

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

WHEN OUR NATIONAL JOURNALS are short of what they call a "story", there is one they can always fall back upon. It is ever a winner. It is—do we live after we die? You can call it Spiritualism if you like, but for many people the name doesn't matter. What matters all the time is evidence that we never really die—all that happens is, we are told, that we are transferred to another "plane" or get pushed into another "vibration", and the dear old life which we never wanted to leave will begin all over again. For eternity.

Hundreds of thousands of people believe this. The fact that they get "messages" from Uncle George or Aunt Martha—messages which are "authenticated" every time—is for them absolute proof. And if these people cannot go to "scances", they are always prepared to read articles about "life after death".

## R101 Case

The astonishing thing is that wide-awake editors in general send out "unbiased" reporters or investigators, which generally means complete ignoramuses on the subject. And such a one was the "investigator" sent out by the *Sunday Pictorial* recently. He was a Mr. Norman Price, and he set out to find the "truth" first from Mr. Maurice Barbanell of all people! And how did this stout defender of the credulity and superstition surrounding Spiritualism respond? He gave Mr. Price full particulars of the celebrated case of the destruction of the airship R101, and the way its unlucky commander, who was killed, "came back" through the mediumship of a Mrs. Garrett. This lady immediately gave the astonished world a full account of the tragedy, together with full technical details which only an experienced air commander could have known. How did the medium know these technical details?

I think a good many readers of THE FREETHINKER must remember how I exposed this sorry fraud, one of the worst cases in the history of Spiritualism. Mrs. Garrett certainly spoke at the seance, but it was such an incoherent jumble of balderdash that the unlucky shorthand typist employed by the late Harry Price to take down a verbatim report, utterly failed to do so. But it was too good an occasion for Harry Price to pass by, so he promptly "wrote up" with the aid of a technical expert Mrs. Garrett's rubbish: and ever since the case of the R101 has been—for people like Mr. Barbanell and others—the biggest proof of "Life After Death" on record. It actually was the biggest hoax.

## "Cobwebbed Oldie"

The *Sunday Pictorial* helped the good work by an "inset" in one of the articles on which was a portrait of the dead commander with the caption "This officer died in the R101 crash. Three days later his 'voice' told why the disaster happened . . ." And it would be difficult to find anything so far away from the truth.

Now it happens that I am "biased" against Spiritualism,

so let us see what the September 23rd number of *Psychic News* which speaks for most of the Spiritualists in Great Britain says. Right at the start we are told—in capitals—that the *Sunday Pictorial* inquiry into "the Mystery of Life after Death" is going "to be a real farce" if

investigator Norman Price maintains in future instalments the furious enthusiasm for inaccuracy he displayed in last Sunday's masterpiece.

And *Psychic News* goes on to prove that Norman Price was at the outset wrong on "five counts" in dealing with the famous R101 case—the most damning one was of course when he said that Mrs. Garrett was under

what Mr. Barbanell calls "strict test conditions", a statement completely untrue. For *Psychic News* the R101 was a "cobwebbed oldie", not a bad description.

## Spirit Uncles

But Mr. Barbanell had many other fool-proof cases on hand, one of them being "the Chaffin Will Case" (quite unknown to me), characterised by *Psychic News* in this way: "This took place 36 years ago in 1925, five years before the R101 seance". The fact is that the most wonderful proofs of "Life after Death" these days seem always to come from the 19th century, and many of them from abroad. They also come through Indian, Hindu, or Egyptian "guides", all able to speak perfect English—that is, perfect English if the medium can speak perfect English. Often the coloured "guide" speaks in a most illiterate Cockney dialect.

The subsequent articles by Mr. Price follow the usual line—there are "mystery voices", and all sorts of experiences utterly "unexplainable" except through "spirits", unless you commit the unforgivable crime of disbelieving the "evidence".

If the spirit uncle is not Uncle George, it is (as in a case described by Mr. Price) Uncle James. Correctly of course. Such descriptions are always absolutely correct. Sometimes a friend of the family, now quite forgotten, comes along and gives his correct name. If the sitter's name is Mary, then the medium drags in a name like Polly for her and it must come from the dead because Mary used to be called Golly. (Nearly all Marys in any case are Pollys.)

Unbelievers, we are sadly informed by Mr. Price do not believe these messages from the "spirit" world, and we put down those which are accurate to ESP, or "chit-chat", or something of the sort. Well, I have never received any message from my own Uncle George (yes, I had one)—not even from a lady I knew very well who was a Spiritualist. She never came back after her death though she promised faithfully to do so.

A file of old volumes of *Psychic News* would disclose all sorts of stories, almost in the same words as those used by Mr. Price giving his experiences with mediums. So would the books, *The Nightside of Nature* by Mrs. Crowe, and *There is No Death* by Florence Marryat. Both of course are quite discredited in these more scientific days.

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### "The Sunday Pictorial" in Search of Spirits

By H. CUTNER

Mr. Price came even to believe in "auras", in "invisible glows", in "souls", and in "Something", whatever it is, "which keeps contact with the world of living men". I suspect that by now he believes everything Spiritualists can offer him — just like the Christian who believes in "miracles", in the "risen" Christ, and in the "Ascension" of "our Lord" straight through illimitable space to sit on the right-hand side of God Almighty.

And it seems to me to be quite useless to argue about such things once a believer has swallowed them wholesale. Take, for example, Mr. Price swallowing all the nonsense sent out by his namesake Harry Price about the R101. He didn't even ask for any evidence. Nor for that matter has Mr. Price bothered about "unbelievers", who, he thinks, base so much on ESP as a kind of magic spell for everything we do not understand. We do not, of course, but it would never do to tell the readers of the *Sunday Pictorial* so. And anyway, he has a very powerful reply to us when we "giggle" at Spiritualism. Here it is: —

Well, we laughed at Marconi, who gave us radio. We chuckled

at the Wright Brothers who said a machine could fly. And may I quote the Astronomer Royal who said in 1958 that the idea of Space Travel was "poppycock". So giggle at Spiritualists if you like. I don't.

Well, I happened to have lived through the beginnings of the phonograph, the radio, the aeroplane. But I can't remember anybody laughing or chuckling at Edison, Marconi, or the Wright Brothers. On the contrary, we were all thrilled at the work of these and other great pioneers of the "space age". In any case, what they did had nothing to do with believing that dead people were alive in another "plane", or that we could get in touch with them. The work of Marconi and the rest was "materialistic" in every sense of the word.

As for the Astronomer Royal — it is obvious he was talking of "space travel" in the "space fiction" sense.

But what has space travel, fiction or not, to do with talking to dead people living in a "spiritual" world? If anybody can talk "poppycock" it is Mr. Norman Price on the "proofs" of Spiritualism. He should meet some of us who really are unbelievers. And this he never did.

## Humble Servants

By D. W.

THE PREACHER, that amazing combination of effrontery and servility, is forever making outrageous claims on behalf of an unseen deity, continually prostrating himself before the God from which his own importance derives. Day by day our eyes and ears are assaulted with promises, warnings and blandishments, all allegedly received from the same Divinity, although the messages vary considerably according to creed and preacher. A measure of conformity, one feels, would be helpful.

"Almighty God, we thy humble servants beseech thee" is a favourite phrase with which the occupants of the pulpit preface their remarks. But do they really believe that an almighty Deity is listening to their words? If they were certain (as they say they are) that their sermons were being heard by an omniscient, omnipotent God, surely there would be some indication of nervousness or trepidation in their behaviour. Instead they generally show less respect and timidity towards God than a man shows towards his employer.

Do Christians make obeisance to God for reasons similar to that followed by Pascal in his famous Wager? If God were as real to them as they insist, their attitude would be very different from the casual familiarity they usually adopt. If their congregations troubled to think about it they would realise that God is at best a nebulous figure whose existence is in doubt. The clergy's protestations of the certainty of his existence are too much at variance with their actions to be accepted. The Church service is not directed at God but at the worshippers. It is narcissism. They gain satisfaction and pride from their adulation. The greater they make their God, the more important are they, his followers. Yet paradoxically, with the excellence of God goes the baseness of man: the mortal being the antithesis of the Immortal. Clerics extol the virtues of the latter and emphasise the lack of grace of the former. Some, indeed, seem to try to see how far apart they can place God and man. Their motives are open to speculation, but their insistence on their own unworthiness appears hypocritical.

Despite their self-confessed limitations, their humility and their unworthiness, the preachers have no hesitation in telling the rest of us how we should live; what is right and what is wrong and issuing pronouncements on every

conceivable subject. They are the interpreters of the Holy Word, translating archaic doctrines into modern terms. There is, it seems, no problem which besets us which was not foreseen by the Biblical prophets. Only 9% of the population of England attend church, but the campaign is endless to make the other 91% into humble servants. God gives a small portion of the population what they regard as adequate evidence of his existence, yet denies the same privilege to others.

If an angel appeared to a crowd at Piccadilly Circus one Sunday afternoon, it would be tangible evidence, especially if the TV cameras were there to record the visit. At last people would know what to believe, which faith was right. Then the pulpit exhortations would not be required. For obvious reasons there is no hope of such an occurrence, and Christians will continue with the mental contortions that allow them to believe the impossible. Instead of "We, thy humble servants", the clergy might say, "These, our humble servants" with a resulting gain in accuracy.

### BODYGUARD

WE DO WELL to remind ourselves from time to time of the "licensed insanities" (as a friend calls them) of Rome. We quote, therefore, verbatim, from the bulletin of the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, Deptford. (*The Trinity Light*, 29/10/61): "Today is the Feast of Christ the King and there will be Solemn High Mass sung at 11.30 a.m. From after that Mass until the Evening Service at 6.45 p.m., there will be Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament. We urge you to make as many visits as possible during the Exposition. Members of the Men's and Women's Guilds of the Blessed Sacrament are reminded of their special privilege and duty to form a Guard of Honour by watching throughout the day. Would you please sign on the list posted in the porch so that all periods are covered. We would be grateful if some generous souls would arrange to cover the awkward watching period from 12.30 to 2.30 p.m. when most families are having their lunch. *Candles for burning before the Blessed Sacrament* are on sale in the Repository this morning, 2s. each."

# A Humanist Anthology

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN HER RECENTLY PUBLISHED *Humanist Anthology* (Barrie and Rockliff, for the Rationalist Press Association, 21s.), Mrs. Margaret Knight, well-known for her sensational broadcast a few years ago on "Morals without Religion", has selected representative passages from a large number of ancient and modern authors which she regards as being typical of the Humanist point of view. This very comprehensive selection ranges from the pre-Christian writings of the (perhaps legendary) Chinese sages, Lao-Tze (who opens her *Anthology*), Confucius, and Mencius, down to contemporary writers such as Bertrand Russell, and to several of his and our younger contemporaries.

As is perhaps inevitable, in a collection of human opinion drawn from such vast and diverse regions of Time and Space, the views expressed by the numerous cosmopolitan authors differ widely, and are even occasionally in seeming opposition to each other. But all of them represent what are evidently held to be views and attitudes representative of what is here termed Humanism. Hence, obviously—as that ex- (very ex-!) Humanist, the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad, used to remind us—it all depends on what one means by the term "Humanism". Mrs. Knight herself commences her personal Introduction by quoting the Cambridge philosopher, Wittgenstein, "the meaning of a word is the way in which it is used" according to which perhaps not too transparent definition, a Humanist, at least at the present day, is—explains the editor—one who sees no reason for believing in a supernatural god or a life after death, so that he holds that man must face his problems with his own intellectual and moral resources, without invoking supernatural aid; and that authority, supernatural or otherwise, should not be allowed to obstruct inquiry in any field of thought. Mrs. Knight adds, quite logically from the standpoint of her above definition, that she includes certain Deists, though "with some qualms", as *bona fide* Humanists worthy of citation and, as such, to be included in this *Anthology*.

In my opinion, her "qualms" were quite unnecessary, for if King George III once declared that he did not think "that the Bible needed apologising for" (e.g. a reference to Bishop Watson's then current *Apology for the Bible*) neither do I think that Paine and Voltaire (Mrs. Knight's Deists) need apologising for here.

Personally, I do not see why it should be necessary to coin a new term, "Humanism", at least for use in the above sense by Mrs. Knight. The term defines nothing that had not been previously defined by such already existing terms as Rationalism or Secularism. Just as Schopenhauer (one of Mrs. Knight's authors), once defined Pantheism as "an easy-going way of getting rid of God", so the word "Humanism" when used in this specifically anti-supernaturalist sense, merely repeats the implications of such terms as "Rationalism" and "Secularism", but in a more genteel way. It is, shall we say, respectable in polite society, avoiding the aggressive militancy implied in such terms. Nor is that all: in my submission, at least, the proper use of the term "Humanist" (i.e. to paraphrase Wittgenstein in the sense that the word means to me), is something quite different, and has no specific connection with either religion or, necessarily, anti-religion.

A Humanist is surely one whose primary interest is in serving humanity, and it has got nothing whatever to do with specific beliefs. In my opinion again, any representative *Humanist Anthology*, should include men like Bernard

Shaw and Bertholt Brecht, whose primary interest was humanity but who were mainly indifferent to religious controversy. Nor would such an *Anthology* exclude all Christians, as this one scrupulously does. At least three clergymen (all Deans of the Church of England), should have been included, for who has better defined what is surely the very essence of any Humanism based (as all genuine Humanism surely must be) upon human solidarity, than John Donne (17th century Dean of St. Paul's), in his magnificent "For whom the bell tolls" passage? Who has ever fought more passionately for Humanity as he knew it, than Dean Swift (18th century Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin), or produced a better Humanist definition of the irrational authoritarianism that suffocates any and all genuinely Humanist thought, than Dean Inge (St. Paul's, 20th century): "A philosophy in which there are no problems to be solved, but only authorities to be consulted"? These men and their kind were surely Humanists, and great ones at that.

I must repeat that I do not think that the proper use of the term, "Humanism", has any such anti-religious connotation as Mrs. Knight and the movement to which she belongs, suggest. The terms "Rationalism" and "Secularism", I must repeat, covered all that long ago. One must also add that, even assuming the correctness of the anti-supernaturalist definition of Humanism, there are some surprising omissions in this volume. To produce a detailed anthology of modern Humanism whilst leaving out probably the greatest Humanist (in Mrs. Knight's own sense of the term) of modern times, John M. Robertson, is surely rather like producing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark; whilst the omission of men like Joseph McCabe and G. W. Foote, is only a degree less surprising.

Naturally, a representative selection of Humanist literature over 2,000 years, stretching as this one does, from China to Conway Hall, is a difficult task, and with a few such exceptions as the above, this selection is an adequate and valuable one. Many of its highlights are, of course, classics which it would be impertinent to criticise. I myself, was particularly interested in some of the lesser-known anti-Christian writers, such as Celsus (2nd century) and Jean Meslier (17th-18th century), whose iconoclastic attacks on Christianity were for so long effectively suppressed by the Church.

As is, no doubt, inevitable in a *corpus* of mainly critical literature, there are some controversial opinions expressed: e.g. Lady Wootton's expressed opinion that Marxism and Catholicism are the two major contemporary superstitions of mankind, an opinion which certainly appears to use the word "superstition" in a rather arbitrary sense since, whatever one may think about Marxism, it belongs to an entirely different order of secular thought to Catholic supernaturalism. Contrarily, another contributor, Archibald Robertson (whose recent death has been such a shock to us all) was himself an ardent adherent of this Marxist "superstition". In general, however, the authors quoted here are eminently worthy of study.

Much of this *Anthology* naturally consists of great literature and is of permanent value. From Lao-Tze to Bertrand Russell, an intellectual minority has kept the flame of reason alight in a world in which hitherto, authority has been the normal and Humanism the exceptional feature of human society (there is no quotation in

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

We are delighted to find, according to the Rev. J. C. Peddie of Glasgow, (*Daily Sketch*, November 2nd) that "any ordained clergyman can obey the Christian injunction to heal the sick". This should be great news for all hospitals for, with Christ's help and "healing rays emanating from God", any ordained clergyman can now walk into any hospital, and clear the ward of sick people, send them back to their homes completely cured, say, in an hour or two. It's as simple as that. There can be no failures, for God and Christ are solidly behind every ordained clergyman.

It is hardly necessary to add that Mr. Peddie himself is a remarkable healer, for when he cures a patient, he sees the sufferer "bathed in a kind of golden light". Always golden — never in a "silver" light! Moreover, so triumphant are Mr. Peddie's cures, that he once cured a Communist who was on his "deathbed" and "who denied the very existence of God", which proves beyond any possibility of doubt, as Mr. Peddie claims, that his power passes "directly from God". How the very religious can lap this sort of thing up *ad lib* is truly a modern miracle!

The Bishop of our own diocese, Southwark, wants us to "face the facts" — "We must stop deceiving ourselves with careless talk about a return to religion", there are churches in South London with "less than ten people in their congregations each Sunday", and "too much of the clergy's time is taken up with argument and discussion about Church law and liturgy". All this is very true, no doubt, and in addition, people in the Church and out are still discussing the wonderful teachings of Jesus and Paul without in the least knowing what they meant.

As an example of what we mean, the "Daily Express" (November 10th) gives the story of a naval captain who at the Church Assembly recently praised up the New English Bible — "When I read it to classes of boys they look up — they understand". Yet for centuries we have been told that the beautiful, simple, teachings of "our Lord" can be perfectly understood by even the most illiterate and unlearned in the Authorised Version. But in spite of this, other speakers said that "there were fairly obvious defects" in the NEB, and "some unfortunate translations". Were the unfortunate translations also "understood" by the boys?

Anybody who has tried in vain to get even a shilling out of pools and Premium Bonds, should try Katrina the famous astrologer whose address was in the *News of the World* the other Sunday, together with a case out of her marvellous files of success. A lady "feeling dreadfully down" got in touch with Katrina, and soon after won £700 on the pools. No doubt every one of the eight million readers of the Sunday journal could do the same. Or could they? In any case, it appears that you can hear Katrina on Radio Luxembourg every Sunday at 8.30. And good luck to you!

According to the widely-circulated "Sunday Pictorial" (October 2th) Billy Graham made 12,000 converts in 1954 here in Britain — most of them about 15 years of age. And of course, the most interesting fact about it is that they were all Christians to start with. They all had religious teaching for years in school. And what do research workers now say of the beliefs of similar young people? Some results are contained in a book just published, *Teenage Religion* by Harold Loukes and some of the descriptions of God given by the youngsters will no doubt make many

bishops squirm. God is in general for the young, an old gent with white hair, and is a very good man because he created the world. Animals must think God is like them — an animal. We call God a "he" but how do we know he's a "he"?

But quite a large proportion of these teenagers have no belief at all. "I don't believe in Heaven and Hell", said one, "because millions of people are dying every day, and there wouldn't be enough room for them all. We would be meeting some Stone Age men . . .". And this sums up their religious "unbelief" — "I think it is a lot of hilly-billy nonsense that is not true". As Billy Graham so signally failed, in spite of all his ballyhoo — what about the Archbishop of Canterbury taking a hand and trying to convert these young infidels once for all to Christ Jesus?

In Malta, once a hot bed of the Catholic Faith, there appears an awful row looming between the ex-premier Dom Mintoff, and his one-time Church. Mintoff seems to have little regard for the sacred person of the Archbishop of Malta, "lambasting him for helping the British to keep Malta in colonial chains". He claims that "the Church opposed integration because Britain is not a Catholic country"; while the Archbishop contends that "not even behind the Iron Curtain has the Church suffered such insults" as those from Mintoff. Altogether it is a pretty quarred and the *Sunday Express* (October 29th) is asking who will win — "Mintoff, playing with hellfire, or the Church?"

### A HUMANIST ANTHOLOGY

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this Anthology from the long Ages of Faith). Indeed, Humanism has been, historically, a fragile plant that has only flowered intermittently at rare periods throughout recorded human annals; nor can Humanist values be regarded as secure even now. Today Bertrand Russell the last great Humanist recorded here, now holds high the banner of Humanity and Humanism under the nuclear shadow of what threatens to be final disaster to both.

Mrs. Knight is to be congratulated on this valuable volume which appears at a time when all human and Humanist values (however defined) are at issue and in jeopardy as never before. If we incline to dissent from her precise definition of the term, "Humanist", we will strive to make amends by offering her an even older definition than that of Wittgenstein: "What's in a Word?"

### PAPERBACKS

**Common Sense and The Crisis** by Thomas Paine (double vol.) 8s.  
**Miss Lonelyhearts and A Cool Million** by Nathanael West (double vol.) 2s. 6d.

**Memoirs of a Nun** by Diderot, 3s. 6d.

**My Childhood** by Maxim Gorky, 3s. 6d.

**Children of the Sun** by Morris West (illustrated) 2s. 6d.

**Six Days or Forever?** by Ray Ginger (The story of the Tennessee "Monkey Trial"). 4s.

**Man and His Gods** by Professor Homer W. Smith (500 pages), 12s.

**One Woman's Fight** by Vashti McCollum. Revised Edition, with a Postlude by Paul Blanshard, a Preface by George Axtelle and the complete text of the Supreme Court Decision (the "McCollum Case"), 13s. 6d.

Available from the PIONEER PRESS, Postage 8d.

### NEXT WEEK

#### A NEW CASE OF ARSON

By EVA EBURY

# THE FREETHINKER

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. 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, McRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

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, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY

### INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, November 28th, 7.30 p.m.: M. W. ELLIOTT, G. B. LESLIE and DR. EUSTACE CHESSER, "Moral Standards of Modern Youth".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, November 26th, 6.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Nuclear Age and the Materialist Conception of History".

Marble Arch Branch (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, November 26th, 7.15 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "Telepathy".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, November 26th, 2.30 p.m.: DEBATE (Young Conservatives v. Young Socialists), "This is My Life".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, November 26th, 11 a.m.: MRS. MARGARET KNIGHT, M.A., "Scientific Humanism and Education".

## Notes and News

WE SHOULD like to thank those who responded so promptly to our request for counterfoils of postal orders taken by burglars. It has helped us considerably.

AMONG THE PAPERS that referred to the plaque to Charles Bradlaugh at 29 Turner Street, Stepney, were *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and the *Leicester Mercury*. Bradlaugh — said the last named (3/11/61) — "was a man who by his courage in face of a lot of opposition did much for the cause of free speech. He was the Secularist and Politician whose freethought paper, the *National Reformer* was prosecuted by the Government for blasphemy and sedition in 1868". It is a pity that, in an otherwise fitting tribute, the *Mercury* should have repeated the error that Bradlaugh "refused to take the oath on a Bible". He didn't. When not allowed to affirm, he was prepared to take the oath and to regard it as binding. It was the House that refused.

IT IS HARDLY UNUSUAL these days to read that the minds and faith of our children are being "Satanically attacked".

What "distinguishes" a letter to the *Dover Express* (10/11/61), is that the writer is a "flat-earther". Yes, they really do exist! In fact, this one, S. Shenton, is their International Secretary. And he is right, of course, when he says that "The God of Israel stands or falls by his statements regarding the structure of the heavens and the earth, which He claims to have created". Mr. Shenton aptly quotes from *The Age of Reason* that, "The two beliefs [Modern Astronomy and Bible Cosmology] cannot be held together in the same mind; and he who thinks that he believes both has thought but little of either". The surprising thing is that Mr. Shenton calls Thomas Paine an atheist when the sentence before the quotation expresses Paine's belief that "God created a plurality of worlds at least as numerous as what we call stars". But we can't expect too much logic from a flat-earther, can we?

THE DEAN OF CAPETOWN, the Very Rev. E. L. King, is reported (*Evening News*, London, 8/11/61) to have told his congregation that "he will refund woman members who damage their nylons while kneeling in prayer". A lady friend of ours thinks the Dean might run up quite a bill.

DURING A RECENT CASE in the Montreal Criminal Court, Mr. Joseph Cohen, Q.C. pointed out that a Roman Catholic priest "has no privilege under the criminal law of Canada to keep 'secrets of the confessional' when called as a witness" (*The Montreal Star*, 21/10/61). Mr. Cohen agreed with Judge John O'Meara that the "custom" of respecting the confidences of priests, religious ministers or rabbis had "grown up", and added that, while no clergyman has apparently ever been forced to divulge a conversation "considered sacred under religious edict" in a criminal case, "should such a precedent occur, it would mean that a cleric could go to jail for contempt of court, if he refused in court to reveal the secrets of the confessional".

A FEW DAYS EARLIER (19/10/61) *The Montreal Star* quoted W. Arthur Lewis, British-educated Principal of the University College of the West Indies, as saying that "bickering educational missionaries are badly confusing people in the underdeveloped nations". "Education", he said, "is being introduced into Africa the same way as the Christian religion has been introduced into Africa — by missionaries of various kinds who are just as much interested in fighting one another as improving the minds of the natives".

THE MANCHESTER BRANCH of the National Secular Society has been inactive for some time. Now, Mr. William Russell of 27 King William Street, Salford 5, has accepted an invitation from the Society's Executive to try to get things going again. Will all who are interested (whether NSS members already or not) please write direct to Mr. Russell? He will welcome your support.

THE NEW (fifth) edition of Adrian Pigott's *Freedom's Foe: the Vatican* is now available at the same price as the last, 3s., plus 6d. postage. This, despite the addition of further material bringing the work right up to date.

F. A. RIDLEY'S article, "Atheism and the Industrial Revolution" (THE FREETHINKER, June 30th) was reprinted in *The Indian Libertarian* on October 1st, 1961, and Colin McCall's article, "Evolution the Modern Concept" (THE FREETHINKER, May 5th) in the November 1961 issue of *The Free Humanist*, Philadelphia.

# Jehovah's Witnesses: A Summary of Confusion

By ARTHUR R. HARDY

I LIST BELOW some excerpts from the works of the religious organisation commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses. As a matter of interest I have given subject titles, but the actual quotations are verbatim and may be verified by any interested students. This organisation claims, of course, to have the "Truth", but after a rather protracted examination of their viewpoint, as expressed in published works, I am inclined to ask with poor Pontius Pilate, "What is Truth?"

## Money and Riches

False riches, consisting of money, houses and lands, acquired by selfish means at cost to others and thereafter used selfishly, are almost always used for the oppression of other persons. In the present time a few men own or possess almost all the money, houses, and lands, and the great mass of humankind suffer in need of the very necessities for their daily living. Riches thus acquired and wrongfully used the Scriptures describe as "filthy lucre". Selfish men love the power that a great amount of money gives them, and for that reason it is written in the Scriptures that the "love of money is the root of all evil". —*Riches*, 1936.

If your money is lazy you are to blame. It can work for you when you give it the opportunity, but as long as you leave it lazily lying in a hiding place, it will do nothing. Like an unused muscle that loses its strength, so money loses the power to serve you in proportion to the length of time it is idle. Inflation weakens it so that what it can buy when you go to use it is less than when you put it away. The longer it remains hidden the greater will be your loss from its inactivity.

It is a good practice to discuss frankly with an account representative of the brokerage firm your investment desires as well as your financial standing.

Like any business, you must balance the time you devote to selecting and watching your investments with other things in your life.

Selecting companies in which to invest is not very difficult. Think of the products you use in your daily life, such as foods, automobiles, tires, gasoline, oil . . .

—*Awake*, October, 1952.

How often we hear someone call money "the root of all evil". This gives the wrong impression, conceals a treacherous snare and obscures a sign of the last days. Why? Because money is not the root of all evil. There is nothing evil intrinsic in the circulating medium called money.

—*The Watchtower*, March 1954.

It appears that the Jehovah's Witnesses are not quite clear upon this attitude to the modern capitalist system, and their claim to be "not of this world" is certainly not endorsed by the present members of this organisation who have obviously "never had it so good", as evidenced by a recent issue of their periodical which gives sound financial advice to speculators. Obviously they, in common with most other Christian organisations have a foot in both worlds!

## War and Politics

The war of one nation against another nation of the earth is not the fight of the followers of Christ Jesus. If the nations of this world desire to fight, that is their affair entirely, and it is not the affair at all of one who has made a covenant to be faithful to Almighty God and his King and Kingdom. The Christian must not interfere in the least manner with the war between the nations.

Being in Christ Jesus, one can no longer take sides in the controversies and wars between the peoples and nations.

—*Neutrality of Jehovah's Witnesses*, November, 1939.

The Bible establishes the principle that to support or put into power a person or group makes the supporter a sharer in the sins the person or groups may commit.

—*The Watchtower*, July 1954.

The preaching activities of Jehovah's Witnesses as ministers entitles them to claim exemption from performing military

training and service in the armed forces of the nations wherein they dwell. The exempt status of Jehovah's Witnesses also relieves them of the performance of governmental work required of conscientious objectors because Jehovah's Witnesses are ministers of the Gospel and not religious, political, or academic pacifists. —*Report on Korea*, April, 1952.

The bloody dagger of communism in the East has turned from Korea to Indo-China. Now it has turned again and raises to strike against Formosa. The question of American armed intervention comes to the fore, as Formosa is a key link in the island chain that stands guard against the Communist Mainland of China. —*Awake*, January, 1955.

The world was electrified when, last October 23rd the entire nation of Hungary rose in revolt against the brutality and oppression of Red Rule. —*Awake*, April, 1957.

To delve into politics would mean to shew friendship for the world, and to shew friendship with the world would mean to make oneself an enemy of God. That is why the early Christians shunned politics.

—*The Watchtower*, November, 1956.

Today the Christian witnesses of Jehovah, like the witnesses of Jehovah in the early days of Christianity, keep unspotted part in the politics of this world, yes, even from voting.

—*The Watchtower*, November, 1956.

To conclude this necessarily brief review I quote the titles of a few magazine articles from the American organisation, viz. "Exposing the Red Paradise", "Red China regiments the Masses", "Missile bases in Britain", "Hungary rises against brutal masters", and, amusingly, "Britain on Parade, the Coronation her greatest spectacle". It appears that the followers of this sect, although claiming to be apart from the world of politics, have no objection to following the general propaganda line of the American Senate, and their constant usage of the term "Red", coupled with the definitely biased style of writing, implements this conclusion.

I am personally a pacifist, and I am pleased that the Jehovah's Witnesses are also conscientious objectors. It is worthy of note, however, that they are so not because they believe war and killing to be wrong—they don't—their objection is primarily that they are entitled to exemption as ministers of religion. In fact, like most fundamentalists they do support, on Scriptural grounds, the existence of Capital Punishment, and in the past have advised acceptance of racial segregation laws where they exist, in accordance with the injunctions of St. Paul.

It is a mixed picture, typical of the attempts of man to distort humanity in the various, contradictory, and opposing teachings of the Bible. The Witnesses' personal attitude of toeing the party line is strongly reminiscent of the Communists they so obviously dislike, and conversation with their representatives gives one the impression that they are dogmatic and quite incapable of making an individual decision without reference to their books. This of course suggests they are not capable of discussion by themselves, but must refer back to Brooklyn for answers, as the Catholic does to Rome or the Communist to Moscow.

## CHAPLAINS TO THE STORES

"MOST OF THE THOUSANDS who come to London's West End to work do not go to church" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 5/11/61). So the church goes to them. "Five of London's biggest departmental stores, employing nearly 7,000 people", have accepted a curate from All Souls' Church, Langham Place, as "Chaplain to the Stores" and are contributing to his salary.

# An Introduction to Geology

By AKIBA

*Introducing Geology: The Earth's Crust Considered as History* by D. V. Ager, illustrated by Walter Shepherd and J. B. Frame; Faber and Faber 30s.

THIS POPULAR INTRODUCTION to Geology is one of the finest that has appeared. Geology is a fascinating subject alike to the professional and amateur student, but a great deal of skill is required to make it interesting to both at the same time. Dr. Ager's book can be read by older schoolchildren and university students who wish to know something about geology, while for those taking short courses in geology, particularly as ancillary or subsidiary subjects to a main degree course it is invaluable. With 19 half-tone illustrations and 60 drawings (including characteristic fossils and maps of rock distribution) the written and pictorial presentation of the subject are well balanced.

Geology is divided into many branches and sub-branches. The four main branches are: historical geology (Stratigraphy), the study of minerals and rocks (Mineralogy and Petrology), the study of fossils (Palaeontology) and the study of landscape and erosion (Physical Geology or Geomorphology). Specialised sub-branches include palaeobotany and palaeozoology (belonging to the main branch of palaeontology), geophysics, geochemistry and engineering geology, each of which overlaps or is included in one of the main branches. Rocks are divided into three main types, viz., sedimentary, igneous and metamorphic. Over the years a new three-fold division has been advanced by Professor H. H. Read which has gained wide acceptance, viz. volcanic, neptunic (i.e. sedimentary) and plutonic (i.e. formed at a great depth beneath the surface).

Dr. Ager establishes an important principle in his introduction with these words:—

Geology is simply history extended backwards for millions of years. It is not really a science at all but rather the application of almost every other science to the elucidation of earth-history. Just as a modern archaeologist uses isotope chemistry to date his ancient documents and aerial photography to find his buried walls, so the geologist uses almost every branch of chemistry, physics and biology to investigate his rocks and their contents. (P. 13.)

Geological time is divided into two great periods, the Pre-Cambrian and the Post-Pre-Cambrian. Very little is known of the former, relative to the more recent period, owing to the sparseness of the remains of any fossils that have survived the transformation and burial of the rocks in which they were embedded.

The Stratigraphical column is divided into a Pre-Cambrian Era and three Post-Pre-Cambrian Eras—Palaeozoic, Mesozoic and Caenozoic—while each era is sub-divided into periods such as Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous and Permian (for the Palaeozoic Era). Although the impression is often given that the periods rank in equal importance, either in terms of their duration or significance in terms of orogenesis (i.e. mountain-building)—this impression is false. Recent geological thinking has veered to a re-writing of the stratigraphical column, so that the "rank" of the periods is made more even.

The Palaeogeographical maps which are excellently drawn, are as Dr. Ager points out very rough and ready maps of the different periods in review. No great accuracy can be attached to them as borings are few and far between, outside the present distribution of land and

water. As is well known, Britain has undergone vast changes in level over geological time, and London itself has been under water for many millions of years. By London, of course, is meant the present site of London.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters in the book deal with "The Present and Future", in which Dr. Ager, himself a palaeontologist, attempts to extrapolate the main lines of present-day evolution. His discussion of the "organic world of today and tomorrow" (p.216) is thought-provoking, his outlook being literally down-to-earth and materialistic—in the best and proper sense of the adjective.

The final paragraph in this chapter is well worth quoting, as it sums up Dr. Ager's thinking on this subject:

We may degenerate through our rejection of natural selection, we may be displaced by some better-equipped organism (though there is nothing on earth at the moment which faintly approaches this category). Most likely of all, we may destroy ourselves by our own efforts, but on the whole it looks very probable that man and his products will be the zone fossils of the strata accumulating for a very long time to come.

We do not know very much of the future

Except that from generation to generation

The same things happen again and again. (P.223.)

For those interested in the subject, thirty shillings is reasonable for *Introducing Geology*.

## ALMOST A VILLANELLE

No man can know the features of his fate.  
Should he contrive, at best it's but a guess;  
Between events the Gods interpolate.

Though he may scheme and speculate  
and read into the night, nevertheless  
no man can know the features of his fate.

He need not brood in mood disconsolate  
however, for the more he knows the less  
between events the Gods interpolate.

It follows, then, man must investigate  
and act to free himself, though he confess,  
"No man can know the features of his fate."

Since like gets like and ends don't deviate,  
how come some schemes "gang aft a-gley", unless  
between events the Gods interpolate?

Instead of "Gods" read "chance" and this equate  
with ignorance. Now with this you'll acquiesce,  
though man can't know the features of his fate  
between events no Gods interpolate.

S.B.

## HOLY WARS

IN LOOKING through some old books in our local library, I came across the following extract from *The Suffolk Chronicle*, dated Saturday, October 17th, 1835:

The Inquisition, since its foundation in the fourteenth century, has burnt at the stake above one hundred thousand persons of both sexes, besides destroying twice that number by imprisonment.

Religious wars among Christians, for differences in opinion, on points now unintelligible, have cost the lives of above two millions in direct slaughters; and the wars to establish Christianity, and those waged against the Turks about the Holy land, etc., have cost fifty millions of lives. The wars of Charlemagne, etc., to Christianise the Saxons, etc., and of the Spaniards to Christianise the Moors and Americans, cost at least fifteen millions.—*Paris Advertiser*.

H. R. TURNEY (Colchester).

## CORRESPONDENCE

## ANSWERS TO QUERIES

Mr. Flemming will find the answers to most of his queries (so far as they can be answered at all) in Joseph McCabe's *Rationalist Encyclopedia*.  
C. H. NORMAN.

## MR. KHRUSHCHEV AND GOD

Knowing the British Press's usual distortion in matters relating to progressive movements such as freethought, atheism, communism, etc., the writer of *This Believing World* (19/11/61) should have waited to see what Mr. Khrushchev *really* said. The official report quotes him as having said "But as they used to say, God save us from ever exploding these bombs over any territory, no matter whose it may be. That is the most cherished dream of our life" (my italics).

I notice that the same Press, while crudely trying to suggest that Khrushchev was some sort of a theistic atheist, made no mention of this significant statement towards the end of the same speech: "Communist education presupposes the emancipation of the mind from the religious prejudices and superstitions that still prevent some Soviet people from displaying their creative ability to the full. A more effective system of scientific atheist propaganda is needed, one that will embrace all sections and groups of the population, and will prevent the dissemination of religious views, especially among children and adolescents".

C. A. MORRISON.

In reference to *This Believing World* (10/11/61), Mr. Khrushchev and his "May God grant . . .", is I suspect a deliberately unsemantic translation from Russian into English; since many words and phrases in Russian contain an indigenous but meaningless reference to God.

A. J. WAKEMAN.

## THE LEAGUE OF THE GODLESS

Your correspondent, "Akiba" (a lineal descendent of the famous Rabbi of Bar Cockba fame, I presume?), in the course of his interesting article on the Bolshevik experiment in "Proletarian Atheism", confined his remarks purely to the original Russian organisation. Actually however, I understand that the original conception of Stalin and his Minister of Anti-Religion, Yaroslavsky, was for a "godless" International similar in kind and diffusion to the then active and cosmopolitan Third (Communist) International and also presumably with its world headquarters at Moscow.

At least, this is what I was informed at the time—the early thirties) by the then English comintern expert on religion, T. A. Jackson, who was mentioned by "Akiba" in this capacity. Mr. Jackson approached me personally at the time, and indicated that an English Section of The League of the Godless was about to be formed to carry on the anti-religious struggle as a necessary part of the proletarian fight for Socialism. He added that they did not wish to confine membership of the projected organisation to members of the Communist Party, but intended to include all *bona fide* Socialists who accepted the Marxist interpretation of religion as political and social "opium". He evidently included me in this category, since he then made the suggestion that I should join his staff! At this time I was not a member of the National Secular Society, and I may add that I have never been a member of the Communist Party.

Soon after this, Hitler came to power in Germany and the International Line of World Communism hastily switched over to the Popular Front against Fascism, which necessitated collaboration not only with non-Communists, but also with Christian anti-Fascists. Presumably on this account, Stalin and Co., did not proceed with their anti-religious International, but began to hobnob with Christians like the famous "Red Dean". The Russian League of the Godless, no doubt as part of the new line, then applied for membership, and was accepted, by the World Union of Freethinkers, and I think I am correct in stating that its leader, Emelian, was himself present at the World Union London Congress in 1936. (Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner could probably confirm this, as also the date of the Russian entry into the World Union). Stalin dissolved the League of Militant Atheists in Russia presumably in order to consolidate the national defence against the German attack in 1941-5. At present—or so I was assured by representative Communists in East Germany—there is no intention at Moscow of reviving it, the present Party Line being that religion (as presumably a relic of pre-Socialist society) will inevitably disappear in a fully-fledged Socialist order. Consequently, with the possible exception of Poland, where the Communist regime at present carries on a bitter struggle against the Roman Catholic Church, anti-religious societies, as also any propaganda specifically devoted to such ends, are illegal in both the Soviet Union and the (European) Peoples' Democracies. I do not know whether this is also the position in China where, however, Western missionaries have left bitter memories of their

past association with the gunboat diplomacy so often practised by Colonialist regimes, when the Gospel and the opium traffic were introduced simultaneously.

I hope that "Akiba" will return to this subject on future occasions, for one must recognise its importance in relation to the Socialist world which now includes a thousand million people and has obviously come to stay.  
F. A. RIDLEY.

## OBITUARY

Freethinkers in many parts of the world will be deeply sorry to hear of the death, on November 6th, of Mabel Coates, wife of the Secretary of the Westralian Secularists, Collin Coates.

Mrs. Coates was a sweet and charming woman, a Freethinker like her husband, and well known in the Manchester area as a Clarionite in Robert Blatchford's day.

The secular funeral (believed to be the first of its kind in Western Australia) took place at the Crematorium, Kauratta, Perth, on November 8th, and a fellow Secularist paid tribute to a lady who will be sadly missed at future local functions. "I cannot get poor Collin out of my thoughts", wrote a mutual friend, and this expresses my own feelings at this sad news.  
C.McC.

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