

The Freethinker

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WHAT IS THE NEW Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of All England and official head of the Anglican Church like? On April 5th, 1961, His Grace, Dr. Michael Ramsey, by divine permission, Archbishop of York and Primate of England, DD (Cantab), etc., then Archbishop Designate of Canterbury, gave an interview to the *Daily Herald*. He duly delivered himself of what scrupulous regard for truth compels us to describe as a number of

very platitudinous remarks upon some leading questions of the day, at least from the current standpoint of Anglican Christianity, a fact which must be rather difficult to explain from the standpoint of present-day defenders of our educational system, which includes some past critics of articles upon this theme by the present writer. Dr. Ramsey had a most brilliant academic career culminating in professorships at his own *alma mater*, Cambridge, and at my own theological *alma mater*, the University of Durham, of which—may I remind readers of THE FREETHINKER—I am a Licentiate of Theology and University prize winner. However, notwithstanding his own far higher academic distinctions, Dr. Ramsey's contributions to sociology are not marked by any conspicuous originality of thought; a deficiency that he shares with those other eminent episcopal products of academic learning (Oxford in both cases), the late Dr. Lang (a Fellow of All Souls College) and Dr. Fisher (Headmaster of Repton). Like his even more exalted ecclesiastical contemporary, Pope John (as recently demonstrated upon the theme of Irish horses), Dr. Ramsey appears to concentrate upon playing for safety. Nothing said by the new Archbishop is likely to set either the Thames or Fleet Street on fire.

Platitudes Galore

The former Editor of this paper, the late Chapman Cohen, once related an amusing story about a former Bishop of London, the late Dr. A. F. Winnington Ingram. On the day that Ingram's elevation from Stepney to London was announced, Mr. Cohen met one of the new Bishop's Stepney clergy whom he asked for the reason of this surprising elevation. The cleric raised his eyes piously to Heaven and answered resignedly, "Only God knows!" Today, Dr. Ramsey has certainly more impressive qualifications than "Winnie" (as the old Bishop of London was usually known in ecclesiastical circles) ever had. But, one must repeat, his answers to the important questions put to him are really not very enlightening. For example, when the *Daily Herald* interviewer asked him: "Communism or Democracy—which should a Christian choose?" the answer was "Neither", for "The only true alternative to Communism is Christianity". But surely Christianity nowadays, covers a multitude of meanings as well as of sins? We would remind His Grace that historically, Christianity was both the religion of the Roman Empire and of the German Barbarians who conquered it; of Charles Stuart and of Oliver Cromwell who cut off Charles Stuart's head; of nowadays, say Dr. Nkrumah of

Ghana, and of the Belgian Imperialists in the Congo; of the Ku Klux Klan and of its Negro victims; not to mention, of both the Roman Catholic Church and of Jehovah's Witnesses who regard the Pope as Satan personified; of a good many of the Aldermaston marchers and of the clerical would-be crusaders in a proximate nuclear crusade to defend Christian civilisation against "Godless Russia". Dr. Ramsey should have told us what,

or which, Christianity he means is *the* effective antidote to Communism. As it stands, his remark is quite meaningless. Similarly, on the certainly important current problem of apartheid, Dr. Ramsey pronounces definitely that it is "abomin-

able and not Christian". But here again, the vagueness of the reply really makes it quite meaningless; for Dr. Ramsey should define which Christianity he means, since it is indisputable that the South Africans who invented apartheid and who practise it are most pious and orthodox Christians, to whom any tampering with their Fundamentalist faith is inconceivable, and who actually base their racialist policies on principles of unimpeachable Calvinistic theological orthodoxy. Certainly *some* Christians dislike apartheid—all credit to them—but to answer properly the question put to him, His Grace should surely have told us which Christians he had in mind. Then, of course, the Bomb came up (as it presumably always will do until it comes down) and here the stout figure of the new spiritual head of the Church of England by Law Established not only sat on the fence but positively straddled across it. For His Grace is a noted follower of Mr. Gaitskell whose well-known views on the nuclear deterrent came in for explicit approval. (Incidentally, is not this rather ungrateful to Mr. Macmillan who had just made Dr. Ramsey Archbishop of Canterbury?) "I believe" he told us, "the existence of the Bomb deters both sides from such aggression".

God-Given

We learn further the rather surprising fact that it is God who "has given us this terrible thing"—personally one has always understood that nuclear scientists had most to do with it. Dr. Ramsey does not go on to tell us what he thinks about the probability of the deterrent failing ultimately to deter. He is, in such a dire eventuality in any case, unlikely to be in a position to give another interview to the *Daily Herald* or any other paper, since nuclear explosions are unlikely to spare even Archbishops of Canterbury. Again platitudes galore. Lastly, Heaven and Hell. What, the *Daily Herald* man naturally wanted to know, did the Archbishop think of these well-known post mortem resorts? But here the Archbishop excelled himself. He is evidently not a "famous theologian" for nothing. For we defy anyone to get anything positive out of Dr. Ramsey's ambiguous reply. The old theologians, if they did not know where precisely Hell was, at least knew its climate—to within a degree or two at any rate. But all our Archbishop informs us is that "what it is like

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The New Archbishop of Canterbury

By F. A. RIDLEY

after death, we cannot possibly know, but if in this life or the next we lose God, then that is hell enough". But precisely what does this statement mean?

And so on and so on. Platitude after platitude. If this is the best that the Church of England can do, one can only define the whole interview as a confession of Christian bankruptcy. However, to judge from the above (and

many similar) remarks, Dr. Ramsey has certainly one qualification as Chief Shepherd of the Lord's (Anglican) flock. He is certainly woolly enough. In the course of its long history, the See of Canterbury has produced a few Archbishops of real intellectual eminence. But to judge from recent utterances, Dr. Ramsey is not likely to add to their number.

Billy Graham

By COLIN McCALL

"I AM SELLING the greatest product in the world: why shouldn't it be promoted as well as soap?" Dr. Billy Graham once asked with disarming frankness. No reason at all, I suppose, though it might be pertinent to counter: should Christianity need such promotion? Whether it should or should not, it certainly gets it from the forty-three-years-old evangelist now in our midst once again. How are we to assess the results of his salesmanship?

An American acquaintance of mine suggests that people in the US could be divided into three main groups in their reactions to Billy Graham. First, those who avidly believe that his type of religion is the only type, and who hold his writings as the nearest to Scripture that the 20th century has produced. Second, those who do not personally agree with him but who feel that he is "a good thing" because he appeals to fear of Hell and Brimstone and thereby decreases the immoralities and illegalities of the coarse-living, hard-drinking segment of the population that constitutes a large part of his following. Third, the openly sceptical and critical.

The first group, says my informant, includes a surprisingly large number of Protestant ministers, with the heaviest swing being of course towards the more fundamentalist sects. The congregations of these ministers are naturally largely of the same mind. But it should not be assumed that these people are all unintelligent, for a number of educated persons have been caught by Graham's tremendous personal appeal. In the second group are more Protestant ministers and a larger number of "almost Christians"—men and women who were raised as Christians but who in adult life have ceased to practise religion. The third group, "with almost 100 per cent following among young professional students of whom I am one", considers his type of religion primitive. People from all three groups may attend his meetings though obviously for very different reasons. But for whatever reason they attend, few are likely to deny Billy Graham's personal appeal. The American student avers it. "Could the context of what he is saying be blotted, then one almost becomes religious simply from his forceful approach. Thus it is easy to understand his popularity among those who are even tolerant of the context".

I take the above to be substantially true. There would have to be many qualifications, of course, and allowances must be made for the Southern Baptist upbringing of the American, which might make him more receptive than I, for instance. One fact is clear, however: that the Billy Graham appeal is fundamentally emotional. In this he is like all his predecessors. There is no appeal to reason, no theological argument; just a plain and simple "message": you have sinned; you need Christ; come forward now. Come forward and say, "Billy, tonight I accept Christ".

It is all so simple. That, in fact, is its strength. For mass appeal, complexities, doubts, would be fatal. There must be certainty. Graham has no time to argue; no

need to argue; he has the truth. And when you have the truth, there are, as Eric Hoffer remarked in *The True Believer*, "no surprises and no unknowns. All questions have already been answered, all decisions made, all eventualities foreseen. The true believer is without wonder and hesitation". In Pascal's words, "Who knows Jesus knows the reason of all things".

There are many—and we must face this—there are many who yearn for certainty, for simple certainty. A different emphasis in education might reduce their number, but that is another question. There are many, too, who are lonely and who feel "lost". To these Billy Graham makes a strong and deliberate (though not necessarily insincere) appeal. Unashamedly he speaks "to the heart", to "that void, that aching, that empty place". "There is questing," he says, "there is a hunger; there is a longing for something else in life, and you haven't found it yet and you want it." "You can leave here with peace and joy and happiness such as you've never known." Moreover, he makes his spot-lighted appearance on the rostrum at the right moment, after the crowd has been praying and meditating.

The Observer, for whose profile of Dr. Billy Graham (24/4/55) I am indebted for my quotes from him, referred to his failure to meet the needs of the modern world. But Hoffer has pointed out that "The quality of ideas seems to play a minor role in mass movement leadership. What counts is the arrogant gesture, the complete disregard of the opinion of others, the singlehanded defiance of the world". This, I suggest, is true to some degree of Billy Graham. He may be quite a modest man, but he is an arrogant evangelist; not only does he fail to meet the needs of the modern world, he defies that world.

Except, that is, in technique. However incongruous his matter, there is nothing to fault in his manner of presentation. It starts months before with publicity and organisation, and it goes on for some time afterwards. It is essentially salesmanship. As Mr. J. B. Priestley once exclaimed, "man, what a set-up!"

Graham has no wish to start a new Christian Church: he works in conjunction with those Churches that are willing to co-operate, and he aims to place his "converts" in the care of their local parsons and pastors. In this way he hopes to keep them "converted", to prevent them from lapsing. Here, though, is the snag. It is one thing to be moved by the atmosphere, the build-up of a Billy Graham crusade meeting, with that supreme moment when the handsome, wavy-haired, perfectly groomed, six-foot-tall leader speaks to you, personally, almost confidentially, it seems: it is quite different to go along to the local church or chapel and hear a humdrum sermon. The converts want Billy every week—or anyway, a good deal more often than they can have him. Without him the emotional appeal subsides. That is why his permanent effect is negligible; why the permanent "converts" are not converts at all, but regular churchgoers already.

Science and Homo Sapiens

By JACK GORDON

THERE ARE LANDMARKS in science which are important because of their significance in clearing the way to further progress in this or that particular field of study. In modern parlance, these important new developments are termed "break-throughs". Such is the rate of progress of science today, that "break-throughs" are reported from one or other of the many laboratories throughout the world as almost a daily occurrence; while the number of scientific periodicals and research reports is so vast, that the problem of indexing, editing and filing them for future reference is becoming a huge task.

While all scientific developments are important to those concerned with them, there are some which are of outstanding importance because of their impact on modern thought as a whole. If we look at the history of science we have no difficulty in finding examples: Copernicus and Galileo; Darwin; Freud; Einstein; and there are many young men of outstanding ability working today in the newer sciences who may well see their names in the Scientific Hall of Fame before this century is out.

Now, to me, one of the great things we owe to immortals like Darwin, Einstein and so on, is the better sense of perspective they give us of Man's place in the Universe. There are many living creatures on this Earth, but only one with the power of abstract thought. Man has not been around very long but during the very brief time he has been known on this planet, he has acquired, by virtue of this power, an egocentricity of outlook which is marvellous to behold. The world is the centre of the Universe; the earth, the sun, the stars were all created for his benefit. And Man himself! The last to strut on stage; and no wonder, for Man has been made—indeed specially created—in the image of God Himself and for a vast purpose which only God can conceive. Man is the measure of all things. Not only is he unique, but the very conceptions of his brain have absolute significance! Only he dares to suppose that through meditation within the narrow confines of a monastery, or contemplation within the four walls of a book-lined study can he attain complete knowledge of Reality (capital "R", please)!

Such an outlook may have been of some survival value in the past when man found himself confronted with real dangers in his struggle to live. "A guid conceit o' onesell" certainly has its uses. But a time comes when it merely seems absurd. Let us look at the time scale of Man. I am indebted to Arthur C. Clarke, a founder member of the British Interplanetary Society and a well known science writer, for the following analogy taken from his book, *The Challenge of the Spaceship*. "Let the height of the Empire State Building represent the age of the Earth; on this scale, a foot is about two million years. Now (if the wind will let you) stand an average-sized book upright on the TV tower. It won't look very conspicuous from ground level—but its few inches of height correspond roughly to the entire existence of *Homo sapiens*. However we haven't finished yet. Now place a slightly worn dime (or a shilling, if you like) on top of the book. The thickness of the coin corresponds to the whole of Man's civilisation, right back to the building of the pyramids. And if you want to represent the era of modern science and technology—that is about as thick as a postage stamp. The postage stamp on top of the Empire State Building is a picture we should bear in mind." A mere second in time. Scarcely long enough, you may think, to justify

anyone making statements about having discovered "absolute truths". Scarcely long enough to justify dogmatic statements, whether scientific or otherwise, on the nature of life, the nature of man, the role of society. Scarcely long enough to support a conclusion that "ethics are absolute", or anything else, for that matter.

I was recently (March 31st) taken to task by Mr. G. I. Bennett for failing to recognise that "sin" is one of the undeniable facts of human existence. And why put inverted commas round "sin", anyway, he wondered? I should have thought the reason was obvious. Sin is a theological term, technically "an offence against God", and therefore represents an evolution of some action proceeding from a definite but quite arbitrary viewpoint. If one does not accept the philosophy under-pinning the viewpoint, the evaluation appears useless. I am, of course, quite well aware of the facts of human existence but at the same time I recognise, that more than one interpretation of the facts is possible.

While on the subject, it may be useful to point out that whatever its theoretical status may be, ethical relativism is a fact. It is a fact of common experience that ethical notions of what things are "right" and what things are "wrong" vary widely from place to place and sometimes even within the same social group. Not only do ethical ideas vary with geography, they vary with time as well. The moral convictions of one generation are frequently not those of the next. Nor is this surprising. In a complex and rapidly changing society such as ours, it would be strange if the laws regulating conduct between individuals did not change to keep pace with social requirements.

In primitive times, Man's ignorance of his planet was almost complete. Anything seemed possible. Theoretically, complete certainty can exist only on a basis of complete knowledge. In practice, complete certainty is often found to exist on a basis of complete ignorance! The great merit of discoveries such as those of Darwin and Einstein is that they tear some of the blinkers from our eyes. We began to realise that many of our cherished certainties were but cherished fantasies. There may be an end to what we *will* know but there seems virtually no end to what we *can* know. Man's pugnacity, and his burning curiosity about the world round him, have lifted him to his present meagre pinnacle of attainment. It is Man's capacity to *think* which has enabled him to stumble slowly forward to become the dominant life-form on Planet Three. If there is any ultimate weapon, surely this is it? For surely the brain of *Homo sapiens*, the product of millions of years of evolution, can perceive that the price of survival is—adapt, or be adapted! This, in turn, demands a certain flexibility of thought, a refusal to be limited to current horizons of knowledge, a refusal to be stunned and chained by theological "certainties", and a refusal to be enmeshed in brilliant logical paradoxes or linguistic subtleties. I believe in the future of *Homo sapiens*, though his brief centuries of dominance may appear puny compared to the hundred million years of time when the dinosaurs reigned as masters of the planet. With Arthur Clarke we can say, "If we last a tenth as long as the great reptiles which we sometimes speak of disparagingly as one of Nature's failures, we will have time enough to make our mark on countless worlds and suns". What, then is there to stop us—unless our own stupidity?

This Believing World

According to Reuter the claim is being made that the number of Roman Catholics in the United States "increased by 47 per cent to a total of 42,104,900 during the past decade. We wonder sometimes how these figures are arrived at? Do Roman Catholics ever die, or backslide, or get converted, or unconverted? That they are increasing in some measure may be true, and that the Roman Church is in a strong position with a Catholic President, but such figures can never be trusted.

★

And what about our own House of Lords? An article in the *Sunday Express* (April 30th) is headed "Could the Catholics take over the House of Lords?" and lists a number of noble Lords who are devout members of the Church. But they are very much in the minority—about one in 18, while in the whole nation the proportion is one in 10. As a result of marriages with Catholics and children being brought up as Catholics the writer, Bernard Harris, thinks that by "1980 or soon after the Roman Catholic vote in the House of Lords could be a political factor of first rate importance"; and therefore if "reform of the Lords is delayed, Roman Catholics could virtually take over the House on issues of special significance to themselves".

★

We were delighted to see in the "Daily Express" (May 10th) a letter from a shocked lady who is very angry with the bishops who want to expel the Devil from the Catechism. "Did not Jesus Christ," she indignantly asks, "definitely say to the unbelieving Jews who were seeking to kill him: 'Ye do the deeds of your father . . . ye are of the father the Devil . . . he was a murderer . . .'" (John, 8,41-44)?" Hear, Hear. With "our Lord" so clearly indicating his unbounded belief in the reality of the Devil, how dare the bishops water down the true Christianity of Christ, and substitute their pink pale Churchianity?

★

But however pale pink "Churchianity" may be it still sticks to the "clanking ecclesiastical machinery" (so called by the Rev. F. Martin in the *Sunday Dispatch* for May 7th) for only one "sin"—the sin of sex. The Churches of Christ appear to have been more obsessed by sex than by unbelief; and so, says Mr. Martin, "in our out-dated religious thinking the one unforgivable sin is still sex".

★

Mr. Martin is right about the unfrocking ceremony—a relic of the Dark Ages handed down from a Church drunk with power; but there are still the "blasphemy laws" unrepealed which surely are a disgrace to any "civilisation". What does Mr. Martin—or for that matter the Bishop of Southwark—say about them?

★

If you ever want to see a ghost always get in touch with a "clairvoyant". He is almost infallible. As proof, we have the London *Evening Standard* (April 25th) telling us how Mr. T. Corbett "a London clairvoyant" went to Lord Bath's country seat at Longleat to search for a lady ghost and was so successful that he met an assortment of them—seven to be exact, male and female; and the extraordinary thing about two of them was that they were in one room "and neither was conscious of the other". Most of the spooks were—of course—dressed in 18th century costume and, except one, were quite friendly to Mr. Corbett as indeed they should be for he brought them to life again. As for Lord Bath—can it be believed in the face of this uncontrovertible evidence, "he does not see any ghosts himself"? It must be heartbreaking both for the spooks and the clairvoyant.

"Man of Reason"

THE TITLE OF THIS LIFE OF Thomas Paine by Alfred Aldridge sums up the subject's characteristics. As Cobbett maintained, Paine had already put the principles of the French Revolution into practice in actively fostering the American Revolution. And because of his persistent attacks on the reactionary elements in English life in the Eighteenth century, he was subject to many bitter counter-attacks. The book is very appreciative of Paine's great sympathy for the common man: it also does not spare Paine's weaknesses, but it should be remembered that most of the 18th century literary and political figures were heavy drinkers. He was no worse or better.

As regards his famous works *Common Sense* and *Crisis*, American officers, including Washington, testified to their enormous influence in boosting the morale of the troops. And Professor Aldridge points out that Paine made no personal profit from his works which sold widely.

Professor Aldridge makes allowances for religious prejudices which affected much of the opposition to Paine, with his radical revolutionary ideas. Present-day America should express its appreciation of Paine's constant efforts to maintain the union of all the States, says the author, while in England his efforts to promote peaceful relations with France should be remembered. It was the common man in all countries whom Paine defended, and who can forget his retort to Burke's lamentations over the French Revolution, that he "pities the plumage but forgets the dying bird"?

Against Paine's alleged egotism, Professor Aldridge sets the deep humanitarianism! Of his great merits there can be no doubt. His political principles are regarded as axioms today. *Man of Reason* is full of biographical facts, it brings out Thomas Paine's remarkable personality and reaches a fair estimate of his strong character.

F. W. GARLEY.

[*Man of Reason*, The Life of Thomas Paine, by Alfred Owen Aldridge, Cresset Press, 30s.]

AN ODD SECT

THE OTHER DAY we heard from a BBC correspondent ("Today", Light Programme, May 16th) of yet another religious sect. They call themselves Rastafarians, after Ras Tafari Makonnen (the former name of Emperor Haile Selassie); they claim that he is the Living God and that Ethiopia is the Chosen Land.

The correspondent interviewed one of the members, a Jamaican with a beard and long hair. Over "this disagreeable *coiffeur*" he wore a woollen balaclava in the national colours of Ethiopia. He also wore a sort of white robe which, said the correspondent, would have looked fetching on a dusky damsel, but didn't suit the man. "I was in Hell last night", said the Jamaican, referring apparently to a Rotarian dinner where alcohol had been served. He was vigorously chewing marijuana throughout the interview, but that was all right. God chewed marijuana; it said so in the Bible. It also said you mustn't cut your hair, he informed us.

He had had an interview with the Emperor. That must have been an honour, ventured the interviewer, and the Jamaican agreed. But, pursued the interviewer, "did you address him as God?" Did God, in fact, know that he was God?

There was no reply. The BBC correspondent had obviously asked the wrong question. P.F.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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Manchester Branch N.S.S. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. SMITH AND G. A. WOODCOCK.

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Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street.) Sunday, June 4th, 6.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Pope John and the Cold War".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.) Sunday, June 4th, 11 a.m.: R. W. SORENSEN, M.P., "The Conflict and Conciliation — A Personal Problem".

Notes and News

THIS WEEK WE PRINT the second of our two commemorative articles by G. W. Foote, who founded THE FREETHINKER eighty years ago. "Capital Letters" appeared in the issue of February 21st, 1904, yet as was the case with "The Ways of God" reprinted last week, it is essentially as valid today as when it was written. Contemporary political references alone date it.

"ARE YOU A PSYCHIC?" the papers asked on behalf of two members of the Society for Psychical Research, Mr. Herbert Stark and Mr. George Medhurst. "If so, you may be able to help in a big London experiment concerning the nature of thought-reading and associated phenomena", added Robert Chapman in the *Evening News* (12/5/61) in a column rather unfortunately called "Science and You". Not since 1940, said Paul Doncaster in *Reynolds News* (14/5/61) "when a photographer named Basil Shackleton was found, had there been discovered anyone in Britain with extra-special extra-sensory perception". Not a mention, though, of Mr. C. E. M. Hansel's explanation of Shackleton's alleged ESP capacities. But Mr. Doncaster did ask Messrs. Stark and Medhurst "what was it all in aid of?" They "confessed they didn't know", but then said that "a team of good percipients, the tops at ESP, could save the world a lot of money. They could spread around the world to receive

messages through telepathy. Normal communication methods have drawbacks—time-lags and that sort of thing", Readers know our views on E.S.P. (we don't believe it exists) but we print a letter about the experiment in our Correspondence column this week.

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A LETTER FROM Reginald Holme in the *New Statesman* (19/5/61) disputed Mr. Maurice Capel's allegation a fortnight earlier (quoted by Colin McCall in his article on MRA, THE FREETHINKER, 19/5/61), that General Jouhaud "has long been an ardent champion of Moral Re-Armament". The General, said Mr. Holme, "paid a 24-hour visit to Caux one year while I was there and very little has been heard of him since". Bless us, though, Bryn Meredith's photograph was printed in one of those full-page advertisements on the strength of a couple of hours' visit to a cinema!

★

THE EDINBURGH *Evening Dispatch* (10/5/61) informed us that an electronic computer was used to find out how much money the Church of Scotland will need for next year's budget, and it came up with the answer, £760,000—£50,000 more than this year.

★

"IN MY CONSTITUENCY the worst bloodsuckers are the Church Commissioners," said Mr. Ben Parkin, Labour MP for Paddington North, at the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Housing Bill on May 11th. "They have a job", he added, ". . . to extract the best profit they can out of the asset they have . . . It is their job to take advantage of the increase in property values and conduct their property in such a way as to bring in the biggest income". (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 12/5/61.)

★

SO FAR AS IS KNOWN, said the *Ledbury Reporter* (19/5/61), Ledbury is the only town in Herefordshire where Roman Catholics hold a public procession in honour of the Virgin. On Sunday, May 14th, Catholics came from many places around to follow the statue through the streets and to see the local May Queen crown the statue with flowers. Then, Father T. Brendan Minney (no doubt a local lad!) "explained the Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin and invited all those who were looking on to join the Catholics in spirit in honouring the Mother of God".

★

FOOTE, IT WILL BE REMEMBERED, pondered the awful prospect if Mary had refused the invitation to be the Mother of God, and how "so much depended on so little". Presumably she had retired for the night when Gabriel made his sudden appearance in human shape, and it must have been quite alarming for the young lady. "How natural it would have been if she had cried 'Mother!' 'Joseph!' and alarmed the whole household. In that case, Gabriel would have vanished as he came—perhaps through the keyhole; the Blessed Trinity would have flown after him; the Incarnation of the Word would have been postponed indefinitely; and thousands of years might have elapsed ere the attempt was renewed". "Dear, good, Mary!" Foote exclaimed. "How fortunate for us that she was no quick of intuition and so prompt in compliance!"

—NEXT WEEK—

THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF BOYS' CLUBS
By R. W. MORRELL

Capital Letters

By G. W. FOOTE

WORDS, SAID HOBBS, are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools. The saying is profoundly true, as anyone may discover who takes the trouble to examine and reflect. Just as a bit of bunting will gather men together, inspire them with a common sentiment, and make them face death rather than budge an inch, so a word or a phrase will often act as a mighty spell, though the people who employ it have never given its meaning five minutes' real thought in the whole course of their lives. A bigoted Protestant, say an Orangeman who has been trained to detest the Roman Catholic Church without having imbibed the least knowledge of its history, flies into a rabid passion at the word "Pope". On the other hand, a strict Catholic, who has been taught to regard every form of dissent as a damnable heresy, no sooner hears the word "Protestant" than he conjures up the idea of a monster. To mention "Tory" at a Liberal meeting, or "Liberal" at a Tory meeting, is to excite the strongest feelings of derision or abhorrence, while to mention "Sceptic" or "Freethinker", or "Infidel", among orthodox Christians, is to make them feel positively unclean. During the French Revolution, it is said, there were fanatical Republicans who cried "Fraternity or Death"; that is, not death to themselves, but death to other people. "Be my brother or die!" they shouted to their opponents, while pointing weapons at their breasts. Clearly, in this case, Fraternity was not an intelligible idea, but a shibboleth, a party cry, a cant phrase, meaning as little as Abracadabra.

There are also many words that pass current without any definite signification being attached to them by the multitude, but when once they are adopted by a party, though their meaning becomes no more defined, they are taken as badges, and become rallying cries in political and social struggle. Take a very striking illustration. Free Trade, whether right or wrong, is perfectly intelligible. The phrase is neither dubious nor obscure. The simplest mind comprehends it at once. Free Trade is unlimited trade with every part of the globe. But the opponents of Free Trade, in a country like England, where naked Protection has no chance, raise the flag of Fair Trade; and under cover of that word *Fair*, which is so highly respectable and even venerable, they manage to cheat thousands of simple-minded persons, who never get behind such words, but are imposed upon by their plausible faces. With the most perfect sincerity and composure, they ask you how you can oppose Fair Trade? What can be fairer than *Fair Trade*? And so on. Their poor minds are hopelessly befogged, and their condition is pitiable; but it is only an extreme instance of what is, after all, exceedingly common.

People can be cheated, however, not only by words, but by spelling; and there is no more effective device in this line than the skilful use of capital letters. When every substantive was printed with a capital there was no opportunity for this trick, but now that capitals are generally dropped, except for proper names, the cunning rhetorician can eke out his argument or his metaphor by a species of literary atavism. Probably no writer knew the secret of this method better than Carlyle, who was one of the greatest masters of rhetoric that ever lived; or, as some might prefer to say, one of the greatest artists in words. When Carlyle was writing straightforward history, as in the *Frederick*, he used few more capitals than an ordinary

author; but when he assumed the preacher or the poet, as in his wayside disquisitions or in the perpetual transcendentalism of *Sartor Resartus*, his pages showed a perfect eruption of capitals. Eternities, Verities, and so on, sprang up head and shoulders above modester words of equal merit; and naturally they struck the attention of the ordinary reader, who is too apt to judge by first appearances, and takes these capital-lettered substantives at their own estimate—if we may be allowed to charge them with the author's doings. The object, of course, is to give these special words, not simply a distinction, but a personality. They are nothing but abstractions, but when they are printed like proper names they look like real existences; nay, like living beings that may be loved and hated for themselves. When Carlyle says "the Eternities cry" this, that, or the other, he imposes on the ordinary reader by means of the capital. Eternities suggest God; in fact, it seems a sonorous euphemism for the ineffable name. Yet if God were substituted for Eternities, the reader would shrink back. "How do you know", he might exclaim, "that God says so? Is it in the Bible, or is it a private revelation to yourself?" The fact is, Carlyle, like the tremendous and unscrupulous artist he was, expressed nothing but his own opinion; but this trick of spelling enabled him to father it, as it were, upon the universe.

Professor [T. H.] Huxley, many years ago, uttered a strenuous protest against this jugglery. Speaking of the metaphysical idea of compulsion, he said, "Matter I know and force I know, but what is this Necessity but a mental figment of my own creation?" And later on he said, with his peculiar blending of humour and scientific precision, that words like Necessity are printed with capital letters to make them imposing, just as you put a bearskin hat upon a grenadier to make him look more formidable than he is by nature. Metaphysical discussion would not cease if such words were printed like ordinary nouns, yet it would probably lose much interest to common readers, who might begin to see the truth of Berkeley's remark, that metaphysicians first raise a dust and then complain that they cannot see.

Deity is another word usually printed with a capital, though quite wrongly. God is in a sense a personal name, for the word is supposed to denote a personal being. Mr. John Morley, therefore, was a little *outré* in printing it with a small g when he edited the *Forthnightly Review*, and the *Spectator* was only dishing him with his own sauce when it retorted by printing Mr. Morley's name with a small m.

Christian journals frequently print Atheist or Freethinker without a capital, while uniformly bestowing one on Christian, Protestant or Catholic. This practice seems to justify their readers' opinion that Atheists and Freethinkers are an inferior species. We have even seen Unitarian printed in such journals with a small u.

During the Jubilee craze we all witnessed a new development in spelling. Loyalty had grown so hectic as to appropriate for the Queen a usage formerly devoted to God. Every personal pronoun relating to her in the Jubilee service at Westminster Abbey was printed in capitals, so that she and the Almighty claimed an equal dignity. It is actually reported in the newspapers, without contradiction, that in the Prayer-Book used at Windsor the royal pronouns all take capitals, while the divine

pronouns are reduced to the ignominy of small type. Surely it is impossible to conceive a loftier (we beg the word's pardon) flattery of royalty, or a more blasphemous snub to the heavenly majesty. Who will dare to pretend, after this, that the religion of the upper circles is anything but a branch of statecraft, or that their Christianity is anything more than "an organised hypocrisy"?

[Reprinted from THE FREETHINKER, February 21st, 1904.]

In Memoriam

We print below the eloquent speech by Hugh Robert Orr, Editor of the Freethought magazine, *Progressive World*, at the memorial service in Los Angeles, California, to Richard Culbert Olson, who died on January 26th, 1961.

RICHARD CULBERT OLSON, the son of former Governor Culbert L. Olson, died after a protracted illness on January 26th, 1961, in Los Angeles.

In his early life Richard attended the University of Southern California, was graduated from the Harvard Law School, and served as secretary to his father when the elder Olson was Governor of California. Later he practised law with his father and, at the time of his death, maintained his own law office in Los Angeles. Through his dedicated interest in his profession he became a member of the Uniform Laws Commission of the State of California. For the past year he had been a member of the Board of Directors of the United Secularists of America. Through my association with him during the past several years I came to know him as a loyal worker in the cause of secularism. He was a thoroughgoing rationalist, a keen thinker, a true humanitarian, a kind and generous man.

There is no discounting the tragic aspect of death when it strikes without warning, or when it strikes prematurely and long before the life has attained its normal span of years. It contradicts and astounds our human sense of justice and we rebel at it, although in our more rational thought we know that we have no basis for projecting our human sense of justice into the world of physical nature.

Nevertheless it is always hard to accept the fact of death when it takes one who was near and dear to us. This is indeed the great hurt in the heart of man and he is loath to be reconciled to it. In various ways he has sought to assuage this greatest of all human griefs. Sometimes by a stoic resolution he has tried to benumb his natural feelings. Sometimes he has found solace in the hope of a future life where there shall be no more pain and sorrow. Or, again, he has reasoned that if we could only see beyond the limits of our human horizon we would discover an all-wise superhuman power directing the course of all human events and then we could realise that everything that happens to us happens for the best. But such a philosophy is hard put to maintain itself in view of the epidemic that takes whole families, or the street accident that crushes out the life of a little child.

In our saner moments—even in the hour of anguish—all such feeble rationalisation fails either to satisfy our reason or to mitigate our sorrow. And we find ourselves asking: What is life? What is death? Wherein lies the meaning of this devious wandering from the cradle to the grave—this amazing, intoxicating, joyful yet tragic episode we call our life? Indeed, has it any meaning? If so, can we know its meaning? If there is any cosmic meaning or purpose, it is probably forever beyond the reach of man's knowledge. We are bound to look at life and the universe from our human point of view and there is no getting outside of ourselves to see or think from any other point of view. The riddle of the universe remains a riddle.

Let it be so. It is in our *human* world that we live and

move and find our satisfactions. Turning our thought from the fruitless effort to find some meaning in the great riddle, let us make our life meaningful here and now. Let us learn how to make it significant in our own inner experience and in the lives of those about us so that our family and friends and all who know us, remembering us, shall find in that memory a light for their darker hours, a rampart in the storms.

And so I bring you no words of superficial comfort. I cannot pretend to drug your sensibilities or deaden the pain of your sadness. Your sorrow is real. It is because your love for the one who has gone was real. Had there been no love there would be no sorrow. You who have lost a dear one know that the sense of loss is commensurate with the affection you bore that one. You know there is no escape from the anguish that is as profound as your affection was profound. And we who have outlived and lost the child of our own flesh and blood—we know.

It is for the living to carry on. And we do carry on. I am almost amazed at seeing how the human heart can bear the unbearable. Is there some vital source of courage within this human organism, some unassailable garrison of strength within this intricate scheme of cells and glands and nerves that rallies the natural spiritual resources within us and says: "As great as thy bereavement, so great be thy strength?" To borrow a line from the poet Goethe: "They who have not broken their bread in tears know not the immortal powers".

And so we carry on—because there is work to be done, kind words to be said, sympathy to be shown, generous acts to be performed. We carry on because there are those who love us and need us even though we can give them nothing more than our affection. And as we carry on we come to know there are some things as real as our sorrow itself—the incorruptible treasures laid up in our house of memories. For as the days go by the sudden poignancy of our loss is assuaged and these precious memories become an abiding source of beatitude and comfort through all our days. Thus it is that those we have loved and lost find in us an immortality that is beneficent and sure.

N.S.S. Annual Conference

THE 1961 CONFERENCE of the National Secular Society held on Whit Sunday, May 21st, in the Conway Hall, London (headquarters of our friends of South Place Ethical Society) was one of the happiest and most useful of recent years. It was preceded on the Saturday evening by a reception in the Conway Hall, where the President, Mr. F. A. Ridley greeted members and friends, and where an enjoyable entertainment was provided by members of the Society, with Mr. D. H. Tribe as compère. Mr. L. Hall of Leicester baffled the audience with his varied forms of magic ("I use full suits, not just five cards like Dr. Rhine"); Messrs. F. McKay and J. E. Sankey sang us humorous and unsentimental Irish rebel songs; Mr. L. Ebury recited English rebel poetry, and Mr. C. H. Cleaver gave us new versions of old hymns. Father O'Tribe (whose similarity to the compère was not confined to his name) initiated us in the ways of Catholic apologetics; and a number of Biblical charades (performed by Mrs. Barker, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Seibert and Messrs. Sankey, Shannon and Tribe) taxed but failed to get the better of the audience's knowledge of the Scriptures. Mrs. Alexander provided piano accompaniment throughout.

At the Conference, where a fraternal greeting from Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner was read, Mr. F. A. Ridley was re-elected President, Mr. L. Ebury and Mrs. E. Venton,

Vice-Presidents, and Mr. W. Griffiths, Hon. Treasurer, while the new Executive Committee will comprise: R. Johnson (Scotland), A. Arthur (Wales), F. J. Corina (N.E. Group), Mrs. E. Ebury (N.W. Group), D. H. Tribe (S.W. Group), J. W. Barker (S.E. Group), and W. J. McIlroy and C. H. Cleaver (London). Resolutions were adopted for issuing leaflets on basic Secularist principles designed to appeal to young people (Nottingham Branch), urging more extensive teaching in schools of matters relating to sex (Kingston Branch), reiterating the Society's view that British Government policy in Africa and elsewhere should aim at the abolition of all racial and colour distinction (North London Branch), and emphasising the need for advocacy of Secular Education (Kingston Branch). The Conference also congratulated Mr. Kenneth Robinson, MP, on his efforts in promoting a bill for the legislation of abortion under medical supervision and Mr. Sydney Silverman, MP, on his efforts to rationalise the law relating to the death penalty (North London Branch). And two emergency resolutions were unanimously passed:

(1) That this Conference deplores the treatment of the people of Angola by the Portuguese Government and condemns the recent massacre.

(2) That this Conference protests against the statutory position of Anglican Consistory Courts in this country, whereby they have the same status as secular courts, and presses towards Disestablishment and complete Disendowment of the Church of England.

Three very large meetings (a total aggregate of more than a thousand was one estimate) were held in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoon and evening, chaired by Mr. J. W. Barker, at which the speakers were Messrs. S. M. Caines, G. Cornes, L. Ebury, E. Mills, F. A. Ridley, D. H. Tribe and C. E. Wood.

On Whit Monday morning between fifty and sixty people attended a ceremony at 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1, when these premises of the National Secular Society were named "Bradlaugh House". Speakers included Mr. F. A. Ridley, Mr. H. Cutner, Mr. L. Ebury, Mr. W. Collins and the General Secretary, and tribute was paid, not only to Bradlaugh, but to his successors as NSS President, G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen. In addition to the delegates and members from different parts of Britain, Mr. C. Holmes, of Perth, Western Australia, was a welcome guest, representing the Western Australian Secularists.

CORRESPONDENCE

MISGUIDED

I fail to appreciate the argument by R. Walsh (THE FREETHINKER, May 19th) that if the believer cannot prove there is a God, then the unbeliever cannot prove there is not. If Professor "A" states that he has found a cure for cancer then it is up to him to prove his claim, not for Mr. "B" to disprove it. It is quite obvious that if the professor cannot make good his claim then no one, except perhaps a few cranks, will be impressed. Personally, I am not concerned if anyone desires to believe in a supreme being. A man should be free to believe in what he wishes. What does concern me is the fact that these people who believe in an Almighty and all his works are forever trying to force their beliefs down my throat which in turn causes an annoying irritation. The only way to cure the irritation is either to isolate or destroy the infection, and that is the reason I am opposed to organised religion. I had religion pumped into me for years, but thanks largely to the immunisation supplied by THE FREETHINKER I am now free, confident and happy.

D. PENKETH.

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We should like to invite those of your readers living in the Greater London area, to co-operate in a large-scale investigation concerning the nature of thought-reading and associated phenomena (extra-sensory perception). This experiment, which has the approval of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research, will be one of the most ambitious projects of its kind so far attempted. Whatever results are obtained, they should be of considerable scientific and general interest. However, to ensure success, the help of a really substantial number of volunteers is needed.

People volunteering will be asked to carry out a preliminary unsupervised test in their own homes. The test, which is straightforward and should be found interesting, lasts about an hour. Will those interested in taking part please send their names and addresses (post-cards if possible, please!) to:— Extra-Sensory Perception, 8a Ellerdale Road, London, N.W.3.

E. R. DODDS
President

C. D. BROAD
Former President

H. H. PRICE
Past President

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

FEARS

Some time ago I was a bit scared by your short article on South Africa. I agreed fully with what you had to say but, saddled as we are with a Government of religious and racial fanatics, I had fears of THE FREETHINKER being placed in the list of banned publications like *The Bible Handbook*. As old Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote: "The Pope put his foot on the neck of Kings, but Calvin and his cohort crushed the whole human race under their heels in the name of the Lord of Hosts".

A SOUTH AFRICAN READER.

ARE WE LESS CRUEL?

I doubt if the bulk of humanity today is less cruel than in the "witch"-burning period. There were doubtless "sentimentalists" in those days who objected to a practice approved by the Church and its followers. Some time ago, at a Teachers' Conference here, the Assistants sought power to use the cane, a "privilege" hitherto reserved for the Head Masters. This started a newspaper controversy. The cane or strap is not used in some of our schools, and it is discouraged by the Chief Inspector, but Squeers is not dead.

VERONICA ROBERTS,
(Western Australia).

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