

# The Freethinker

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FOR MANY YEARS NOW, on and off, Guy Aldred has been saying that Charles Bradlaugh was not a genuine Atheist. And in the October issue of his paper, *The Word*, Mr. Aldred again strums the old—and rather timeworn—tune. “The word ‘Atheist’ as used by Bradlaugh was not”, he says, “a militant expression of heresy. It meant nothing more than Agnosticism of a very mild kind”. And, “I do not like Bradlaugh’s way of defining and explaining his Atheism. It is too safe and too metaphysical. It asks the blessings of trembling and tremulous suburbia”.

I haven’t the least idea what that last sentence means and, in any case, I can’t see that the blessings or tremblings of suburbia have any relevance to the question at issue. As for the penultimate sentence, there is no especial merit in bold definitions, and certainly none in rash ones: what are wanted are accurate ones. If Bradlaugh was careful when defining his terms, we should be grateful for it. “Too metaphysical?” Here, Mr. Aldred follows the foolish habit of using “metaphysical” as a term of opprobrium; that is clear. I wish his own meaning were, though. The only thing I can be sure of from the quoted passages, is that Mr. Aldred doesn’t like Bradlaugh’s definitions and explanations of Atheism. Fair enough, though it is a view I don’t share.

“God”  
To understand Bradlaugh’s position, let us consider his own words. In his essay, “Is There A God?” (*Theological Essays*, Freethought Publishing Co.) he wrote:

The great difficulty in attempting any answer to this question is in defining the word “God”. It is equally impossible to intelligently affirm or deny any proposition unless there is at least an understanding, on the part of the affirmer or denier, of the meaning of every word used in the proposition. To me the word “God” standing alone is a word without meaning. I find the word repeatedly used even by men of education and refinement, and who have won reputation in special directions of research, rather to illustrate their ignorance than to explain their knowledge. Various sects of Theists do affix arbitrary meanings to the word “God”, but often these meanings are in their terms self-contradictory, and usually the definition maintained by one sect of Theists more or less contradicts the definition put forward by some other sect.

That seems to me sound (and I am more concerned with soundness than boldness here). Indeed, I suggest that Bradlaugh’s position has gained, not lost point with the years. The undermining of the fundamentalist Christian conception of God, has led to more and more looseness in the employment of the term. Like Heaven and Hell, God has been stretched almost to nothingness. Heaven and Hell have become “states of mind”—even in some cases brought down to earth—or presence or absence of God. And God himself? One has to contend, these days, with “evolutionary” conceptions like those of Teilhard de Chardin and Paul Tillich. Or, to take an example familiar to all readers, Dr. Brian R. Pamplin. In *A Draft for the Book of Creation* (The Paperback, Durham), Dr. Pamplin says: “In the beginning God thought out the

pattern of creation. The Lord God said let there be Light, Energy and Matter. And God said let Matter and Energy form Atoms and let Atoms combine and condense to form solids and liquids, and let Stars and Plants evolve in their millions and it was so”. But “God is still creating the perfect world”, Dr. Pamplin adds (*THE FREETHINKER*, 5/10/62), “and we are expected to help”. This tells us nothing about God and the letter printed this week is no more helpful. I still don’t know how Dr. Pamplin conceives God, merely that he thinks him “good”. But I am told that Dr. Pamplin and I use the same words with different meanings. From this I think we may demonstrate the value of

the Bradlaugh approach.

## Definition

For, if Dr. Pamplin and I were to have a discussion, and that discussion were to be useful, I should have to adopt Bradlaugh’s method and ask, what is meant by “God”. Standing alone, the word is, as Bradlaugh said, without meaning, and it is impossible intelligently to affirm or deny it unless there is an understanding between affirmer and denier, of its meaning. This doesn’t mean, as Mr. Aldred maintains, that one is adopting a position of mild Agnosticism. Once Bradlaugh had a definition he was perfectly explicit. Mr. Aldred quotes from him (writing to Bishop Magee) as follows:

I have never yet heard a definition of God from any living man, nor have I read any definition by a dead or living man, which was not self-contradictory . . . But the moment you tell me you mean the God of the Bible, or the God of the Koran, or the God of any particular Church, I am prepared to tell you that I deny that God.

Mr. Aldred would prefer Bradlaugh to have said with Bakunin, “There is no God, and there is no such place as Heaven”; and with Richard Carlile: “Man has no immortal soul. The mortal soul of man is the only intelligent lord of matter”. The difference, as I see it, is that Bradlaugh was more philosophically-aware than these two. Bakunin’s declaration is all right, as long as “God” and “Heaven” are taken in a traditional Christian sense (though it must be emphasised that Christian interpretations vary enormously). As for Carlile’s, it is rather an unhappy one, and certainly a strange example to bring against one who is accused of being “too metaphysical”. Carlile, I suggest, was being poetic rather than philosophic: subordinating meaning to sound. The second quoted sentence needs *interpretation*.

## Elucidation

Bradlaugh, to my knowledge, doesn’t require interpreting (contrast his essay, “Has Man a Soul?” with Carlile’s remark). Meaning was all important to him. Whenever he wrote or spoke, he set out to elucidate, and to do so as concisely as possible. How clearly and concisely he could state his case (and even that of his opponents) may be seen especially from his *Doubts in Dialogue*, one of which was reprinted in *THE FREETHINKER* on July 20th, and more of which will be reprinted later.

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

### Charles Bradlaugh and Atheism

By COLIN McCALL

But, as I have already quoted from "Is There a God?", I will turn again to that essay for an example of Bradlaugh's exposition of philosophic Atheism.

As an Atheist [he said] I affirm one existence and deny the possibility of more than one existence; by existence, meaning, as I have already stated, "the totality of all phenomena, and of all that has been, is, or may be necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon". This existence I know in its modes, each mode being distinguished in thought by its qualities. By "mode" I mean each cognised condition; that is, each phenomenon or aggregation of phenomena. By "quality" I mean each characteristic by which in the act of thinking I distinguish.

Notice how the meaning is made progressively clearer by definition. And, he went on:

The distinction between the Agnostic and the Atheist is that either the Agnostic postulates an unknowable, or makes a blank avowal of general ignorance. The Atheist does not; there is of course to him much that is yet unknown, every

effort of inquiry brings some of this within reach of knowing. With the element of the unknowable conceded, all scientific teaching would be illusive. Every real scientist teaches without reference to "God" or "the unknowable". If the words come in as part of the yesterday habit still clinging today, the scientist conducts his experiments as though the words were not . . . The "God" of the Theist, the "unknowable" of the Agnostic, are equally opposed to the Atheistic affirmation. The Atheist affirms the true, denies the untrue. The Agnostic knows not of any proposition whether it be true or false.

To suggest that Charles Bradlaugh wrote "sheer nonsense" on this subject, and to imply that he was "awed" or "disturbed" by "the possibility of God's existence"—and Guy Aldred does both—is to reveal one's own limitations. But I am happy to say that, although Mr. Aldred dislikes Bradlaugh's philosophy, he admires him for his stand on the oath.

## Report on the Vatican

SAM WHITE, the (London) *Evening Standard* Paris correspondent, has lately been reporting from Vatican City. To realise how the "public image" of the Roman Catholic has changed under the present Pope, said Mr. White (October 19th, 1962), one must "detach oneself from the somewhat silken sycophancy of Vatican circles and talk instead to some of Rome's more famous 'priest eaters'".

Mr. White sought out the noted Liberal and anti-clerical MP, Luigi Barzini, and the famous novelist, Alberto Moravia, whose novels, *Woman of Rome*, *Two Women*, etc., are all on the *Index*. It was strange, Mr. White said, "to hear these veteran unbelievers speaking of him [the Pope] with uninhibited admiration". But was it really so strange when one thinks of the last Pope? One doesn't have to be a Catholic—or even a Christian—to prefer a John XXIII (or at least a *second* John XXIII—the first was rather a different proposition!) to a Pius XII in the Papal chair.

As for the "so-called black aristocracy which surrounds the Pope", Moravia called it "remarkably crude . . . as can only be expected from an aristocracy which operates in a court without women."

Mr. White also met Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, former Professor of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America (Washington, DC) and now head of American missionaries, and looking "disconcertingly like an actor—say Henry Fonda—playing the part of a priest." (Some friends of ours who often see Bishop Sheen on American TV, think that he never stops acting.) The Bishop obliged with one of his inimitable analogies—on birth control. "It is as though someone proposed that people should be blindfolded", he declared. "We of the Church would then say, 'God gave you eyes to see. You must not walk around blindfolded,' and then we would inevitably be accused of objecting to sight control." Mr. White didn't say whether he asked the ex-professor how celibate priests fitted into his analogy.

Instead the *Evening Standard* correspondent went on to record the complaints of mothers superior of various religious orders that, not only are they not represented at the Council of Rome, "but no efforts have been made by their cardinal-protectors to collect their views." Finally, Mr White turned to Vatican finance. "Financiers of the Vatican are not nearly as mysterious as many imagine them to be", he said.

Through the intermediary of Cardinal Spellman, the Vatican's gold reserves are lodged with those of the American Government in Fort Knox.

The large sum of money paid over by Mussolini to the Vatican under the 1928 Concordat has been multiplied two-

hundredfold by shrewd investments and now stands at more than £178 million. These funds, which are not available to the Pope directly, are deposited in Italy, Switzerland, the United States and Great Britain. Under an agreement between the British Treasury and the Vatican in 1948 these funds are invested in Britain in State bonds.

In Italy the Church has large interests in building societies, the Marconi works, the Montecatini explosives works, insurance and, in Rome, transport, while in France it has heavy investments in textiles and casinos. There is also a Vatican bank which capitalises the funds of the religious orders and the Roman clergy. It functions like an ordinary bank lending money and keeping current accounts. The administrators of Vatican funds act in complete freedom, reporting only to the Pope and enjoying diplomatic immunity in all their transactions.

Finally, once a year there is the collection of St. Peter's pence throughout the Catholic world and this brings in over £500,000. This money is handled by the Pope personally.

Under Pius XII there was considerable nepotism with the Pacellis in almost every branch of the Vatican bureaucracy and there were no fewer than three Pacellis in the Vatican treasury. Pope John has changed this and the treasury is now firmly in the hands of two cardinals.

### CRIBS AND CRUSADERS

THIS IS the time of year when councils up and down the country yield to Roman Catholic pressure and agree to erect cribs in town squares. Not Bolton though, even if the proposal did come from Church of England Canon Norburn, and even if Councillor Mrs. Keogh did accuse this Lancashire town of being "backward in not providing a Christmas crib" (*Bolton Evening News*, 18/10/62). Mrs. Keogh was worried because people didn't know what Christmas means. "All they think about is Christmas trees, Santa Claus, and presents", she said. Mr. John Wardle agreed. A crib conveyed "the true message of Christmas", he said, whereas a Christmas tree was Pagan, just a pretty toy". But Alderman Booth thought a crib was "too sacred to be in the street when there were revellers about". It might not get the reverence it ought to get. Councillor Anderton, Vice-Chairman, explained: "We provide a Christmas tree because it gives an atmosphere of entertainment . . . It is not the job of the Entertainments Committee to remind people of the religious side of Christmas; it is the job of the Church".

Another Lancashire town, Blackpool, is to have coffee bar crusaders this winter (*Evening Gazette*, 18/10/62). The Blackpool Christian Businessmen's Committee "has made arrangements with several proprietors for gospel crusaders to visit their bars and present the Christian outlook to customers".

# Straws in the Roman Wind

By ELIZABETH COLLINS

WHEN MY HUSBAND AND I decided to spend a holiday in Rome in September of this year, it was partly to explore those areas of the city such as Tratevere, that on two previous visits we had not been able to see, and partly to note the impact on the city of preparations for the impending Ecumenical Council with its emphasis on Christian unity. This latter seemed very suspect, in view of the persecution of non-Catholics over the centuries, and the restrictive rules operating against their personal lives in Catholic countries today.

Did expediency now demand a united front with the heretic in order to arrest the decline and fall of the God-religions? Were there any visible signs that the monolithic Catholic edifice was cracking in spite of its wealth and screaming propaganda? Were the miracles, canonisations, and the aerial comings and goings of the Virgin Mary being eclipsed by more affluence in Europe and by the emerging space age? We think a few of these cracks are already discernable, although undoubtedly the fight to survive will be long and furious. Below are a few of the observations we made, trivial they may appear to be at the moment, but perhaps straws in the (Roman) wind.

Apart from the increased number of priests carrying bulky brief-cases, and groups of nuns to be seen in the vicinity of Vatican city and the Cancellaria, things appeared to be fairly normal. There were few outward signs of the much trumpeted occasion that was about to burst upon the city.

Churches, far too many of them, had a dejected and delapidated outside appearance, walls peeling, doors unpainted and coated with dust, not of weeks but of years, while disfiguring the walls were often the tattered remains of old posters. A large and blatant Coca-Cola advertisement stared out by the wall of one of the beautiful little churches at Piazza del Popolo!

It has been said that the women go to church while their menfolk wait for them outside. We saw two instances of this in Rome.

Although scarves and veils are on sale on stalls throughout the city, few women cover their heads now when entering churches, and the regulation forbidding bare arms is not always observed. Also we noticed more women and girls wearing slacks than on our last visit three years ago. Sitting at a café table at the corner of Via Ara Coeli and Via Plebicitio we saw a young woman in tight pale blue slacks saunter into the Gesu church opposite, from which we expected her to be promptly turned out. But she remained inside for about half-an-hour and then just as calmly walked out.

Very few sacred medallions and crosses are being visibly worn. Most women and girls have bare necks or wear costume jewellery.

Seen in the main centres where the principal cafés are, nuns trailing from table to table soliciting alms. Should customers appear unwilling to contribute or not to notice them, they stand there silent and immobile until in desperation people give something to get rid of them. From the corner of a pavement café, in a quiet street at the back of the Coliseum, we saw two young nuns leave a small shop, each furtively clutching a large ice-cream, which, after crossing the road to the comparative seclusion of trees at the rear of the famous ruin, they ate in a semi-concealed manner, their backs to the public highway and ostensibly engrossed in contemplating the ancient walls.

The Forums appear to attract more attention than hither-

to. Much tidying up has been done, with directions and notices placed at important points, although still not enough of these latter. Parties of students and many individuals obviously very interested. Also *Son et Lumière* operates during the summer months in the Forum Romana, thereby calling attention to Rome's pre-Christian, and to many of her citizens—and others—what they consider her splendid past, rather than the sin-obsessed whining of the present Christian system, symbolised by crosses and statues of so-called saints on every available column, obelisk, and ancient building; even on the walls of the Coliseum itself. Even a quite intelligent professional man with whom we had a long conversation, though a fanatical Catholic who still does not believe in evolution, deplored the use of these symbols in the wrong places. Some day it is to be hoped people will cease to tolerate what amounts to a gallows confronting one at every turn.

Very few sightseers in the churches, except the more important specially selected ones, to which organised and escorted parties are taken. The museum in the Baths of Diocletian, however, usually full of visitors. The Capitol and Michelangelo's Campidoglio Square were very popular, people coming and going all the time to visit the museums, the famous Marcus Aurelius statue, Castor and Pollux, and not least the wolf. An American tourist was very concerned about that animal, but was assured by an official that it is well cared for. We saw a good many of the ordinary people enjoying their evenings sitting in the gardens adjoining the Trajan Forum, and many young people exploring it or sitting reading on the surrounding parapet.

Stone footings at the base of the Giordano Bruno statue in the lovely old Campo di Fiori were being carefully repaired when we were there. This statue was erected by the city of Rome towards the end of last century in one of its anti-clerical phases, and we were glad to see it being kept in reasonable repair.

From one of its own adherents we heard serious criticism of Catholicism. A middle-class woman with whom we came into contact, deplored the "cluttered churches, gaudy statues, bad pictures, and excessive Mariolatry". This particular person and her husband had ceased to go either to confession or to Mass. She said, "we don't need a priest to help us to communicate with God, we do it ourselves when we walk in the woods or the country". I should think before long they can be reckoned as lapsed. Many Catholics we have met on recent visits to Italy do not know the history of their own Church, and have no idea that there was a former Pope John XXIII. The story of the disreputable Cardinal Cossa arouses dismay and confusion in their minds.

In North and Central Italy, the people are enjoying their new prosperity. No longer are their horizons narrowly bounded by Holy Mother Church, but by the excitements of the new secular world which is developing around them. They rush off early on Sunday mornings in their small cars or on Vespas or Lambrettas to the sea or country, and the girls can now have a smart hair-do, pretty frocks and jewellery. No longer are they poor, and dependent upon a meagre charity. In the South, and in Sicily, however, it is a different story.

When a nation or organisation is in decline the first noticeable sign is apathy in its citizens or members, and such indifference is evident towards the Roman Church

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

A juvenile delinquent came up before the courts the other day (*Daily Mail*, October 18th) and asked to be allowed to change his religion which, considering that he was a Roman Catholic, was really very horrid of him. It appears that he "resented the religious discipline" imposed on him at a Roman Catholic approved school, and he claimed most of his "trouble", that is, his delinquency, "stemmed from this". So he thought that if he changed his religion he might be rehabilitated, and this was urged by his solicitor.

★

It is interesting to note also that the boy thought there was far too much religion at approved schools, and not enough training. So there we have it—a devastating answer to all those pious reformers who insist that more and more religion must be forced on to delinquent boys to make them "good" when the real truth is that, if religion was completely abolished in these schools and the time spent in extra training, there would be a better chance to make them decent citizens.

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We always accept a religious tract when offered to us, and we noted that one we received at a meeting a little while ago came from some pious organisation calling itself "Voice of Prophecy Bible School" domiciled in Watford. It breathed prophecy in every line and comma, and going much further than any other Prophetic School we have hitherto encountered, told us in the most positive terms that the Second Advent of Jesus was "prophesied" 1,518 times in the Bible and in the New Testament 300 times. So we immediately wrote and asked for six references from the Old Testament—and so far (weeks afterwards) we have received no answer.

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It may surprise some readers but in actual fact the words "Advent" and "Jesus" occur *nowhere* in the Old Testament; indeed, the word "Advent" occurs nowhere in the New either. But so long as the liar is a good Christian, he will find thousands of credulous and pious idiots swallowing every lie he can turn out as "Gospel" truth. There may be some sillier beliefs than Bible "prophecy", but we don't know where they exist.

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There used to be those halcyon days of yore, when we could buy a Bible or at least a copy of the New Testament for a penny, and even at a pinch get one for nothing. But the dear old Book has had a completely new life since radio and TV took it up, and now it sells like hot cakes at almost any fancy price. For instance, you can now get *Our Living Bible*, a sumptuous piece of publishing, for £3 10s. We are told (*Daily Express*, October 19th), that its "Bible scenes are given new depth, colour, and detail", that it sharpens up our "appetite for the adventures, heroisms, teachings and wonders" in the Bible, and so on. It is also "a treasury of illustrations"—as an example, you can now see "what the ships in which St. Paul sailed looked like", as well as "the shape of the widow's mite", a fascinating prospect.

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In those old family Bibles which reverently delighted our grandfathers in the nineteenth century were illustrations of beautiful but sexless Angels, immaculately dressed in white nighties, and horrific pictures of the Devil who so vainly tried to down Jesus in debate—the Devil complete with a huge tail, enormous wings with which to fly about, and of course those inevitable horns sprouting from his head. We cannot help wondering whether this new Bible

can equal, let alone beat, the old ones in such marvellous illustrations of Bible heroes, heroines, and villains. The one thing in its favour is however that it is not "a theological work", for which relief much thanks.

### STRAWS IN THE ROMAN WIND

(Concluded from page 347)

today, in spite of the coach-loads of tourists, peasants, school-children, seminarists and others brought to St. Peter's to form the much-boosted crowds. In roaming about the various "quarters" of the city where the ordinary people live and work, away from the tourist centres, we sensed this indifference to religion, and we believe that the power of the priesthood is weakening. Hence the need to call an Ecumenical Council!

However, because of its wealth the Papacy, that hang-over of medieval times, is still a power to reckon with. It is as true today as when the Roman poet Giuseppe Belli wrote in the nineteenth century apropos the famous SPQR seen on all corporation property in Rome, "*Soli Preti Qui Regnont*", which translated runs, "only priests rule here".

But we believe that the puppet-show of Catholicism in Rome, at present kept alive by tourists, is slowing passing. Foreseeing the decline of its religious activities, the Vatican has firmly entrenched itself in various branches of commerce and industry both in Italy and abroad. When commercialised superstition no longer pays dividends, another source of income and power has to be found.

After our naturally limited observance of the Roman scene, we came to the conclusion that some effort should be made to counteract the propaganda put out by the Church relating to its so-called saints and martyrs. Homage, wherever possible, should be publicly paid to those notable atheists, humanists, and others who opposed and often gave their lives to prevent a dictatorship of the human mind by a largely parasitic priesthood. By poster and pilgrimage, Rome loudly proclaims her saints. By paying public attention to where they lived or worked, to their monuments, or their graves, let us extol our atheists.

### JOSEPH LEWIS IN ROME

ON OCTOBER 17th, *The New York Times* carried a report from Rome, dated the previous day, that Joseph Lewis, President of the Freethinkers of America had placed a wreath on the statue of Giordano Bruno. In an interview, Mr. Lewis said that the Ecumenical Council had been called because the Roman Catholic Church was "face to face" with the end of "religious colonialism".

### "BIRD MAN OF ALCATRAZ"

Burt Lancaster, filming with Visconti in *The Leopard*, took time off from location to introduce his film of Robert Stroud's life, *Bird Man of Alcatraz* at Venice. Lancaster won a Jury award for his performance. He also won the respect of most of the critics and reporters present at a packed press conference. He told them bluntly that *Bird Man* is intended as a plea for Stroud's release. He said that in his opinion the United States Government was refusing to release Stroud for no other reason than they now believe him to be a homosexual as a result of his imprisonment.

Lancaster is anxious that people who see the film should be able to sign a petition in cinemas where it is shown asking for Stroud's release. The producers have asked that such a petition be available to sign in every country in the world.

So far, no plans have been made for a petition in Britain. If, when you see the film, you would like to sign a petition on Stroud's behalf, ask the cinema manager why he is doing nothing about it. And write to Mr. Lancaster's representative in London: United Artists, Film House, Wardour Street, London, W.1.

—*Films and Filming* (November, 1962.)

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TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (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, J. A. MILLAR

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

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

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

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, November 4th, 6.45 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "The Twist".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, November 6th, 7.30 p.m.: JOHN BURROWS, B.Sc., "From Poor Law to Social Security".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sundays, November 4th, 6.30 p.m.: R. W. KIND, M.R.C.S., "The Family Planning Association".

Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, November 4th, 7.30 p.m.: D. TOMLEY, B.Sc., "Aspects of Biological Evolution".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, November 4th, 7.30 p.m.: LIONEL MUMBY (Editor, *The Amateur Historian*), "Religion and the English Labour Movement".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, November 4th, 11 a.m.: J. B. COATES, B.A., "The Problem of God in Modern Thought".

## Notes and News

"YEAR BY YEAR the percentage of Christians in the world becomes smaller," said Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, President of the Lutheran Church in America and President of the Central Committee of the World Union of Churches (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, 5/10/62). If the pulsebeat of the Church remained as placid as it was, he added, the world will turn away. "In fact the world is already disappearing into the distance". Dr. Fry named China as an area "where we dawdled, fumbled and neglected our opportunities until the door was closed and is now almost irrevocably sealed against the cause of Jesus Christ". In the past, he went on, "we acted irresponsibly, to reap the quickest harvest for ourselves, to gain the quickest statistical advantage . . .". The "cheapest way", he said, was a "synonym for the Lutheran way". Dr. Fry also criticised Lutheran seminaries. The three worst years of his life, the President said, were those he wasted in a Lutheran theological seminary on courses which hardly merited the attention of a graduate student. "Are we God's favourites to be pampered or is it because he trusts us?" Dr. Fry asked. "Let us not let him down".

HOW MANY Ghanaians are Christians? Details of the last census are not yet available, but according to the 1949 census the total Christian population was 640,000 (309,000 Roman Catholics) out of a total of some 4,100,000 (*West Africa*, 25/8/62). The population has now increased by about 50 per cent and no doubt the Christian population with it. All the same, it seems unlikely that the *World Christian Handbook* figure of over 28 per cent Christians is correct. Perhaps the *Handbook's* percentages for the Ivory Coast (11 per cent), Nigeria (8.7 per cent), Tanganyika (20 per cent), and Uganda (over 29 per cent) are similarly inflated. ★

MR. J. V. THORNTON, of Liverpool, in a letter to *The Guardian* (24/10/62), thought it unreasonable to complain of facilities granted to the press at the Vatican Council, as *The Guardian* had done a few days previously. There are, he said, good reasons for the secrecy. "It would surely be impossible for the assembled bishops to speak their minds with complete freedom if they should have to weigh their words against their possible effect on world freedom". "The world should be prepared to wait patiently for the outcome which" according to Mr. Thornton, "will not simply be the point of view of the majority of bishops but an inspired and authoritative outpouring of the Holy Spirit". ★

THE SPREAD of the Church Commissioners' assets—we read in *The Economist* (13/10/62)—is likely to change substantially in the next year or two. They are now extending into property development which, "it is hoped, will prove as rewarding as their earlier switch from gilt-edged stocks to equities". The vehicle for the bulk of these property developments is the Church Estates Development and Improvement Co., which has "27 subsidiary companies, in which the Commissioners have total commitments of about £24 million, which are jointly controlled with leading property developers and builders". Some new blocks of flats and houses will be built in London, "but the main emphasis is still on developing commercial properties, which already yield about three-quarters of the Church's income from real estate". The Bishop of Southwark, we suggest, might lead a procession of London's homeless to the headquarters of the Church Commissioners and ask the latter if they have got their priorities right. ★

"Now, on Mercury, he sings 'He Got What He Wanted But He Lost What He Had . . .'" We hasten to inform squares that this *South London Press* item (19/10/62) has nothing to do with interplanetary travel, but refers only to a new record about Judas Iscariot by the coloured American rock 'n' roller, Little Richard. Richard whose discs sold in millions, "got religion" when his plane caught fire during a flight to Australia. As the *South London Press* put it: "Little Richard went on his knees, vowing that if God put out the fire he would sing only for him. God did. And Little Richard did". A fair bargain, on the face of it. ★

THE REV. Cuthbert Glascodine informed young readers of his Appleshaw and Clanville (Hants.) Parish Magazine (October, 1962) that he was willing to start a youth club, subject to ten conditions. One of which he was "particularly keen", was that meetings should always end with the Lord's Prayer, "because people who never say their prayers are almost always wet or irresponsible". They are, he continued, "either self-centred, unfair, low-minded, boozy, quick-tempered or lazy". Perhaps Mr. Glascodine may be excused: he admitted that he was "getting fairly ancient". But think of the influence he would have on the youngsters!

## More Spirit Photographs

By H. CUTNER

REGULAR READERS OF *Psychic News*, which is now the journal most read by Spiritualists, must have noticed that its pages for many years past, though here and there dealing with raps, trumpet voices, materialisations, apports, hauntings, exorcisms, and other remarkable happenings from the spirit world, eschewed in the main such "phenomena", and concentrated on faith-healing as far as possible, with highly coloured descriptions of the way completely incurable ailments and diseases were almost immediately cured by either Jesus himself, or by famous doctors still living in Summerland.

The advent in its pages again of its one time editor, Mr. Maurice Barbanell, has altered all that. His own unanswerable proof of the reality of the spirit world has nearly always been spirit photography, and nobody more than he has championed photographers who specialised in this field.

Now I must say at the outset that there is no more blatant fraud in the whole baggage of "proofs" of Spiritualism than "photographing" spirits. There never has been a *genuine* "spirit" photograph, and spirit photographers have always been bitterly opposed to what Mr. Barbanell calls "stringent scientific tests". In the days before the war, I met a few Spiritualists in debate, and on more than one occasion, I met a spirit photographer. But when it came to a test under my conditions, I was angrily told no. Who was I to lay down conditions?

The truth is of course that I, as an amateur photographer, ever since I took up photography at the age of twelve or so, know perfectly well how spirit photography has been done in most cases. I do not know all the methods which have bamboozled so many "experts", but I am always prepared to meet any Spiritualist who thinks he can demonstrate the truth of spirit photography, with my camera.

I think I am right in saying that with one or two exceptions there are *no* spirit photographers these days. We were given, in a recent number of *Psychic News*, the photos of some of the old stalwarts—like William Hope and Mrs. Dean.

Although there are many ways of producing spirit photographs, the chief way and the most successful, is what is called "switching" a photographic plate which has been duly prepared with a spirit upon it, in the darkroom. It is practically impossible for an average person, a Spiritualist or an unbeliever, to see the switch in a darkroom, just as it is almost impossible for anyone not conversant with conjuring to resist taking from a pack the card which the conjuror wants him to take.

Preparing is very easy, and any practising photographer would tell you how it is done. In *Psychic News* we were shown two portrait photographs of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and William Hope and two "spirit" photographs with the two identical portraits on them. A more glaring example of sheer swindling it would be difficult to imagine.

As I have ever had the highest admiration for Conan Doyle's great gifts for story telling, it has always saddened me to think how he was so often bamboozled by such people as Hope and Dean.

In his classic, *Sixty Years of Psychical Research*, Joseph F. Rinn has a lot to say of Hope and his impudent swindling. It was the late Harry Price who fully exposed him, and as Doyle still had faith in Hope, Rinn offered to pay 5,000 dollars if he could not produce "a spirit picture under more scientific conditions than was ever

made by any medium". Rinn listed the strict conditions which no spirit photographer has so far ever allowed, but of course his challenge was never taken up, and he added that he was astonished "after Hope's exposé by Harry Price", that Doyle could ever again have faith in Hope's honesty.

Doyle also believed in Mrs. Dean's honesty—in the "genuineness of the so-called spirit pictures taken by Mrs. Dean, showing the spirits of dead soldiers hovering over the heads of the crowd . . . at the Cenotaph, yet any trick photographer can produce a similar picture for him". In fact, the Society of American Magicians offered to produce one for him, but Sir Arthur wasn't having any. His belief in photos of fairies is a sad commentary on this brilliant writer's credulity and gullibility.

And here is what Harry Price thought of Doyle in a letter to Rinn dated 1938. "Speaking of Conan Doyle, he was wrong in stating that I did not catch William Hope in fraud. I caught him red-handed in changing my dark slide". Hope here tried "switching" the slide, but was caught outright. Price added in the same letter—"You ask whether I believe in spirit return. I must say *emphatically I do not*. I have yet to see evidence for 'survival'". Spiritualists certainly did not like Price, even when they thought he was sitting on the fence. When he fell off, it was for them always on the wrong side.

The real truth about spirit photos these days is that the game is not worth a candle, for films have nearly everywhere superseded plates and switching is not at all easy with films. That is one reason why my challenge to any medium—and to Mr. Barbanell in particular—was never accepted. Spirits just hate films.

Apports and materialisations have very nearly gone with the wind, and it looks as if the only thing left for true Spiritualism is faith-healing (or spirit-healing) on the spot, or at a distance. I believe that there are still a few mediums who can go off in a trance, and utter complete drivel, or summon up from the mighty deep the spirits of Beethoven or Chopin, Dickens or Tolstoy, Michelangelo or da Vinci, and even Nelson, Thomas Paine, and Charles Bradlaugh! The only noticeable thing about the spirits is that as soon as they open their mouths—through the medium—they appear to have lost every scrap of intelligence.

Not many people appear to know how spirit photographs originated. I have dealt with this more than once in my articles, but such information is easily forgotten. They came to the fore when Scott Archer invented "wet plate" photography about 100 years ago. The sensitive film was put on the plate by the photographer and exposed while still wet. The glass plates were used again if possible by cleaning off the old film. Now this was often not as easy as it looked, for even when the film was rigorously cleaned off, a faint something of the exposed plate left a hardly visible "ghost" which appeared on the print if the plate was coated again and exposed afresh. Any of the older generation of photographers could give details which explained the "spirits" quite easily. I myself in my early days did a lot of wet plate photography, and so can vouch for the difficulty we had in thoroughly cleaning glass plates which had once been used. The spirits simply would not disappear!

But of course no one would expect such a champion of spirit photographers, especially the known fraudulent ones, as Mr. Barbanell, to know this. And certainly not readers of *Psychic News*.

## Trypho, Irenaeus—and Mr. Cutner

By F. A. RIDLEY

WITH REFERENCE to Mr. Cutner's recent article, "Still Unrepentant" (October 5th) I would like to make the following comments:—

First, as I have already indicated several times in this paper, I am not a one hundred per cent dyed-in-the-wool believer in any historical Jesus, human or (of course) divine. All I say is merely that I think the sources of Christianity were composite, partly mythical and partly historical; the historical sources being also probably composite, i.e. referring not to one, but to several Jesuses, a contention that in my submission at least, is borne out by such contemporary, or near contemporary, evidence as is provided by the Talmud and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Jesus of the Gospels was a composite character drawn from probably John the Baptist, Judas the Shulamite, and also quite possibly, the Talmudic Jesus-Ben-Pandira, the Essene "Master of Righteousness" (as recorded in the Dead Sea Scrolls) and possibly others. I do not, however, agree with Mr. Cutner, or the authorities that he quotes, that the New Testament as we have it today, is entirely mythical. And, as I pointed out before, this has never been the opinion of any representative Jewish authority; and surely, the Jews amongst whom (as presumably even Mr. Cutner will agree) Christianity actually originated are the most likely to know what actually transpired in first century Palestine.

From the days of the Talmud and of Celsus (c 200) who, though a Pagan, carefully records the specifically Jewish anti-Christian criticisms of his day, the Jewish criticism of the Gospels has never varied in substance: viz. Jesus was an impostor, a bogus Messiah; whilst, as for the New Testament taken as a whole, "What's new in it isn't true, and what's true in it, isn't new".

I must further add, that however the case many stand at present with the mythical theory as such, Mr. Cutner renders no service to it by the arguments that he adduces in his most recent reply. I would suggest to him that whatever may have been the case with regard to Jesus, Trypho (whose "evidence" Mr. Cutner never tires of citing) was himself probably a myth; a Christian Aunt Sally put up by Justin Martyr—himself of Palestinian origin—to knock down the alleged arguments of the Jewish rabbis. At any rate Jewish tradition knows nothing about Trypho. Even the exhaustive *Jewish Encyclopedia* never mentions this redoubtable anti-Christian champion. The very name, Trypho, is a Greek, and not a Jewish, one, and in any case, as I pointed out in my previous article, his arguments, at least as translated by Mr. Cutner, are in no way representative of the traditional Jewish arguments against Christianity, whether in his own day or in ours.

I suggest, then, to Mr. Cutner that Trypho was probably himself a mythical figure: a kind of Aunt Sally. I freely make this concession to the mythicist theory. In any case, even if Trypho could be proved to have been a real person, he was obviously of no importance in the Jewish community, or else Jewish tradition would have recorded him as an anti-Christian champion. And, as I have already pointed out, his denial of the historicity of Jesus (assuming Mr. Cutner's translation to be accurate) is in no way typical of Jewish apologetics, or representative of any orthodox Jewish point of view.

Mr. Cutner then proceeds to drag the Christian father Irenaeus (Bishop of Lyons) into the argument. Why, I am at a complete loss to understand. It is true that Irenaeus did put forward the certainly rather unusual view

that Jesus was nearly fifty at the time of his crucifixion, but there was nothing heretical about this view and there was no reason for the Church to condemn it. Particularly since Irenaeus, in his book, *Against all the Heresies*, specifically based his argument on a text in the orthodox Gospel of John, where the Jews say to Jesus: "Thou art not fifty years old, and how canst thou have seen Abraham?" It is, in any case well known to students of the evolution of Christian theology that the early Fathers of the Church often indulged in such fanciful speculations at a time when Christian theology was still in a flexible state before being codified by the general councils from the 4th century on; e.g.: Origen actually denied the existence of the devil, though this was later condemned by the Church which could not carry on without His Satanic Majesty. But this passage of Irenaeus, if speculative, was quite orthodox.

Mr. Cutner then goes on to make the truly extraordinary statement that Irenaeus never mentions the crucifixion. All that this statement proves is that Mr. Cutner himself, has never even read Irenaeus! For had he only taken the trouble to read his authorities, before quoting them, he would have known that Irenaeus wrote extensively on the Crucifixion, so much so, in fact, that *Vacandard's* [French] *Catholic Encyclopedia*, devotes an entire paragraph to Irenaeus's views on the Crucifixion. In his best-known book, *Against all the Heresies*, Irenaeus conducts a vehement polemic against the Valentinians (contemporary Gnostic heretics), who denied that Jesus was crucified in flesh and blood and that a spirit took his place upon the cross. (cf. Irenaeus, *Against all the Heresies*, Book 1, ch. 8). Whilst in his lesser-known book, *On the Apostolic Teaching* (of which an Armenian version was recovered in recent years), Irenaeus has an entire section upon the intriguing theme: Why Jesus allowed himself to be nailed to the tree, viz. the Cross. In this last lucubration, our Greek author argued that since the first Adam fell on account of eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge, so Christ the second Adam, had to redeem us by suffering also upon a tree, a typical piece of Patristic reasoning. However, all this has apparently remained an unread book to Mr. Cutner, who nevertheless quotes Irenaeus so frequently! It is surely axiomatic at all times and places that one should at least read one's sources before quoting them. In any case, it is surely obvious that a man like Irenaeus could not conceivably have become a bishop and a famous theologian in an already highly-organised body like the Christian Church already was, when he wrote (c. 180), had he disbelieved such a fundamental dogma as the Crucifixion. There were of course then heretics (Irenaeus himself mentions any number of them), who did deny it, but they were outside the Catholic Church and were, as such, fiercely denounced by its orthodox apologists, including Irenaeus, who was one of the most famous orthodox writers in the early Church.

In conclusion, I must add that whilst not entirely convinced by its arguments, I concede that the mythicist theory represents an interesting, and up to a point, valuable theory of Christian origins. But Mr. Cutner in no way strengthens it by citing Christian Aunt Sallies like Trypho and by attributing demonstrably erroneous views to Christian Fathers of the Church. I translate below, Irenaeus's most significant passages on the subject of the Crucifixion: "By carrying His [i.e. Jesus Christ's] obedience to the extreme point of suffering Himself to be nailed to the tree [i.e. the

cross], He has wiped out the ancient disobedience of Adam incurred also because of the tree [*i.e.* the tree from which Adam plucked the forbidden fruit.] For the Logos of God [*i.e.* *Jesus Christ*] did all things on account of our salvation and the Son of God has been crucified for all, having imprinted the sign of the Cross upon the whole Creation". (Translation by F.A.R. of St. Irenaeus *On the Apostolic Preaching*, ch. 34.) And: "It is only by means of the Cross that those who believe in Him ascend to Heaven".

I trust that we shall not again be told that Irenaeus did not mention the Crucifixion!

### America's Free-Thinking Tradition

ON OCTOBER 16th, a St. Louis (Missouri) Unitarian minister addressed a meeting of Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU) on the subject of the New York Board of Regents' public (state) school prayer, declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court. The attitude of many Americans was one of "vast indifference", said the Rev. Dr. Thaddeus B. Clark, of First Unitarian Church, St. Louis, yet the disapproval of a "vigorously vocal" minority made it appear that "the people's worship was being wrested from them" (*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 17/10/62).

"One might have thought the entire country wanted the prayer". Dr. Clark said, "and that only the Supreme Court was against it. The impression these people gave—and still give—is that they are champions of God rising to His defence". More than one self-appointed champion, especially from the ranks of the politicians had accused the Court of turning its back on God. "Such an indictment as this I find offensive", he went on. "I can only call it a crude and irresponsible distortion of the truth."

"America's tradition is that of free-thinking and individual, not ecclesiastical, religiosity", Dr. Clark added. "Hardly any of our Presidents or other prominent legislators have been conspicuous for their churchgoing or public professions of piety. The figure in American history one is most inclined to call religious is Abraham Lincoln, yet he was an avowed non-church member. His religion was intensely personal, very private, and was truly in the American tradition of individualism with a high moral quality issuing from an inner integrity."

The fact that a good many of the nation's actual founders were "atheists, or nearly so," does not fit the popular image, Dr. Clark stressed, but the "truth is that in 1800 only 5 per cent of the citizenry held church membership".

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### NO DILEMMA!

Colin McCall's article, "Dr. Pamplin's Dilemma" (*THE FREETHINKER*, October 12th, 1962), tries to establish that I contradict myself in my writings. This may appear so to an outside observer who uses the words I use with different meanings. I have no dilemma and feel I must make two points clear.

1. Creation for me is a continuous process (just as Professor Hoyle uses the phrase "continuous creation" in his work on astro-physics). All creation is continuous. Before God invented Time and Space, He thought out the evolutionary pattern of Creation.

2. We are sinful in the sense that we all experience the feeling that we have not done all the good things we ought to have done but have done less good (or evil) things instead. Evil in this sense and in the sense of suffering and injustice are present with us because the good God is still creating. When He has finished the perfect world will be here on Earth and God will again come to dwell with men—this time to reign and not to die. This will come about when the stalagmite of science joins the stalactite of Theology.

If I surrender my belief in God as Colin McCall tells me to, I should be starting on a downward path of decay. Similarly the agnostic who becomes an atheist starts on a downward path. But while there is life there is hope and even he who rejects God can be shown the upward path, and should strive to take it even if he doesn't understand it.

I should like to end by quoting two sentences from the work of a Muslim friend of mine who is a lecturer in chemistry at Karachi, Saiyid Shamim Ahmad. "Human consciousness is composed of the power to know, to feel and to will. Man has the power to know the past, feel the present, and to will for the future". This sentiment is a truly Christian one especially if we use "will" in the sense of hoping and praying. We must hope that the world religion will concentrate on Fundamentals and strive for unity.

(Dr.) BRIAN R. PAMPLIN.

[This letter is referred to in *Views and Opinions*.—ED.]

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