for scientific knowledge an impulse favourable to the cause for which we strive. Nevertheless, there is a danger. With the passing of each day, the encyclopaedic knowledge of scientific progress becomes more and more beyond the powers of a single man; the ambition to know merely the essentials of each and every science is becoming a chimera.

Even in a single science those who devote their lives to it give up any hope of mastering it in all its detail. Yet the desire to attain an encyclopaedic sovereignty shows itself every day; the more often as such supremacy becomes the more impossible. It is met to some degree by an effervescence of popularised information, hurried and superficial, bubbling up like marsh gas through the daily Press, the radio and the television. Hence the wide-spread fancy that culture and mental development can be realised by means of a kaleidoscope of bits and pieces joggled into pseudo-harmony.

## Danger

I would very seriously draw your attention in this brief communication to this threatening and increasing danger of confused vulgarisation, and, having emphasised it, suggest a remedy; a method of action, based on careful and exact work, which may endow scientific studies with the virtue of forming free minds.

With my first aim in view, I shall allow myself to give one or two examples by way of illustration. A few years ago there was at Geneva, in the halls of the Palace of Nations a remarkable exhibition of apparatus wonderfully constructed, intricate and complex, demonstrating what had been discovered of atomic fission and the utilisation of the energy so obtained. In dazzling competition the world's leading nations displayed their marvels; in keen rivalry

each sought to accompany its display with informative literature and spoken explanations so that the visitor should go away impressed and enlightened.

I have no hesitation in saying that this mighty and admirable effort was a complete failure as far as the generality of the public was concerned. They goggled at the magnificent and monstrous apparatus without a spark of understanding of the principles involved, the aims sought, and

the functioning ingeniously invented, and went away as wise as they came in. Alone, the very few well acquainted beforehand with the problems in question could draw any profit from their visit; and, meeting some of the high military and civil personages who had organised this really astounding exhibition,

I suggested that the motto on their banner should be not "Man wearies of all save of knowledge"; but, in very large letters, "Man wearies of all, save of not understanding." This sally was sourly received. I was told that the exhibition would stimulate the public to study and understand the mysteries of nuclear fission; that in this way a healthy approach to the problems raised by atomic disintegration would be inculcated; and I do not deny that this is possible. All the same I affirm that the exhibition in itself had but the slightest value. I will add, too, a more severe criticism. An essential of the scientific spirit is to realise and admit in any circumstance when such arises, that it does not understand. Whereas I am convinced that there were many excellent persons who, after visiting this exhibition, fancied naïvely that they knew and understood, and were able to speak with authority on, what they had seen and heard.

This is an example of the devaluation of the sciences, under the influence of ill-understood popularisation, as a means towards the formation of a scientific spirit, of a spirit of free enquiry, in short, Freethinking. There is, in my opinion, nothing more pernicious than to make men fancy that they know, when they do not, or that they understand when they are far from understanding. Exhibitions, such as the one I have just referred to, marvellous though they be, are of no help at all to Freethought.

Allow me to give a second example. Yielding to the general desire of its public for scientific information which is current today, a broadcasting institution of this continent devotes a regular weekly period in the course of which any listener may ask any question of a group of scientific notables who are limited to replies of three or four minutes each at the most. No doubt, when descriptive information alone is required, these brief answers to an incoherent "hash" of vague questions may offer some interesting data, valuable to an attentive public. But to fancy that a first-class scientist, no matter how brilliant an expositor, can present an explanation of how and why the theories of Heisenberg differ from those of Einstein or of any similar problem in three minutes is to cock a snook at science and at the whole teaching profession, and is profoundly harmful

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### *The Enormous Growth of Scientific Knowledge*

— By HENRI LAUGIER —

(Professor of Biology in the Sorbonne, formerly Assistant General Secretary of UNO)

Translated by C. Bradlaugh Bonner

as far as the development of thinking minds is concerned.

I need not say that these two examples which I have taken to illustrate my contention could be multiplied an hundred-fold without difficulty; you can probably think of many yourselves; and I believe you will agree with me that culture and the scientific spirit — the free mind — have little to gain, and much to lose, from the chaotic superficial popularisation of science, ever straining to cover vaster and vaster domains as science extends its boundaries. Its sole result is to hide beneath a monomolecular lamina a bottomless abyss of ignorance.

### What is to be done?

What are we to do about it? Shall we sit down passively, confessing that human knowledge has got beyond the individual and watch the anarchic and incoherent propagation of undigested information do its worst on minds anxious to know? Not so.

From the destructive to the constructive; that is what I shall try to do. We must not imagine that it is merely scientific information which builds up the scientific spirit; it is the profound knowledge, practice and mastery of method, of the methods that man has used to make scientific progress; it is knowing how men have sought out and arrived at truths; it is the revelation of the adventures, the successes and the defeats of questing man in his search into the unknown which surrounds him.

Please do not think I am asking for university courses in methodology, in the history of science or in its philosophy. What I am asking for is practical. I ask that the student should carry out himself work on precise problems, which have been tackled and, for the time being, solved in the past; work which will teach him who does it something of the structure of his own mind as well as the ways of the experimenter. Work which will teach him: (1) that attentive, intelligent and critical observation of facts which is not so simple as is often thought; (2) the richest and freest play of the imagination in the endeavour to formulate systems theoretically possible for the explanation of given phenomena; and (3) the obligation to re-examine facts by experimental investigation, setting all theorising aside for the time being, then ascertaining what explanatory system meets best the experimental test, all known facts being taken into consideration.

### Concrete Problems

I am convinced that by keeping to real, concrete problems, highly satisfactory results can be obtained in all the sciences; and I here suggest one or two. In astronomy it is no doubt of interest to know the topographic details of the celestial map, but it is also of value to follow the steps which have led men from the notion of a heavenly vault to that of today's universe of boundless space. In biology, it is doubtless useful to know in detail, say, the situations and functions of the glands of internal secretion, but what is enlightening is to see how from initial observations and by what experimental steps the notion of a gland of internal secretion has been conceived. In physics it is definitely of interest to know the structure of the atom, that micro-universe, but we need to understand, too, just how men have, in the course of a relatively short time, been able to make acceptable this profound change in our conception of matter and of energy.

To sum up, young minds must be familiarised with the actual intellectual and experimental procedure which has led to the establishment of the scientific concepts of the day. They must be encouraged to employ to the full the unending dialectic of observation, imagination and experimental control, in whatever aspect of their chosen science they are studying. To do this will not, I feel sure, require

the superficial memories of endless detail, since it will be a study in depth, nothing being left unexamined, of a few precisely delimited problems such as are to be found in all the experimental sciences and, henceforward, in some of the human sciences.

We have then before us a problem, still sufficiently vast, but clearly delimited; no longer one of unending and paralysing detail; which defies human powers to master. We are tackling a new conception of human culture, based, not on the accumulation of information, but on the integration of scientific methods in the young student's mind.

Such a system of practical methodology, focussed on concrete cases, in the diverse sciences has not as far as I am aware, yet been undertaken; and here I call on all you young professors, young research students, bold publishers and pedagogues to undertake it. Success, I am convinced, will crown your efforts; and, succeeding as you will, by creating an encyclopaedia of concrete, practical methodology, you will render a most signal and far-reaching service to science and to freedom of thought throughout the world.

## That Easter Egg!

By H. CUTNER

AN ARTICLE BY A REAL LIVE CARDINAL would be too good to miss, so we must not be too hard on the *TV Times* (Easter week) for printing one by Cardinal Godfrey, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. (Incidentally, some of us have often wondered whether, if England were under a Catholic hierarchy, the head Cardinal would have allowed a *Protestant* Archbishop of Westminster. The reply made famous in *Pygmalion* by Bernard Shaw would no doubt be the all-sufficient answer.)

The worthy Cardinal deals with "The Egg and Easter," and though he admits that "the giving of eggs at Easter is of ancient origin," he takes good care not to tell us *how* ancient. In fact, he goes no further back than to Edward the Confessor. After this, the Cardinal devotes some lengthy paragraphs to show that "the rising of Christ our Lord from the tomb is fundamental and essential in Christian teaching" — as if this was quite unknown until he told us. In any case, what emerges is that the egg is "a symbol of the Resurrection" which shows either an extravagant disingenuousness, or an appalling ignorance.

The egg has been the symbol of fertility for countless centuries — certainly long before Christianity was ever thought of. It was used by the ancient Egyptians as an Easter (that is, as a Spring) offering; but of course some of the most ancient beliefs about the Universe are that it came from a "cosmic" egg which was represented in stone in the shape of half an egg (or a whole one) on a pedestal.

As Brand says in his once famous *Popular Antiquities*, the "custom of giving eggs at Easter is to be traced to the theology and philosophy of the Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks, Romans, etc., among all of whom an egg was an emblem of the universe, the work of the supreme Divinity." Most of the ancient religions were phallic, or based on sunworship, or both, and Christianity took over nearly all their beliefs, rationalising them wherever possible, and hiding their source of origin. And as far as symbolism is concerned the egg at Easter is purely *phallic* — and no doubt the Cardinal knows this as well as we do.

—NEXT WEEK—

MATERIALISM

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG

# What Can We Offer?

By COLIN McCALL

AN AUSTRALIAN READER, Mr. D. L. Humphries, prompted by recent discussions on whether THE FREETHINKER is too militant or not militant enough, has sent me his own friendly comments on the subject. As it is possible that his views are shared by others, and as I think they are of general interest, I propose to deal with some of them here.

Mr. Humphries "reluctantly" acknowledges that "traditional religion does provide its believers with a framework and motivation for life and can make them quite happy," and that "demolishing the old house in which the religionists live can be quite distressing for them, especially if they have nowhere to go." "Our modern house," he says, "is only a blueprint compared with the tradition and definite beliefs of the old." The best thing, of course, would be not to indoctrinate the children with an obsolete theology in the first place, he adds, but we have to contend with a situation where they have been indoctrinated.

I think most of us would agree with Mr. Humphries, with however, rather important qualifications — or differences of emphasis. In the first place, we live in a world of declining religious belief and more especially, in a country of very considerable scepticism. I would assert that, in fact, relatively few people in Britain (Eire may be different) get really deep comfort from Christianity: the majority are indifferent to religion. Though they may retain vague beliefs, call themselves "C of E," get married in church, and so forth, religion plays little or no part in their lives. Freethought propaganda, therefore, can hardly distress them, though it may stir the old beliefs a little and "set their backs up." As far as religion is concerned, these people have, not so much "nowhere to go," as no wish to go anywhere. And, although I would, for social reasons, prefer them to take up a more positive freethinking attitude, I can understand their position. As Freethinkers have repeatedly shown, the fundamental, and even the secondary features of life are completely independent of religion. Love, friendship, family life, aesthetic pleasure, adventure, and so on; none of these needs Christianity or any form of religion for its stimulation and sustenance.

So, to a large extent, the conception of a mass of refugees from religion wandering in the wilderness with nowhere to go — no promised land — is a mistaken one. There are some, however, who might well be hurt if they should hear or see (in print) their cherished beliefs attacked. They are, as I have said, relatively few, in Britain at any rate, but that doesn't mean they should not be considered. They *should*; but not in isolation.

Our policy has to take these few into account but, necessarily, in relation to the whole. Christianity is here and is still influential; sufficiently so to be taught in our schools and to be propagated on radio and television. There is the evil. The problem is: what should Freethinkers do about it? Answers vary from the passive "nothing, (for fear of upsetting the Christians") to the militant. Rather popular at the moment, it seems, is the comparatively passive state of leaving the religious to their own devices and cultivating one's own little (non-religious) garden. I see two great objections to this. First, it completely ignores the social nature of religion and treats it as a purely personal matter. Leaving the religious to their own devices is not merely letting Miss Smith go to the Parish church every Sunday evening, or letting Mrs. Murphy and family go to Mass every Sunday morning, for their own comfort; it also means leaving the Archbishop of Canterbury free

to interfere in the life of the nation (or the Royal Family) and, more seriously to my mind, it means permitting the Roman Catholic Church to increase its power, far out of proportion to its numbers, in this country.

The second objection concerns the Smiths and Murphys rather more particularly. No doubt they do get comfort from their respective faiths. Nevertheless, I believe it to be a false comfort, and I cannot but act upon that belief. I don't definitely seek these people out and force my views upon them, but, for what I conceive to be their and the social good, I claim the right to express those views in public. And among my particular friends in the Freethought movement, I number quite a few formerly very religious people who are grateful that their faith was assaulted — and demolished — in public.

Mr. Humphries, quite unconsciously I am sure (and I know he won't take offence at what I say) prejudices the discussion from the start with his metaphor of "the old house." A house is, to all but a few Britons, a necessity of life. Moreover, it evokes the deepest emotions relating to the family, the fireside, and so on. But religion, I must repeat, is not necessary to life. We can live, and live happily, without religion; few of us can live happily without a house. The metaphor, then, is ill-chosen.

Mr. Humphries suggests, however, that religion fills some deep need in human life, and he fears that, unless we can offer substitutes for at least some aspects of it, "people will backslide into their old beliefs or adopt weird new ones like Nazism, Spiritualism, Yoga, Surrealism, etc., or just dissipate — 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.'" He is prepared even to adopt "some of the ideas of existing religions" as "preferable to having too attenuated a Humanism that attracts only studious intellectuals." And he proposes a common symbol and an "anti-bible."

A good symbol, he suggests, might be a "Question mark, the dot of which is a heart, symbolising Curiosity and Goodwill, the basis of Freethinking Secularism." The "anti-bible" would consist of selections from Freethought writings. In themselves, these ideas are harmless enough, I suppose, but I foresee danger. I wear a Freethought badge myself, but a symbol is more than just a badge, and who knows what it might become? The border-line between symbol and totem is tenuous. An anti-bible might in turn become a bible, a dogma, and that is contrary to the very spirit of Freethought. The danger, in short, is that in taking over "some of the ideas of existing religions" we may well take over some of the attendant evils, too.

No, I am afraid Freethought is not for the timid, it is for those who are prepared to travel with their eyes open, to explore new regions for themselves. Not content with the perennial conducted tour arranged by the old agencies, the Freethinker seeks new prospects, new experiences. Stimulated and refreshed, he returns to relate his adventures and encourage others, too, to venture from the familiar trodden track.

### QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

(5) God has spoken — what has He said?

Please do not talk in Church before the commencement of the Service.

—Blackpool Parish Church Service Sheet.

### THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT THE FREETHINKER FOR 1959

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## This Believing World

It is astonishing how unbelieving some of our judges are when it comes to *modern* supernaturalism. In all our courts religious people have to swear on the Bible that they are telling the truth — the Bible being, of course, the greatest supernatural book in the Christian world; but when it comes to “virgin” births, amorous exploits with devils, and so on, our judges resolutely refuse to accept *any* kind of evidence.

★

This was the case when Mr. Justice Hewson recently rejected the plea of a wife who was being sued for divorce. She maintained that a coloured Jehovah's Witness whom she knew had nothing to do with the coloured baby she gave birth to as it had been “astrally conceived,” the father being the astral body of a Franciscan student 14 years ago. After all, this story could have been just as true as the better-known Virgin Birth of Jesus — but the judge refused to believe her, and the husband got his divorce. In the precious days of “our Lord,” she would *not* have got it.

★

Although most Spiritualists are fervent believers in the “Divinity” of Jesus, there are a few who go no further than Deists and Humanists, for example — namely, that he was a very Great Man. On the much disputed question that he was a “myth,” they now have a positive answer. It appears that “spirit guides” have actually met him in “Summerland” — or whatever it is called. A writer in *Psychic News* knows this for a fact; so at last the problem has been solved. Guides like “Red Cloud” or “Wandering Flower” have settled it for us once for ever. Jesus is certainly not the “Son” of God, but a Great Man still alive and kicking in the happy realms we shall all go to if we are good in this world. It is a happy thought.

★

What the “Daily Mail” calls the “facts about religion” have formed an intensive enquiry in that national journal by Miss Rhona Churchill who, some time ago, expressed a profound conviction in the truth of all the Roman Catholic miracles at Lourdes in the same journal. She swallowed then everything she was told, in most cases without investigation. This time she has tried to find out some “facts” about churchgoing and very little else. The *truth* of Christianity she has severely left alone. For her, that religion is as true as the Lourdes miracles.

★

However, we have got one or two facts — out of 100 baptised members of the Church of England, we now know that 61 thought the Church “old-fashioned,” 68 thought it was “mainly for women,” 61 felt it was “mainly for the old,” 59 thought it “dull,” and 49 thought it “uncomfortable” — whatever that means. Some of the “believers” thought the clergy should brighten up the services, and others didn't like to have “rock-n-roll” used for this purpose.” But not one made any comment on the *truth* of Christianity. This was actually taken for granted! Just like the Lourdes “miracles” in fact.

★

“Daily Express's” star critic, Mr. Bernard Levin, who specialises in drastic criticisms of plays he doesn't like, went into raptures recently over “The Admiration of Life” by Pauline Taylor at the Arts Theatre. It is “a religious play” and is “all about the desperate Agnostic longing for belief” which somehow or other so many writers of religious books and plays find Agnostics always worrying about; but which those of us who mix with them discover never worries them in the least. On the contrary, they are glad to get shut of almost all “belief.”

## A Catholic President ?

By N. E. S. WEST (U.S.A.)

IN THE “LOS ANGELES TIMES” of January 5th, 1960. American Cardinal McIntyre argued that religious beliefs should not bar a man from being elected President of the United States. Here, in part, is what he said: —

Since, therefore, men of all religious affiliations have administered and administered well, responsible public office, is it not a manifestation of an un-American spirit to raise the question in this late day that religious affiliation disqualifies any citizen of integrity and honesty and ability for any office within the gift of the American people or the appointive agent of duly established authority?

Every public office of trust has its relative responsibility. All authority basically comes from God, and the authority imposed in any public service begets an obligation to its source in the exercise of that authority; namely God. This obligation is universal, as is the law of God universal and binding upon all creatures. We are a nation governed and functioning under God.

You will note that the Cardinal claims that all authority basically stems from God.

But, in the USA, the Constitution is the law of the land and that reads, in part, as follows: —

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.

Done in Convention by the unanimous consent of the States present, the 17th day of September, in the year of our Lord, 1787 and of the Independence of the United States of America the 12th.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names.  
Geo. Washington, etc., etc.

You will note that the only reference to a supreme being in that passage is, “in the year of our Lord, 1787,” and that applies to Jesus, not directly to God.

Be that as it may, the basic authority lies with the people, and God was not recognised as the guiding and dominating power in the US Government. Cardinal McIntyre would like to have the concept prevail that the authority stems from God, but that is the traditional Roman Catholic concept, not that of the founders of the United States.

The Roman Catholic Church wants that concept to prevail because it, and it alone (it says) knows the will of God. The spiritual sword, it says, has dominance over the secular sword in case of a conflict of interest. And so, if a “good” Catholic were elected President, the Church would be in a position of authority. The Pope would take precedence over the US citizens' concept of what is best for the country. If the President were a good Catholic he would do what the Priest, the Bishop, the Archbishop, the Cardinal, or the Pope considers best. That this will coincide with what is best for the United States is not, by any means, certain. Certainly the Catholic hierarchical concept conflicts with the American view. The faithful Catholic obeys the Priest, the Priest obeys the Bishop, and so on to the Cardinals, and they obey the Pope. Unquestioning obedience is the rule in the Roman Catholic Church and even a President would have to conform — if he were a good Catholic. In the November 1959 issue of *Church and State*, one may see the Labour Secretary, James P. Mitchell, kneeling to kiss the hand of Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburg.

A Protestant is under no such obligation to any mortal man. A Protestant or a Freethinker does not obediently bend the knee, kiss the hand or kiss the foot of any man.

Of course, there remain two questions: Is Senator John Kennedy a good Catholic? And, can the US take the chance of his not being?

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening; Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.; Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitz Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, CORSAIR, SMITH, etc. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH, etc.

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

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).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, April 24th, 6.45 p.m.: R. MORRELL, "Seek Ye Truth."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, April 24th, 6.30 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, F.R.S.T., "The Future of Free-thought."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, April 24th, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "Two Problems: Youth and Age."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, April 24th, 7 p.m.: C. T. SMITH, "God and The Space Age."

## Notes and News

LAST WEEK, in This Believing World, we looked at the funny side of what the *Daily Express* (2/4/60) called "the semi-mystical worship of Premier Kwame Nkrumah." But it has its serious side too. We have watched the progress of Ghana with hope, goodwill and admiration, but we have become increasingly fearful of dictatorial tendencies. Mr. Anthony Lejeune of the *Express* tells us that he found considerable "evidence of an organised attempt to present him in Messianic terms" and "In Accra market place I bought — for sixpence each — a series of postcards which showed Christ and Nkrumah together." One postcard reproduced in the *Express* showed the two figures seated with Christ, as it were blessing the Premier. And three Biblical passages are quoted: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24.17); "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalms 37.23); and — under Nkrumah — "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth" (2 Samuel 23.4). Mr. Lejeune considers this blasphemous. We are not worried about that, but it does seem dangerous. "Does Nkrumah

himself believe in Nkrumahism?" Mr. Lejeune asks. "It is hard to say," he answers, but "He certainly condones it."

★

WITH THAT TYPICAL Roman Catholic mixture of naïvete and arrogance, seven teenage girls wrote to the *Leicester Mercury* (6/4/60) on the subject of the contraceptive pill. Communism, of course, had to be brought in: the pill was "of more use to Communism than was Lenin." Then it was dragging "our precious God-given gift down to an animal instinct" (is the animal-instinct *not* God-given then?); the "final sapping of the moral code on which our civilisation is founded"; not forgetting "murder legalised." And there could be but one conclusion: "many believe that birth-control is the answer . . . has no-one ever heard of self-control?" Why of course, my dears, even Catholics have *heard* of it, the trouble is they seem least inclined to practise it, as it may well be your unhappy lot to find out.

★

IN A RECENT (5/4/60) review of the possible successors to Dr. Adenauer, the *Daily Express* came down heavily in favour of Defence Minister, Franz-Josef Strauss. And among the reasons for its choice was that Strauss is a Roman Catholic. "He enjoys the support of Josef Frings, senior German cardinal, and of the Catholic hierarchy in Bavaria," said the *Express*, and Bavaria sends "a valuable 57 MPs to the Christian Democrat Government."

★

WE HAVE SOME GOOD FARE to offer readers in the weeks ahead. Mr. H. Cutner devotes a series of articles to a criticism of *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* by E. F. Bruce, recommended by Mr. Geoffrey Ashe in the controversy last year; Mrs. Margaret McIlroy contributes a study of St. Theresa of Lisieux; and Mr. Gustav Davidson writes at some length on a subject he has extensively studied, "The Tongue of Angels." Mr. Davidson, Secretary of the Poetry Society of America, has just completed the first draft of a *Dictionary of Angels and Demons*.

★

MR. AND MRS. COLIN MCCALL wish to express their grateful thanks to readers and members of the National Secular Society who so generously contributed to the wedding cheque presented at the NSS Annual Dinner.

## Los Angeles Adventists Supplement

I NOTICED YOUR SHORT STORY of March 4th, 1960, relative to Los Angeles Seventh Day Adventists. There is a branch of this sect with World Headquarters here. They are known as Davidians. This might possibly be a sort of nick-name. However, the local Press and TV both refer to them by that name. Back in the '40's the sect had a credit rating of 7 million dollars. Last April (1959) they started coming here from all directions expecting the end of the World or Judgment Day. They sold their farms and gave their wealth to the Church. There was no exact time stated, but it appeared that it "was coming soon." The sect became excited. Those coming here lived in tents until arrangements were later made for their accommodation. A sort of communal living has always been engaged in by this local group.

Last month I was in a local Savings and Loan Association on business. The President called me over explaining the policy of the association on insuring the amount of the accounts. I asked him if he had many bad loans. He said not many. However, one of the Davidians who was a local contractor, had left here shortly after the end of the world did not come about, and taken bankruptcy in California. The contractor, according to my informant, had been a good risk because he had some capital to work with in his trade of building houses, but after he had given everything to his Church he could not successfully operate on the borrowed capital. It seems the Church did not give the money back! It seems all right to misrepresent matters in religion, where white can be proved black either by reading from some old book or by taking another's word for such matters.

HAROLD HENRY, Attorney-at-Law,  
(Waco, Texas).

# The Papacy Versus Italian Freemasonry

By G. HALLYBURTON

The struggle of the Catholic Church against the Grand Orient Masonic Lodges of Italy started 12 years or so after the publication of the Anderson Constitutions in 1717-18. At that time, strange though it may seem now, many priests took a great interest in the Fraternity. But the hierarchy took a vastly different view and, on July 25, 1737, Pope Clement XII in Florence, presided over a *Sacra Congregatio Inquisitionis*. In attendance were the three principal Cardinals, Ottoboni, Spinola and Zondadari, as well as the Inquisitor of the Holy Office. The subject was the suppression of the Masonic Lodges in Italy. Decisions taken at this meeting were not published in Italy at the time (they were first reported in the Berlin *Vossische Zeitung* No. 85, 1737) but when it became generally known that the Holy Office had denounced the Society of Free Masons, anti-Masonic riots occurred in various places in Italy.

The first anti-Masonic Papal Bull was published on 28th April, 1738, and the following excerpts give some idea of their intolerance and bigotry. It begins:—

Condemnation of the Society, Lodges and Conventicles of Liberi Muratori or Free Masons under pain of excommunication to be incurred ipso facto, and absolution from it, being reserved for the Supreme Pontiff except at point of death.

CLEMENT, Bishop,  
*Servant of the Servants of God in Christ Greeting  
and Apostolic Benediction.*

It goes on:—

That no one under any pretext dare or presume to enter the above mentioned Societies of Liberi Muratori, Freemasons or otherwise named, or to propagate, foster and receive them whether in their houses or elsewhere, and to conceal them or be present at them, or to afford them the opportunity or facilities for being convened anywhere, or to render them advice, help or favour, openly or in secret.

Let it be lawful therefore for no man to infringe this proclamation, notifying our declaration, condemnation, charge, prohibition and interdiction, or to act counter to it, but if anyone presume to attempt this, he will incur the wrath of Almighty God, and of the Blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul.

*Given at Rome in the Basilica of St. Mary the Greater, in the year of Our Lord 1738 on 28th April in the 8th year of our Pontificate.*

The effect of this edict was felt in various countries. Freemasonry was forbidden in Poland by King Augustus, and King Frederick I of Sweden brought in the death penalty for men attending Masonic meetings. One of the most vindictive against the Fraternity was Cardinal Firrao who issued an edict of his own which resulted in confiscation of property and also the death penalty for many members.

The second Papal Bull was issued in 1751 by Benedict XIV and was even worse than the first. Members of Lodges were persecuted everywhere. In Spain, many were thrown into gaol, and others banished by a decree of Ferdinand VI. The Catholic authorities in Spain obtained a special dispensation enabling them to have Joseph Torrubia (a Franciscan) Censor and Revisor of the Inquisition, initiated into one of the Lodges in Madrid. The oath taken by him in the Lodge on the Volume of Sacred Law, (The Holy Bible) would then be — according to the Catholic Church — null and void.

Torrubia then publicly accused the Freemasons of being atheists, heretics and sodomites. He went so far as to advocate an auto-da-fé and, although he didn't achieve this, new decrees against Freemasonry were brought in by the Catholic Monarchy of Spain, while in Portugal, the Inquisition decreed torture and labour as galley slaves for members of the Fraternity.

While this persecution was taking place in Spain and

Portugal, in Germany many clerics were members of Lodges. Frederick the Great of Prussia was himself a member of the Masonic Order, as were many important Churchmen. The founders of the Lodge, "Frederick of the Three Beams" in Münster were all episcopal officials. So were the founders of the "Three Thistles Lodge" in Mayence. The Vatican, however, could not remain indifferent to the progress the Order was making in Germany, and so an anti-Masonic campaign was begun in 1760. Sermons were preached against the Fraternity in the Cathedral Church at Aix-la-Chapelle by the Dominicans. Greinemann and Schuff. A specially vicious attack was launched against Urban Hauer, Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery in Melk, Lower Austria, who on his death-bed, desired that his apron and trowel be buried with him, also that the coffin nails should be driven in with the Master's gavel.

The campaign became so bitter that the German Prince, Frederick, addressed a strong protest to the Vatican. One part of the letter reads as follows:—

My very reverend and venerable Fathers, do you wish to take us back to those centuries of ignorance and barbarity which were so long the disgrace of human intelligence, those times of fanaticism which the eye of reason can only look back upon with horror; those times when hypocrisy seated upon the throne of despotism laid fetters about the world, and without the slightest discrimination had all those who could read, burned as sorcerers? Not only do you call the Freemasons sorcerers, you also accuse them of being rogues and sodomites, and I as a member of this Order will do all in my power to refute these insults against our Brotherhood.

*Potsdam, 7th February, 1778.*

As the years passed and Pope succeeded Pope, they issued encyclicals and papal bulls without number. Pius IX condemned Freemasonry as "The Synagogue of Satan, a detestable and damnable sect of depravity," and Benedict XIV condemned the Order for joining together men of different religions. It would, he thought, cause Catholic religion to be degraded and made impure.

In spite of persecution through the years, however, the Masonic Order survived in Italy until the union of the Vatican and the Fascist Council which resulted in the complete extermination of Lodge activities. The final tragedy took place on November 4th, 1925, when the Vatican, in conjunction with the Facio, accused Zaniboni the Socialist, of planning to murder Mussolini on the orders of the Grand Orient. This accusation opened the way for the destruction of Lodges all over Italy. The Lodges "Giuseppe Mazzini" in Prato, and "Ferruccio" in Pistoja were destroyed; the "Ernesto Nathan" Lodge in Termoli was wrecked and the library which was its pride and joy went up in flames. In Turin all the Lodges were destroyed and their archives removed. Similar acts of vandalism were perpetuated in Florence, Salerno, Venice, Pisa and Bologna.

Readers may think that I am a member of the Fraternity. I am not and never will be. If other men want societies with oaths, ritual, ceremony and mystic symbols, that is their affair. What I want is complete liberty of thought, and this the Catholic Church can never tolerate.

It is obvious that the Catholic hierarchy will ally itself with any group of men, however depraved they may be, to maintain its power and privilege. Many people are under the impression that the character of the Roman Catholic Church has changed and softened with the passing of the centuries; they were never more mistaken. When it feels powerful enough, the Church will impose its will on any nation by any means it considers necessary.

# Immortality

By CHRISTOPHER N. FINNEY

THE BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY is one of the very cornerstones of theism. The belief in prayer is another. When people stop believing that the world can be altered for good or ill by praying to the deity, religion will lose a great deal of its hold upon the human mind. When they cease to think that their souls are destined to eternal damnation or eternal felicity, religion will no longer be an important factor in their intellectual and emotional make-up. Men do not worship God because he created the Universe millions of years ago, but because they believe that he answers prayers and grants petitions now, and will save them or damn them at some future date.

Ever since primitive man fashioned, out of the shadow of his own consciousness, those nebulous and ghostly phantoms that have become the gods of the world's religions, men have believed that the human body is inhabited by an indwelling spirit that animates it during life and leaves it at death. According to some creeds, this "spirit" or "soul" enters the body of another human being or an animal, while others affirm that it departs to Valhalla, the happy hunting ground, or, in the case of the Christian religion, Heaven or Hell. That the belief in the immortality of the soul has its origin in the fancies of untutored savages is a fact about which there can be no two opinions. The writings of the great anthropologists, Tylor, Frazer and others, all testify to the same end. Moreover, it is a belief that is almost universal. It is embodied in varying degrees in many diverse forms, in the faiths and folk-lore of men the world over.

The belief in immortality, then, originated in the childhood of the human mind, and for many centuries went unquestioned. It was only when the belief began to wear a little thin that those who held it began to put forward the quasi-philosophical arguments that are now advanced for its retention. This life, we are told, is a school for character, one in which we prepare for another existence beyond the grave. We must therefore assume that life in the next world will be similar to life in this, and that the "training" we receive now will stand us in good stead in the future life. If this life and the next one are not lived under the same conditions, then the one cannot satisfactorily be a preparation for the other.

What kind of existence, then, are we to look forward to in the next world?

Whilst I write I have beside me a little book by F. Addington Symonds entitled *Know Your Faith* which, according to the blurb, gives "authentic information about Catholic beliefs and practice . . . and has received the official imprimatur." In it I read that in the next life "there will be no need for food or for the procreation of children, nor will sleep be required." Moreover, we have it on the authority of the Gospel Jesus that in Heaven, people "neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Luke, 20,35).

The natures and personalities of all of us are formed in relation to a specific and quite definite environment. If our environment were different, then our ideas and personalities would be correspondingly different. Yet the most important factors in our lives here are absent in the next world. Human life without reference to sex, the family, birth, the desire and necessity for food and sleep is not merely impossible, it is unthinkable! If Christianity be true, and this world is a preparation for the next, then we are all in the position of a man studying French in order to

address an audience that understands only Chinese.

Yet all this leaves out of consideration one of the most mischievous delusions that has ever beset the human mind, and one that is inextricably bound up with the Christian belief in immortality — the doctrine of Hell. The dogma of eternal punishment is found in the Bible, and has always formed part of the teachings of the Roman Church and most Protestant sects. For centuries, Catholic vied with Protestant in depicting in sordid detail the sufferings of the damned in Hell. Father Furness, writing in a booklet designed to be read by children, said: —

Perhaps at this moment a child is going into Hell. Tomorrow go and knock on the gates of Hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. Then they will come back and say — the child is burning . . . Go in a million years and ask the same question, the answer is just the same — it is burning. So if you go for ever and ever, you will always get the same answer — it is burning in the fire.

Lest it be thought that this kind of intellectual sadism is confined to Catholics, I give the following from one of the most eminent Protestant preachers of the second half of the last century, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, as an example of the mental degradation that can result from an acceptance of the Christian belief in immortality: —

In fire exactly like that which we have on earth thy body will lie, asbestos-like, for ever unconsumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string on which the Devil shall for ever play his diabolical tune of Hell's Unutterable Lament.

John Calvin, the "Pope of Geneva," asserted that unbaptised infants were destined to eternal fire, and an English cleric declared that Hell was situated in the Sun, and that sun spots were multitudes of the damned. For hundreds of years fantastic and horrifying ideas like these ran riot, doctrines which, to borrow a phrase from G. K. Chesterton, no self-respecting modern Christian would be seen dead with in a field.

But the dogma of Hell is today on the wane, and the belief in immortality has suffered a corresponding decline. Men are learning to live this life without fear of any nightmare world beyond the grave. The average Englishman today is indifferent to the belief in Heaven and Hell, when he is not openly critical of it. Perhaps the day is not long distant when Man will relegate Immortality to the "ashcan of departed hypotheses," and say, with Omar Khayyam: —

One thing at least is certain — this Life flies;  
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies:  
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

## An Old Tale Re-Told

By W. VINCENT PARSONS

[There is a growing feeling on the part of many of the clergy that the Holy Bible should be retranslated, employing the modern idiom in place of the obsolete phrasing. This would make it more understandable and acceptable to present-day congregations. The following is a suggested restatement of part of Genesis that would, I think, enliven the sacred narrative and give a modernistic touch to it. No poetic "symbolism" here. This is something you can really believe (if you try hard enough).]

"THE OLD MAN'S got something on his mind," said Shem.

"I guess you're right," said Ham. "He looks — what's the word? Portentous, that's it."

"Your father's been walking with God," whispered Mrs. Noah reverently. "A righteous man, my Noah."

"Yeah, righteous," said Ham in a non-committal tone. "Here he comes now."

Mrs. Noah with Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives gazed expectantly as Noah strode up and stood before them. He coughed and cleared his throat.

"Listen, boys and girls, we've got a job to do. A darned big job if I know anything. We've got to turn our hands to shipbuilding."

"Shipbuilding?" they chorussed incredulously.

"Whatever for?" said Shem. "The sea's hundreds of miles away. Who wants a ship round there anyway?"

"Listen. It ain't the sea, at least not the sea where you go for your holidays. It's going to be a flood. God's going to open the windows of Heaven, so he says, and all the world's going to be washed out and everybody drowned except us."

"Gosh, you don't say," they chorussed.

"What's the idea?" said Shem.

"It's because everybody's got wicked," explained Noah, "everybody bar us. We're righteous. All the rest — God is mighty sore about 'em. So he's going to drown the lot, and serve 'em right. We stow ourselves aboard this craft we're going to make until the flood goes down. Then we step ashore again and Bob's your uncle."

"Sounds a bit tough to me," said Japheth. "What about all the little kids? What harm have they done?"

"Don't question the Lord's work," said Noah sternly. "That's blasphemy, that is."

"Now these are our instructions," Noah went on. "This is going to be some ship. Bigger than the 'Queen Mary.' I reckon. I've got the dimensions here." He consulted a note-book. "Three hundred cubits long from stem to stern, 50 beam, 30 draft. That's it. God forgot to mention the Plimsol mark. I'll have to ask him about it."

"Why, that'll take us years to build," said Shem. "We'll never do it."

"Yes we shall," said Noah. "With God's help," he added piously. "Now first thing we've got to get hold of the timber. Cut down all the Gopher trees for miles around. Then we shall want about a million shipwright's nails and a few barrels of pitch for caulking, and a few fathoms of cordage. And lots of other things."

"But why do we want a ship that size?" asked Shem.

"It's got to be that big. There's something else I haven't told you yet. We've got to find room for a few thousand animals of all sorts, beasts of the earth, the birds and the bees and all creeping things. Two of each, male and female and seven of some."

"Gosh! Where are we going to stow 'em all?"

"That'll be seen to. There's going to be three decks in each hold. We'll get 'em in all right."

"How are we going to get the elephants aboard? And the hippos and rhinos?"

"We'll manage. We'll have to rig a derrick for-ard and haul 'em inboard on a bowline."

"Another thing," said Shem. "Some bloke told me he saw a brontosaurus somewhere. Said it was as big as half a dozen elephants. No derrick'll stand up to that."

"Never heard of the animal. Anyhow, we can't take him. He'll have to take his chance and swim. God never said anything about a —. What's the name, did you say?"

"Let it ride. I expect it was only a yarn."

## CORRESPONDENCE

### "NOT SO DUMB"

The theory of Evolution is a popular subject of discussion in the canteen of the factory where I work. The "proletariat" are not so dumb or so indifferent as some of our more aloof intellectuals would suppose. It would do these latter a power of good to hear the views of the industrial worker on religion, politics, freedom, etc. And how the TV and radio parsons would writhe under the down-to-earth polemic they would face. At least Mr. Cutner would appreciate it.

R. F. TOPPLE.

### TO SUSSEX READERS

Readers in the Brighton and Hove area may not be aware that the local Press is quite liberal in its attitude to religious criticism, and that a reasonable letter stands a good chance of being published. I have had six out of eight successes in a year, the last one mentioning two of Avro Manhattan's books by name.

I would also like to ask for help in placing THE FREETHINKER in Hove Library reading room. I am sure the librarian would appreciate letters from readers saying how much they would like to see it available there.

F. PEARCE,

Hon. Sec., Sussex Branch, N.S.S.

### GOD IS NO GENTLEMAN!

Mr. Robert H. Scott is not necessarily an old maid (as suggested by Mr. S. W. Brooks, 8/4/60) because he refers to "repellent physiological functions." The fact cannot be denied that an omnipotent God could surely have organised the human body on more — if I may be permitted to use the term — aesthetic lines. In short, it is a legitimate argument against theism.

Mr. Brooks, quite unwarrantably, converts Mr. Scott's dislike of some aspects of life into a revulsion at "our existence" as a whole. Mr. Scott never suggested that. It is true that the facts he did mention cannot be altered, but at least they should be recognised. And indeed we do this and make them less repulsive by use of scents, etc.

ROBERT DENT.

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