

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXIII—No. 11

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

The United States Supreme Court is presently considering the constitutionality of Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer at the opening of schools in Maryland and Pennsylvania, following on last year's ruling that a state-prescribed non-denominational prayer in New York State's schools was unconstitutional. The Maryland appeal is being made by Mrs. Madalyn E. Murray and her elder, 16-year-old son, William, who are atheists, and who contend that a Baltimore City rule providing for the daily Bible reading and prayer violates the First Amendment to the American Constitution. We print below (by courtesy of The American Rationalist) Mrs. Murray's "declaration of faith" delivered to the Eighth Convention of the American Rationalist Federation on August 25th, 1962, in St. Louis.

IEWS and OPINIONS

Atheism

By MADALYN MURRAY

THE INDESTRUCTIBLE FOUNDATION of the whole edifice of atheism is its philosophy, materialism, or naturalism, as it is also known. That philosophy regards the world as it actually is, views it in the light of the data provided by progressive science and social experience. Atheistic materialism is the logical outcome of scientific knowledge gained over the centuries.

We make a fundamental error, I think, as we tilt at the windmills of imagined gods. We need to review from where we have come, under what conditions, and to see the threshold upon which we stand now.

Ceaseless Struggle

Our history has been marked by a ceaseless struggle against ignorance and superstition. In ancient Greece the works of the materialist philosopher Democritus, who first taught the atomic theory of matter, were destroyed. Anaxagoras was banished from Athens for being an atheist. The materialist philosopher Epicurus revered by the ancients for having liberated man from fear of gods and for asserting the validity of science, was for 2,000 years anathematised and falsely depicted as an enemy of morality and a disseminator of vice. The Alexandria library, housing 700,000 scientific and literary works, was burned by Christian monks in 391 AD. Pope Gregory I (590-604) destroyed many valuable works by ancient authors. In every society there have been forces that have stood to lose by the dissemination of progressive scientific views. In the past these forces either directly persecuted progressive scientists and philosophers or sought to distort scientific discoveries so as to deprive them of their progressive, materialistic implications.

The Inquisition, a papal invention for suppressing all opposition to the Catholic Church, savagely persecuted all progressive thinkers. Giordano Bruno, Lucilio Vanini and Galileo come readily to mind.

Voltaire was imprisoned in the Bastille, and Diderot was sent to prison. In our own country [USA] we are familiar with the story of Thomas Paine, of the Salem witch trials, of Ingersoll, of Einstein. The struggle is unceasing, as important today as during any other period of history.

We need, therefore, to see what we fight and why. We need not direct our main assault against the Bible or the Koran. We need not argue endlessly about the historicity of Jesus. We should look past trinities and angels and other theological blind alleys. We must look to materialistic philosophy which alone enables men to understand reality and to know how to deal with it. It is true that today our kind are no longer burned at the stake, but

there are many other ways of exerting pressure. Our scientists and progressive philosophers are dismissed from universities and other employment. Outspoken scientific and philosophical works are much less likely to be published than rather

senseless junk. Character assassination is common. Reactionary religious propaganda is unceasingly drummed into unthinking minds through the captive media of mass communication. As always, our opponents today are formidable. But our strength lies in the positive approach of uncovering and publicising the laws of nature and human behaviour, and in applying these laws in the interest of human welfare. We need not waste our time with endless arguments about tortuous paths of the endless labyrinths of theology.

Materialism

We need to know upon what we base ourselves. Atheism is based upon a materialist philosophy, which holds that nothing exists but natural phenomena. There are no supernatural forces or entities, nor can there be any. Nature simply exists. But there are those who deny this, who assert that mind or idea or spirit is primary. This question of the relation of the human mind to material being is one of the fundamental questions dealt with by all philosophers, however satisfactorily. The atheist must slice through all obfuscations to bedrock, to the basic idea that those who regard nature as primary and thought as a property (or function) of matter belong to the camp of materialism, and that those who maintain that spirit or idea or mind existed before nature or created nature or uphold nature belong to the camp of idealism. All conventional religions are based on idealism. Many varieties of idealism exist, but the premise stated above is fundamental. The apologists for idealism and opponents of materialism go under many names; we have, for instance, dualists, objective idealists, subjective idealists, solipsists, positivists, Machians, irrationalists, existentialists, neo-positivists, logical positivists, fideists, revived medieval scholastics, Thomists. And opposed to these stand alone the atheistic materialists (or perhaps naturalists, rationalists, freethinkers, etc) who have no need for intellectual machinations, deceptions or masquerades.

Side Issue

Whether or not the Bible is pornographic literature is only a side issue. Let us see what the idealist camp features. The Church teaches a contempt for earthly life and that to reach some imagined "heaven" is the main goal of life. And, significantly, the Church teaches that

this goal can be achieved only as the reward for obedience and meekness. The Church threatens the wrath of God and the torment of hell for those who dare to oppose its teaching. But materialism liberates us, teaches us not to hope for happiness beyond the grave but to prize life on earth and strive always to improve it. Materialism restores to man his dignity and his intellectual integrity. Man is not a worm condemned to crawl in the dust, but a human being capable of mastering the forms of nature and making them serve him. Materialism compels faith in the human intellect, in the power of knowledge in man's ability to fathom the secrets of nature and to create a social system based upon reason and justice. Materialism's faith is in man and his ability to transform the world by his own efforts. It is a philosophy in every essence optimistic, life-asserting, and radiant. It considers the struggle for progress as a moral obligation, and impossible without noble ideals that inspire men to struggle and bold creative work.

Modern materialism—or naturalism—is linked with the everyday experience of people. It believes in experiment as the basis of knowledge, and neglects no sphere of reality. It advances itself as an ideological weapon for use in progress. It is in social life that man develops his mind and emotions, will and conscience, and puts meaning and

purpose into life. He does not closet himself in solitary prayer and dream of death as a door opening unto eternal bliss. A materialist lives a full social life and is inspired by progressive ideals; he is concerned with the problems and joys of life, not death. He is deeply involved with shaping his life as a useful member of society and contributing what he can to its progress.

The idealist sees science and man as subordinate to religion, to "idea", and sees knowledge as subordinate to faith. The ultimate object of the idealist is to furnish evidence of the existence of "God". He lays great stress on moral questions, but the morality he preaches is one of meek submission, of passive acceptance, and, thus, of justification of existing social evils. This morality substitutes prayer and appeals for divine assistance for struggle and protest against social injustice. The entire idealist philosophy is contrived, with deliberateness, to bolster the *status quo*.

Ours is a time when successful struggle against this reactionary philosophy requires more than a petulant argument over the authorship of the Gospels, more than a negative attack on the totalitarian and monolithic authoritarianism of conventional religion, but rather an aggressive action programme to spread the positive philosophy of materialism.

The Weather and The Clergy

By F. A. RIDLEY

IT APPEARS TO BE generally agreed that the past winter—or the winter that we now sincerely hope is past—represents the worst within living memory. Statisticians assure us that the last winter of certainly greater severity was way back in 1814, when the Thames was frozen over and Londoners celebrated a fair with bonfires upon its frozen surface. Other bad winters were 1882-3, when the snow piled up thick in Oxford Circus, and 1947, which most of us can remember. However, as far as living memory goes, this past winter of 1962-63 would appear, all things considered, to be perched upon an icy pre-eminence.

Speaking for myself, I may say that it is only in recent months that I have come to regard with a proper respect the inspired writers of the old Norse scriptures, who laid it down as a certain conclusion of their pagan dogmatic theology that Hell, the abode of the damned in both Norse and Christian theology, was *cold*. The later Christian expression, obviously born like Christianity itself in a hot climate, "as hot as Hell", had no climatic significance for these perspicacious Vikings. Indeed, during recent months, many hardened sceptics accustomed to the infernal meteorology as propounded by Christianity must have envied the lot of so many of their sceptical precursors now roasting in the Christian Hell, without even a hint of the cold outside. When we compare the divergent weather conditions as alternately propounded by the Aryan (Norse) sages and the Jewish and Christian divines, our intellectual respect for the former rises proportionately, and meteorologically never more so than in recent months.

However, in throwing a backward glance at the ferocious weather, we find ourselves confronted by not only mundane considerations appertaining to meteorology, but higher and more celestial spheres. For the efficient causes assigned by the weather experts for this winter's atrocious weather belong after all to the modest sphere of what theology terms, "secondary causes". For above, beneath,

and everywhere that such causes extend, they do so only by the direction and with the permission of a Higher Power. Upon this point all the recognised authorities are quite unanimous. The entire visible universe, including all its weather conditions, past, present and future, are ultimately due to a divine overruling decree.

To speak metaphorically (but always reverently) the world's weather is due to the direct pointing of a divine finger. There can be no doubt about this at all, for not only does Holy Scripture declare without any ambiguity or incidental reservations, that God "made Heaven and earth and all" (mark the word "all" which leaves no loopholes) "that is therein"; but did not the Son of God himself, the Second Person of the Trinity, publicly state that not even that humblest of birds, the sparrow, can fall to the ground without the divine permission of God the Father? As nothing is more certain than that during the recent bitter weather not only sparrows in vast numbers, but many other birds, beasts and even men and women made in the image of God, have so fallen, we are bound to recognise that this terrible weather has been of the nature of a divine visitation—for our ultimate good, if not for the immediate good of the aforesaid sparrows, etc.

Should the unpleasant nature of this visitation cause sceptical doubts to arise in our weak minds, we must always recall that the Almighty often "moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform". Let us then hearken to that great master of theological science, the learned John Calvin, who, after consigning some 99.9 per cent of humanity to everlasting damnation by invoking God's predestinarian decree, concluded by advising us that we must cheerfully accept the divine wisdom plus the wholesale human damnation that necessarily goes along with it.

However, since most of the readers of this paper are or so I imagine, believers in free will, at least as far as

(Concluded on page 84)

The National Secular Society Annual Dinner

Held at the Pavours Arms, Westminster, on Saturday, March 2nd, 1963

THE FIFTY-SEVENTH Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, must have been one of the happiest ever. No two members of the Society are more widely esteemed than the Guests of Honour, Fred and Nina Hornibrook, and the occasion had extra significance, coming shortly after Mr. Hornibrook had celebrated his 85th birthday and after Mrs. Hornibrook had recovered from a serious illness. It was fitting, too, that Mrs. Ethel Venton, Vice-President of the Society and Mr. Hornibrook's associate



Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Hornibrook

on the Executive Committee for many years, should be in the Chair—the first lady ever to fill that position.

It was only to be expected that the Marble Arch Branch, of which Mr. Hornibrook is the President, should have been well represented, but it was sad, on the other hand, that several of Mrs. Venton's West Ham and District Branch colleagues were unable to attend because of illness, and it must have been many years since Secretary F. G. Warner and Mrs. Warner had missed a Society dinner. Illness caused by the weather was also responsible for the absence of many other old friends, but there was nevertheless a good sprinkling of veterans, and a number of members had journeyed from the provinces, the long distance record going to Mrs. Ann Calderwood of Dollar, Clackmannan. Two most welcome guests, however, Mr. Hornibrook's nephew, Northcote Hornibrook and his wife had recently arrived in this country from New Zealand.

Though, as she said, women are not generally given to backward glances, Mrs. Venton rightly thought this an

occasion for recollections of the stalwarts of the past whom she and Mr. Hornibrook had known and worked with, before calling upon Major Christopher Draper D.F.C. to propose the toast to the Guests of Honour. The "Mad Major" did not disappoint, adopting a parsonic style and mixing quotations from Mr. Hornibrook's *The Culture of the Abdomen* with the Prayer Book adapted into modern English, and finally pronouncing his blessing.

Mrs. Hornibrook was the first to respond, charmingly as ever, to the honour the Society had paid to her husband and herself. Then F. A. Hornibrook himself regaled the company in incomparable style, rollickingly funny stories (how does he remember them?) being interspersed with the inquiry "Am I going on too long?" and unanimous negative responses from the audience. After remarking how hard he thought God had been in cutting off Methuselah when only twenty-one short of his millenium (rather like giving a batsman out at 99!) Mr. Hornibrook concluded with a welcome and an encouragement to the younger members of the Society and a plea for a broad outlook, with co-operation with Ethical, Humanist and Rationalist societies and groups. Then he and Mrs. Hornibrook offered a reciprocal Australian toast to the NSS.

On behalf of the Society, William Griffiths then presented Mr. Hornibrook with a pair of pipes in a case and Mrs. Hornibrook with a bouquet.

Eric Kinton, Editor of the *South London Press*, proposed the toast to the National Secular Society, remarking how he had detected a free atmosphere at the meeting of the Marble Arch Branch at which he had recently spoken, and telling of his skirmishes with religious bodies through his paper's outspoken comments on religion. Then, most aptly in the light of Mr. Hornibrook's speech, Mr. Kinton referred to a sense of humour that seemed to pervade secular meetings. He hoped that the Society would never lose this valuable asset.

After Mrs. Venton had responded most suitably for the Society, Mr. Griffiths presented this gracious lady Chairwoman with a bouquet.

The remainder of the evening was spent in convivial conversation and dancing to the music of Billy Spears and his Band, and when the time came for "Auld Lang Syne", it was generally agreed that this had indeed been a most friendly and enjoyable evening.



Mrs. E. Venton welcomes Mr. Hornibrook

This Believing World

Dr. G. H. C. Macgregor, Professor of Bible Criticism at Glasgow University, and the Rev. A. Morton of Culross Abbey, Fife, have been studying the Pauline Epistles with the aid of a Mercury computer, fed with a quarter of a million words of Greek prose. They have found that "only four Epistles—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians—were written by Paul". No conclusion has been reached on the very short Philemon Epistle, but the stylistic differences between the four and the others is "great" (*The Guardian*, February 25th). The work is based on the principle that authors have certain habits of style deeply ingrained said Mr. Morton, and "We hope to study the Acts of the Apostles by the same method". We are not quite sure whether the Mercury computer can be hauled before a shocked Christian court for blasphemy, and if sentenced, what that would mean.

★

Dr. Levison of London University, who collaborated with Professor Macgregor and Mr. Morton said that he thought "the computer has provided very conclusive evidence that St. Paul can only be responsible for a small proportion of the Epistles . . .", and the *Daily Mail* concluded an article on the subject (February 26th) by saying that "Bible authorities have suspected for some time that different authors had a hand in the Epistles". Actually the "some time" is more than a century. One famous authority, Professor van Manen claimed that they were anonymous productions of the second century. What we should now like to see is a combat between the Mercury and van Manen views, and what would happen if the Professor won!

★

Portraits of smiling Anglicans and Methodists have graced our national press as the prospects of "unity" between the two Churches apparently grows brighter. John Wesley bitterly opposed having bishops at any price, but this was nearly 200 years ago, and things have changed. By joining up with the Church of England, the Methodist Church may have a new lease of life; and "our Lord" would be so happy if even a *little* unity was achieved these days. But we are afraid we can't see Roman Catholics and Calvinists joining up, not even for Christ's sake.

★

The latest lady theologian to be recruited by the "Daily Mail" is Miss Monica Furlong who has been holding forth at great length on "true" Christianity, of which she is a fervent and devoted admirer. She has come to the conclusion that "We would all be Christians if it were not for Christians"—no doubt excepting herself. But it is not Christians who are preventing us all from becoming Christians, it is "true" Christianity itself—most of which is boring Oriental twaddle. In truth, if it were not for Christians, and particularly those like Miss Furlong, Christianity would have been dead centuries ago. This scientific age of ours mostly looks upon believers like Miss Furlong with a sympathetic smile—indeed, Christendom itself is at least 90 per cent apathetic to its nonsensical claims. The *Daily Mail* should try and get a professional theologian, and not an amateur to boost up the dying religion.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £74 18s. 6d. A. Hewitt, £1; G.B., 15s.; S. Merrifield, 3s.; Anon, £2; C. Holmes, 12s. 6d.; G. Swan, 10s.; W. Baldie, 10s.; Mrs. N. Henson, £10; A. Bedance, £1; C. Cullen, 4s. 6d.; Raffle N.S.S. Dinner, £7 6s. Total to date, March 15th, 1963, £98, 19s. 6d.

THE WEATHER AND THE CLERGY

(Concluded from page 83)

divine providence is concerned, they may be not altogether content with the notable piece of theological advice recorded above. They may even lift up their voices presumptuously and ask this writer (if not the Lord to whom such a question should rightfully be addressed), what is to be done, assuming that divine providence follows up the icy winter of 1962-63 with even more hellish (Norse variety) winters in the future. Cannot anything be done to prevent the recurrence of the climatic misfortunes which we have had to endure since Christmas? I too, have had this important problem constantly in mind, and am happy to state that there exists a possible means towards that prevention, which is better than cure.

Here it is: we have in this land a state-endowed Church, with two full-time Archbishops, plus a large number of bishops, deans, archdeacons, canons and in addition, a regular army of smaller pieces of ecclesiastical artillery. My suggestion is a simple one (did not that profound thinker, Schopenhauer, once go on record with the comment that we should imitate above all things, the simplicity with which nature orders her current business?), put the clergy to work each winter in future, praying (with, if necessary, staggered hours to relieve them from physical discomfort) for fine weather. Moreover, and this is the gist of our proposal, pay them by results. No fine weather, no money. Nor can the clergy plead inability, since the Book of Common Prayer in its wisdom has some very fine prayers already in print which ask the Deity in no uncertain voice to avert bad weather and to send good, with "seasonable rains" added as a refresher. Should it be necessary, special winter prayers could surely be added appropriate to this harsh season. Reduced to its bare essentials, our suggestion is simple. no good weather, no money for the clergy. Let us imitate that sensible race the Chinese, who in times of continued drought, put out their unresponsive idols themselves to roast in the unrelenting sun!

I make bold to claim that my suggestion is economically as well as theologically sound. For what is the earthly use (whatever its heavenly value may be), of having a state Church with thousands of clergy endowed (or so they claim) with supernatural powers including the power to alter the weather at will, who yet appear to remain dumb during the appalling hardships inflicted impartially upon man, beast and bird alike. Let the Church in future *earn* its money; put the clergy to work upon their knees: at the beginning of every winter, let the government decree a non-stop session of prayer for fine weather until the arrival of spring, and let the clergy again be paid by results. It will surely make them pray all the harder. Should the Lord in his inscrutable wisdom see fit not to answer their barrage of intercession for fine weather, why even in that dire eventuality, there always remains that major organ of democracy, the labour exchange. Indeed, in the event of mass-unemployment amongst the clergy, when thrown out of work by such an "act of God", our benevolent welfare state might build (out of confiscated clerical funds) special labour exchanges solely for out-of-work clergy. Such exclusively clerical labour exchanges, to be appropriately designated as "God's Own Houses". One may already imagine the volume of prayer for heart-felt better weather that would soon ascend to the Throne of Grace under such circumstances.

Just Published

SPARTACUS by F. A. Ridley
7s. 6d. (cloth cover), plus postage 6d.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1
TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

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

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. 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
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, March 19th, 7.30 p.m.: J. H. WALLIS, "The Changing Pattern of Sexual Relationships" (tape-recording)
Hornchurch Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, corner Gubbins Lane and Squirrel Heath Road), Tuesday, March 19th, 7.45 p.m.: REV. TOM DALTON (Unitarian), "Body, Brain, Mind and Soul".
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 17th, 6.30 p.m.: BASIL BRADLAUGH BONNER, "The Need for Abortion Law Reform".
Marble Arch Branch (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, March 17th, 7.30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Why Christianity Survives".
Nottingham Cosmo (Co-operative Educational Centre, Heathcote Street), Sunday, March 17th, 2.30 p.m.: DR. BRYN THOMAS, "The Balham Church Court Case".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 17th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "World Hunger, Material and Spiritual", with readings by JOSEPH REEVES (RPA) and MRS. E. VENTON (NSS).

Notes and News

READERS, WE FEEL, will be particularly interested in Mrs. Madalyn Murray's address to the Eighth Annual Convention of the American Rationalist Federation, which we print for our Views and Opinions this week. Mrs. Murray's courageous fight to end Bible reading and prayers in Baltimore schools has made the headlines in the USA, and when her appeal came before the United States Supreme Court on February 27th, her counsel, Leonard J. Kerpelman said that William Murray had been spat upon, assaulted and subjected to schoolboy and teacher sanctions because he dared to walk out on religious exercises, as permitted by [Baltimore] board rule" (*Montreal Star*, 28/2/63).

FRANCIS B. BURCH and George W. Baker, Jr., Baltimore City solicitors argued that there was no constitutional violation so long as there was no compulsion on the student to attend the religious exercises. "Anyone who dissents runs the risk of disapproval", said Mr. Baker. "Those who now clamour in the school cases won't stop if they win in the Supreme Court". The "inevitable con-

sequence", he contended, "will be continued litigation leading to the elimination from our public works and institutions of all forms of church-state contact which bear the slightest connotations of religiousness".

THE Glasgow Secular Society is presenting a "double bill" on Sunday, March 24th, at the Central Halls, Bath Street, with S. D. Kuebart on "The Spanish Inquisition" and John W. Telfer on "Lourdes: Europe's Greatest Fraud". Mr. Telfer is President of the Glasgow society, and was the author of "The Miracle Goes to Rome", which appeared in our issue of February 8th, 1963. Along with Secretary Joseph Dempster, he is mainly responsible for reviving interest in secularism in Glasgow, and we hope readers will give all the support they can.

AFTER THE TWO religious tragedies which we referred to last week, here are a couple of religious comedies. Asked if a Christian must believe that God delivered Daniel from the lions' den, the Newcastle-upon-Tyne *Sunday Sun* replied (24/2/63): "Whether or not the story of Daniel's delivery is historically true is surely only a matter of academic interest, whereas belief in the Risen Christ who is able to deliver one when the lions have done their worst is a matter of personal experience. It is also a matter of verifiable history". And Mrs. Anne Hopkinson, wife of the Director of the Industrial Christian Fellowship urged (*Daily Herald*, 22/2/63): "Let the little ones praise the Lord for steel girders, tinned soup, plastic boats, nylon, television and food-mixers".

AND PERHAPS some religious tragedies will be averted now that the joint committee from the British Medical Association and the Magistrates' Association has advised doctors to operate on a child to save his life, even if the parents object on religious grounds (*Daily Herald*, 26/2/63). This means that doctors will now be able to give blood transfusions to children of Jehovah's Witnesses, a sect which opposes such treatment even if the alternative is death.

ALDERMAN Frank Wilkinson, Mayor-elect of Blackburn (Lancs) has announced that he will dispense with prayers before council meetings during his term of office and will not appoint a chaplain. If he did, said the 63-year-old railway union branch secretary, "I would be a hypocrite" (*Daily Worker*, 1/3/63). "Tory attacks and the suasions of the Bishop of Blackburn have failed to budge him", so the pious councillors intend to hold services outside the council chamber.

THE Rev. Peter Wood, 26, has resigned as lecturer at Bolton (Lancs) parish church after 18 months and is now a supplementary teacher and a weekend waiter at an inn (*Daily Telegraph*, 4/3/63). Mr. Wood, who is married, with a son aged nine months, said: "I feel that the Church is not moving with the times".

THE CROYDON clergy must surely have urged the Lord to protect them from their friends when they read two letters from A. E. Legg of Thornton Heath in the *Croydon Times* (1/3/63). While not wanting to be too hard on one who was avowedly only expressing his own "humble opinion", we can't help feeling that a little genuine humility would have led to a reduction of both the length and breadth of Mr. Legg's epistles. With a little common sense he might also have avoided the gaff of accusing unbelievers of having "no constructive motives, just sheer destruction", and then going on to extol the Ten Commandments which, if we remember rightly, all start with "Thou shalt not".

Of God and Men

By GONZALO QUIOGUE (Manila)

THE ATHEIST SAYS: There is no God. Nothing "proves" the existence of God. The universe has always existed, will always exist—no beginning and no end. The processes of nature produced life from non-living matter.

From time to time, in various distant parts of space, hydrogen gas and dust whirling at tremendous speeds form enormous fireballs called stars. Smaller whirling blobs of gas and dust, not having enough mass and pressure to generate stellar heat, condense into planets. Millions of stars or suns in our galaxy alone—the Milky Way—have families of planets say astronomers.

Life . . . The colours red and blue alone cannot produce violet. But you can get violet from a combination of red and blue. Violet is thus an emergent colour. Living matter is likewise an emergent entity from a combination of various non-living elements. The raw materials of the amino acids are the hydrocarbons, water and ammonia. About three billion years ago, before life appeared on our planet, water, ammonia, and the hydrocarbons of the land flowed continuously into the sea where they eventually became amino acids which slowly turned into proteins. Some of these proteins developed into protoplasm. After millions of years, the sea animals crawled up to land and became land animals. Some of the land animals developed wings and became birds. In the evolutionary tree, we are told, a lemur-like creature branched out in one direction as the anthropoid ape, and in another as man's subhuman ancestor.

If there is a God. He would:

1. Respond favourably to the prayers of mankind.
2. Prevent wars, epidemics, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, typhoons, fires, shipwrecks, airplane crashes, floods, drought and famine.
3. Prevent the birth of criminals and lunatics . . .

The wonders of the universe, including the apparent order of suns and planets, are manifestations of mindless nature. If you believe God is behind these wonders, you should have more reason to believe there is a more wonderful God behind God, unless your reasoning is cut short by a dogmatic definition of a Supreme Being.

Pure reason is not enough to prove God, said the great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, in his book, *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Nothing proves God, because nothing proves nothing.

Religion's means of proving God—metaphysics—only disproves God. God is a metaphysical entity, it is said, and as such, only metaphysical arguments can prove Him. But metaphysical arguments are beyond reason and matter. There is no better example of nonsense than this; for what can possibly be beyond reason and matter except nonsense?

Four words coined by ancient religious leaders serve now to buttress orthodox faith in God. These are: supernatural, soul, heaven and hell.

Supernatural . . . To believe in the existence of God and the creation story is to believe in the existence of a supernatural power in the universe. A God without supernatural power is no God at all. There is no supernatural power in a world which is governed only by natural laws.

Soul . . . People have to believe in the soul idea, in a life after death, for who will go to heaven or hell if men have no souls? People have to believe, too, in heaven and hell, for hell is God's means of punishing the wicked, and heaven, His means of rewarding the good.

Can we not fight evil and be moral without believing in an imaginary God or fooling our fellow humans? Our laws and proper education in home and school should serve to combat evil. Belief in God, maintains the atheist, is a primitive way of doing it.

God, supernatural, soul, heaven, hell—these are metaphysical concepts, without any real existence whatsoever.

Fortune tellers cannot be persuaded to give up their occupation for a more honest and useful one because giving up the work one has had for years is no easy matter. Fortune telling has become a love, an obsession. The same thing happens to theologians or priests, to people who love to pray. Theologians claim that theology is "real" unlike astrology or palmistry. Theology is supposed to be the study of God and the relations between God and the universe. But how can God be studied when He does not exist?

THE THEIST SAYS: Early man lacked the knowledge that educated and cultured men possess today. Consequently, they had no God; they were atheists. As primitive men began to accumulate knowledge and culture, they also began to realise the existence of a supernatural order—God, and minor gods as well. Later, as men became more intelligent and cultured, they discarded the lesser gods and worshipped one Supreme Being. The minor gods had complicated matters by making prayers too long and too many.

Atheism had its beginnings in primitive ignorance. Today its influence is slowly disappearing in the light of knowledge and civilisation.

Evidence for the existence of God is found everywhere. Consider man's intellect. There must be a giver of intelligence in this world. Only God could have given man the intellect which has enabled him to produce radio, television, radar, rockets, guided missiles, satellites, jetliners, electronic computers, nuclear bombs, etc. The wonders of nature speak of the power of God. The cause is God, the Uncaused Cause. The movements of the planets in the solar system are caused by God, the Unmoved Mover. The whole universe of matter came into being through the supernatural power of God. A watch is fashioned by a watchmaker. A chair, table and a house are here, because a carpenter made them. They did not cause or make themselves. Likewise, the universe is here, it exists, because God created it. It is beyond the power of matter to create itself. No one is more blind than he who refuses to acknowledge the obvious.

Science insists that life came from a combination of non-living matter sometime in the remote past on this planet. This is true, because God created life through the processes of nature.

The majority of people are good, because God makes them so. Belief in God is an essential moral guide of humanity, said Immanuel Kant in his famous book, *The Critique of Practical Reason*.

We are better off with God and religion than without them. History testifies to the ennobling, enriching effects of religion—despite the evil and perversity man is capable of. We feel a need for God. He exists and in Him we find meaning for our lives and significance in an otherwise empty and absurd universe.

THE AGNOSTIC SAYS: If pure reason is not enough to prove God, it is also not enough to disprove Him. Likewise,

natural science can neither prove nor disprove God. This is as it should be, for God is a metaphysical entity which can be proven only by metaphysical arguments. And metaphysics is beyond reason and physics. It consists of transcendent concepts of nature and the universe. This is not easy to understand unless you are familiar with "the thing". Here are samples of metaphysical thought: (1) Matter is the principle of individuation; (2) Space is unreal; (3) Time is the moving image of eternity; (4) Contradiction is the principle of all movement.

Man is finite, limited. His knowledge is necessarily limited by time, matter and space. He is not in a position to know with any certainty whether or not there is a God. A finite being in this physical world cannot know whether an eternal metaphysical entity exists. It is self-evident that the finite cannot know the infinite. Time cannot contain eternity.

The atheist can with reason deny God in the known

realm of nature. But he knows nothing about the unknown which is part of the total reality of the universe. Hence he cannot logically make a complete denial of God.

The theist, like the Psalmist of the Old Testament, sees beauty and wonder in the world, and thinks they are the handiwork of God. There is poetry in the vision of the theist, but it is only the product of the superstition ingrained in him since childhood.

While the theist feels the presence of God wherever he goes, the atheist feels only the wind in his face. The theist is superstitious while the atheist is presumptuous. The logical position is that of the agnostic who neither affirms nor denies God. His vision of the universe is framed by reality and reason.

QUESTION

What are you? Atheist, theist or agnostic? Do you disbelieve, believe—or do you say you simply do not know?

Presumptuous?

By COLIN McCALL

IT IS DIFFICULT to know how rigorous to be in criticising Gonzalo Quiogue's "Of God and Men", which first appeared in the *Philippines Free Press* on December 22nd, 1962, and which is reproduced here at the author's invitation. One doesn't want to be too hard on an obviously "popular" article; at the same time it has philosophic pretensions and concludes that the position of the agnostic is more logical than that of the atheist. If this is Mr. Quiogue's own view it cannot go unchallenged.

Mr. Quiogue calls the atheist "presumptuous". The logical position, he maintains, "is that of the agnostic who neither affirms nor denies God". Might it not similarly be argued that the man who disbelieves in fairies is presumptuous and that the logical position is that of the man who neither affirms nor denies them; that "His vision of the universe is framed by reality and reason"? It would be just as valid—or invalid.

Consider Mr. Quiogue's reasoning. Man is finite and his knowledge limited. "He is not in a position to know with any certainty whether or not there is a God". Without the "any", thus far we could agree. We cannot know with certainty (i.e. absolute certainty) whether or not there is a God. But this is not saying much, since we cannot know anything with absolute certainty—even that fairies do not exist! I suggest, though, that we can and do know some things with some (i.e. reasonable) certainty—phenomena that come under the general heading of scientific or empirical knowledge. For example: that the earth spins on its axis and revolves around the sun.

Mr. Quiogue concedes that the atheist "can with reason deny God in the known realm of nature". But because "he knows nothing about the unknown which is part of the total reality of the universe", the atheist "cannot logically make a complete denial of God". That nothing is known about the unknown is a tautology, but questions about God, in so far as they have meaning, are rooted in what is known, not what is unknown. By this I mean that the theist, arguing for God, argues from that part of the universe which he knows, not from that which he doesn't. This is exemplified equally by the Scholastic philosopher with his objective "proofs" of the existence of God and the mystic with his "personal experience" of God. Both start from the world that we know.

The unknown, then, is irrelevant. It is from the known that we must start, and on the basis of the known that we

must argue. It is on this basis that the theist posits his God. In Mr. Quiogue's words, the theist "sees beauty and wonder in the world, and thinks they are the handiwork of God". But not only does he *think* it, he *asserts* it, and he has often compelled others to say so too. It is theism, then, that is presumptuous, and often historically dogmatic. Atheism, by contrast, is the outcome (I should say the logical outcome) of scepticism, and hence generally undogmatic. There have been dogmatic atheists, of course, but they are uncharacteristic. As for the contention that it is dogmatic to deny God *per se*; this ignores the antecedent assertion of God. Indeed, strictly speaking, it is this assertion that is denied.

Or better, rejected. The atheist rejects the belief in God in its usual forms (I cannot make allowance here for all the untypical uses of the term) because it will not survive critical examination. The existence of pain, for instance, is incompatible with the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, beneficent deity. The former cannot reasonably be denied, and in face of it the latter cannot reasonably be accepted. What then, is the position of the agnostic, whose "vision of the universe is", says Mr. Quiogue, "framed by reality and reason"?

The agnostic, I take it, will grant that pain is a "reality", at least in that part of the universe which is known to him. Can one say then, "I simply do not know whether there is an almighty, all-knowing, all-loving God"? Certainly not with "reason". Far from being a "logical position", agnosticism here is absurd.

Likewise with other theistic assertions. If they can be shown to be unsupportable (as they can and have been times without number) what merit is there in adopting a "don't know" attitude towards them? The answer is none. Such a practice, in fact, is fatal to rational thinking. If an assertion is illogical (i.e. self-contradictory or contrary to tested experience) the logical course is to reject it, not to remain undecided. And I have no doubt that Mr. Quiogue—like other agnostics—adopts this logical course in many cases. That, for instance, he disbelieves in dragons, elves, fairies and the like. That, moreover, he disbelieves in specific gods like Allah, Jehovah and Jupiter. Is this presumptuous of him, because his finite mind cannot know the infinite? Not at all. It is a rational conclusion from a critical examination of what he does know. And it is the road to atheism.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

WHAT HUMANISM IS ABOUT

In her review of Mrs. Mouat's book, (1/3/63) Mrs. Margaret McIlroy writes—"the many people who are rather ashamed of their unbelief, and feel themselves somehow inferior to those who naively accept Christianity" (my italics).

Good God! Ashamed? Personally I trumpet my unbelief all over the place, in season and out. Inferior? Profoundly contemptuous, pitying and vastly amused would doubtless describe 99% of the readers of this journal, otherwise they should change to *The Methodist Recorder*.

A. O. SNOOK

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

The "Church of Silence" Exhibition now in Rome, depicting the persecution suffered by the Church in Communist countries, is to go on tour in the nations of the free world. It is presented as a drama, and in the prologue, said *The Universe and Catholic Times* (15/2/63), "there is the word of Christ, who preaches all kinds of persecution to His disciples, the letter of the Holy Father to Mgr. Beran re-evoking the painful situation of the persecuted Church and the list of all the persecutions from the Catacombs to the Church of Silence". The drama is demonstrated "by panels dedicated to each persecuted country", while other "significant parts" are "a picture of a crucifix in pieces with the slogan, 'God must be destroyed', and a crib with no Babe but a Jack Frost". At the end there is a "shrine dedicated to all those bishops who have suffered for the Faith—killed, imprisoned, tortured, exiled or prevented from exercising their priestly and pastoral duties". This reference to "persecution" rings hollow, when we remember that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy has openly supported such megalomaniacs as Hitler and Mussolini, while also praising and, in some cases, even decorating, such dictators as Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal, Batista in Cuba, Pinilla in Colombia, and Peron in Argentina, to name a few. It rings even hollower when we turn to the blood-splashed pages of Catholic history.

Why does not the "infallible" Pope order his Mary-adoring devotees to practise some of the elevated sentiments to which he gives lip service? There is very little freedom, personal, civic or religious, in Vatican-dominated territories. The Papacy and Catholic Press obviously resent the persecution of Romanists by Communists, but not persecution by Romanists of others.

What hypocrisy! I suggest that the Church substitute for this exhibition one showing the true history of totalitarian Catholicism, calling it not the Church of Silence, but the Church of Violence.

JOHN W. TELFER

SUPPOSE WE CHANGE THE SUBJECT!

The Hindu was describing his religion.

"The world," he said, "rests upon the back of an elephant, and the elephant stands upon the back of a tortoise."

"And upon what," asked the Christian, "stands the tortoise?"

"Suppose we change the subject," replied the Hindu.

So they changed the subject, and the Christian described his beliefs.

"Because the world exists," he said, "it must have had a creator, and that creator is God."

"But if God exists," asked the Hindu, "then surely by the same logic, He too must have had a creator?"

"Suppose we change the subject," replied the Christian.

J.M.W. (Australia).

SWANENG HILL SCHOOL REPORT

To the Treasurer, The Humanist Council.

Dear Mr. McCall,

I thank you for your very kind letter of December 17th, 1962, accompanied by the very generous cheque for £250. It certainly arrived at a very good time, as building was going ahead at a great rate, and available funds for building materials were rapidly diminishing. Fortunately, thanks to people like yourselves, we have been able to keep the building work going at top speed all the time, with no agonising delays through lack of money.

I am sorry that my thanks come so very late in the day, but the school opened on February 11th, and we have for some time now been caught up in a hectic routine of last minute building operations, administrative work and preparations for opening, organising equipment and so on, with not a moment to ourselves. We did plan to take only 25 pupils, but the flood of applications was overwhelming—in fact they are still streaming in—so that we agreed to take 28 altogether. It is enormously depressing having to turn people away, but gratifying to have such powerful evidence that the school is desperately needed here. On the opening day there were sad people who came, with their blankets under their arms, from many miles away, and who sat around all day long hoping for a cancellation so that they might be allowed in. Last week was a very chaotic one—with builders hurriedly doing last minute finishing touches to the classroom, and bits of equipment still to be delivered, but the pupils are a splendid set and very adaptable and did not seem to mind at all! They have taken immediately to the idea that this is their school, to work for, to improve, and plan for; that if they want a midday meal, they must contribute a cent a day and the girls must cook it; and if they want to eat vegetables and fruit they must grow them and see that they are watered each day. They have already had meetings to "organise building our sportsfields, sir."—and all on their own initiative, which is encouraging.

With very great thanks from everyone here.

Yours sincerely, PATRICK VAN RENSBURG.

OBITUARY

Many people in Aireborough (Yorkshire) will regret the passing at 61, of Fred Cooper, cemetery foreman at Yeadon. He was a well known local historian and antiquarian, and a competent naturalist.

He was one of us in spirit, and while he did not number the National Secular Society among the many peace and progressive movements he joined, he was for at least 20 years a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER.

The funeral service at Rawdon Crematorium on March 1st was conducted by William Baldie of the Bradford Branch of the NSS. This form of service was unfamiliar to many of the hundred or so people present and it was very gratifying to hear the words of thanks and appreciation often expressed at the close.

RECENT PENGUINS AND PELICANS

- Penguin Science Survey, 1963 A, 3s. 6d.
- Penguin Science Survey, 1963 B, 3s. 6d.
- Memories of a Catholic Girlhood, by Mary McCarthy, 4s. 6d.
- Children of the Ashes, by Robert Jungk, 5s.
- Insecure Offenders, by T. R. Fyvel, 5s.
- Middle-Eastern Mythology, by S. H. Hooke, 4s.
- Mysticism, by F. C. Happold, 6s.
- Theory and Practice of Communism, by R. N. Carew-Hunt, 5s.
- The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, by T. E. Lawrence, 10s. 6d.
- The Island of Dr. Moreau, by H. G. Wells, 3s. 6d.
- A Short History of the World, by H. G. Wells, 5s.
- Hitler. A Study in Tyranny, by Alan Bullock, 8s. 6d.
- A Pictorial History of Nazi Germany, by Erwin Leiser, 3s. 6d.
- Meet Yourself As You Really Are, by Prince Leopold of Loewenstein and William Gerhardt, 3s. 6d.
- The Life of Sir Alexander Fleming, by André Maurois, 5s.
- Boundaries of Science, by Magnus Pyke, 4s. 6d.
- The Growth of Plants, by G. E. Fogg, 7s. 6d.
- Introducing Science, by Alan Isaacs, 5s.
- Magnetism, by E. W. Lee, 7s. 6d.
- Man and Energy, by A. R. Ubbelohde, 6s.
- The Strange Story of the Quantum, by Banesh Hoffman, 4s. 6d.
- A History of Science and Technology, by R. J. Forbes and E. J. Dijksterkius, 2 Vols. at 5s. each.
- William Morris edited by Asa Briggs, 7s. 6d.
- Common Sense about Smoking (Fletcher, Cole, Jeger and Wood), 3s. 6d.

Plus postage, from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT

NOW READY

The Freethinker for 1962

BOUND VOLUME 32/- (Post free)

THE PIONEER PRESS

103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1