

# The Freethinker

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As the time approaches for the United States Supreme Court to announce its decisions in the cases of Bible reading and prayer recitation in the schools of Maryland and Pennsylvania, we are devoting a large part of this issue to a report by Mrs. Madalyn E. Murray who, with her elder son, William, are the appellants in the Baltimore (Maryland) case. We are sure that readers will find this firsthand account of the Court proceedings interesting, and it will serve as a useful background against which to view the decisions.

It is followed by a letter from Mrs. Murray describing what she has elsewhere called the "harassments" that she and her sons have had to undergo. But, as she says, "the good news goes on and on and on", and "the best news is of our effort to organise militantly". And the letter ends on a note of confidence which we hope will prove justified.

THE SUPREME COURT of the United States has heard the oral argument in the cases of Bible Reading and Prayer Recitation in the public [state] schools. The Murray case from Maryland (ours) was heard on February 26th and 27th, 1963. The Schempp case from Pennsylvania was heard on the 27th and 28th.

Every newspaper service, every television service, every radio network, every magazine which disseminates news was in attendance. The court room was packed, and re-packed, with long lines standing in the corridor. Some arrangement was made to relay groups in and out, so there was a constant coming and going.

We have many newspapers now. Some places we made front page banner headlines (Baltimore, of course!). The story was always front page, with varying texts, sometimes pictures. One national television programme after another picked up pictures, statements. All the radio networks carried accounts.

So, the court now has the full argument, both oral and written, from both sides, in both cases. They have all the *amici curiae* briefs and the only thing remaining is for the court to hand down their decision. It is anticipated that they will do this in about two months; i.e. early May.

During that two months we, and you, have a job to do. In order to be prepared to do that job, this newsletter will analyse what the issue is, the basis on which a decision must be reached, and what is anticipated as to the decision. You must be informed because you are going to be in a lot of arguments, and soon. Since our case includes both Bible Reading, Prayer Recitation and the factor of voluntary "non-participation" in the exercises, we will use our case for example. The Schempp case is involved only with Bible reading.

## The Fight Against Religion

We are Atheists. As such, we are foes of any and all religions. We want the Bible out of school because we do not accept it as being either holy or an accurate historical document. We want the Lord's prayer out of school because we doubt the historicity of Jesus Christ

and we also do not believe in the efficacy of prayer. To attack the practices in school now we need a legal base. Fortunately for us, we have one. The Constitution of the United States prohibits religious services in schools. However, and we want to make this clear, if our Constitution did not say one word about religion and if our Constitution did not furnish us the basis for our suit, we would try to get religion out of schools by some other method,

by some other type of law suit. We want this clear: we are foes of religion. We are using what means are available to us, legally, to pursue our object: *the fight against religion*. This case is one aspect of that fight.

Now, we have said that

fortunately our Constitution prohibits religious exercises in school. Well, then, why do we have them? Because we have a system of jurisprudence in this country that makes it necessary for one person (or the state) to charge another person with having violated the law. Then, there is a hearing, and the person who has been violating the law is charged to stop his violation, or is punished for having violated the law. This is a simplification of how the law operates. We have Bible and Prayer in schools because the school boards, with pressures from the religious of the communities have put the Bible and Prayer into the schools, in defiance of the Constitution and out of their strength. There has been some challenging of this, and in some states Bible and Prayer are approved *by the State Court*. But the issue was never taken to the highest legal authority, the US Supreme Court.

## The First Amendment

The section of the Constitution which is violated by these practices is the First Amendment, a part of our "Bill of Rights". This amendment says,

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . ."

That is *Congress* shall make no law. What about the individual states? This is where the Fourteenth Amendment becomes applicable. That amendment has been interpreted by the US Supreme Court to mean that prohibition is extended to the states of the union. This is now an accepted fact of law. Neither the Congress, nor a state, may abridge the First Amendment.

The First Amendment contains two admonitions:

1. there shall not be an establishment of religion
2. there shall not be a prohibition of free exercise of religion,

by either the State or the Federal Government. All of the "religious" cases before the Supreme Court have been involved with the interpretation of these two clauses. These are legal concepts and the case will be decided by the judges on the basis of whether or not the Bible Reading and Prayer Recitation falls into one or the other of the two categories, and is therefore prohibited. We feel that the Justices can only make the very obvious, very clear, interpretation: the school exercises violate both clauses.

In both cases there is a state-sponsored religious prac-

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### US Supreme Court Considers Religion in the Schools

By MADALYN MURRAY



tice. If this is admitted by the Boards of Education, immediately it is clear that they are violating the establishment clause because they then admit to having established in the schools a religious practice. Therefore, both the State of Maryland and the State of Pennsylvania came into court and said that reading the Bible and reciting the Lord's prayer *had nothing to do with religion*. They denied that the Bible was a religious book! They denied that the Lord's prayer was anything but a source for inculcation of moral percepts! They said the exercises were merely a morally uplifting way to begin the day, completely apart from any religious significance!!! *This was seriously presented as an argument*. In the Maryland case the proof offered was a letter from the Superintendent of Schools that the children are not such disciplinary problems when they begin the day with the services!

#### Cut to Ribbons

This part of the trial was delightful. The Justices of the Supreme Court really sent a barrage of questions to the Maryland and Pennsylvania counsels. They boxed them in. They tripped them up. They cut them to ribbons. I wasn't permitted to take notes, so let me quote directly from newspaper accounts in Washington. Justice Stewart said that if the exercises were not religious but only to put the children in a calm state of mind why didn't the school just give them tranquilizers. Justice Black said if the exercises set a tone for the day in three minutes, why not use the entire school day reading Bible and Prayers to be really certain of the moral uplift. Justice Douglas asked why they didn't read the Koran which was a good moral book. Justice Warren asked why they could not have a Buddhist moral uplift every morning. The attorneys from Pennsylvania and Maryland were completely routed, intellectually, with the array of questions from the court. This was because they had an untenable position.

#### "No Establishment"

Then, they moved in their argument to the "free exercise" because there was a provision to excuse the children from the services. Here, they had singular difficulty because the Supreme Court has ruled in other cases that no state can force a person to profess a belief or a disbelief in a religion, or punish them for entertaining or professing a belief or a disbelief in a religion. The School Boards' attorneys claimed that when a child asked to be excused from the services because he could not accept them (didn't believe in them) that this was not really forcing him to profess his belief or disbelief in front of his schoolmates or the school authorities. There is no compulsion, they said, for him to so identify himself. He could stay in the room and participate and he would not be identified. There was no punishment they said. However it was pointed out that standing in the hall outside the door of a room is a form of punishment, and this is what the excused child is forced to do. The Court has said in previous cases that no pressures, even psychological, may be used to force such a profession. Well, the law is now in Maryland that a note must be written by parent or guardian. In addition, the Maryland attorneys were forced to admit into record that Bill "suffered loss of caste with his fellows; he was regarded with aversion, subjected to reproach and insult". So, the justices did just that to the Maryland and Pennsylvania counsel for the court room had many waves of laughter as the Justices ridiculed the position they took.

#### Sympathetic Judges

Our side did not have that much trouble. But, we had trouble. Our attorneys called attention to the fact that the Bible was a religious book and that prayer was a real

part of religion. They showed that walking away from such a service was "professing a belief or a disbelief" at variance to the service in the classroom. It wasn't a hard job. The judges were sympathetic for the most part, and in a number of instances asked leading questions so our counsel could give the right answers. There was one difficulty. Justice Stewart, the only judge who dissented in the New York Regent's Prayer Case, hit our attorney with a veritable stream of questions. He interrupted so many times we lost count, maybe 20 or 25 times. He argued with our attorney. And, when our attorney faltered under his stiff attack, Justice Black took up the argument with Stewart and answered for us! Justice Goldberg answered Justice Stewart several times. Time and again they pulled our attorney out of a tough spot and helped him with his argument. Every single Justice (with the exception of Clark who never asked one question) got into the fray with Stewart, and helped our side.

#### Which Holy Book?

A few side notes: once the Schools' attorney got carried away and said this was a question of the theist against the non-theist. Chief Justice Warren flatly contradicted him and said that many persons were against prayers in schools and they were not all non-theists (godless people) but members of fine groups who had entered *amicus* briefs, and he mentioned the Jewish people specifically. Once the Maryland attorney wanted to have each local school board set down the holy book to be used. Justice Goldberg asked if the Mormon communities could then teach Mormonism and Justice Brennan asked if the Catholic minority would be taught Protestantism where that ruled the school board. Justice Black labelled this "religion by local option". Justice Warren said that the political issues would soon be "Who can control the School Board" and every one in the courtroom burst into laughter.

#### Verbal Battle

It was a beautiful verbal battle, exciting, full of action. There was also a strain. My attorney was so full of pressures that he felt he had to disavow Atheism before he went into the Court, and gave some news releases to this effect. I don't blame him. He was still the bravest attorney in America that day. Before he went into court he admitted he was frightened. As soon as he opened his mouth to give a beginning statement Stewart attacked him with questions. He was in the fray in a minute. He did well enough. Compared to the Maryland and the Pennsylvania attorneys he did quite well. To use the vernacular, the School Board's attorneys were shown to be asses, narrow, bigoted, and opinionated. However, the best attorney there was the one who represented the Schempps. He was tall and lean and red-headed. He was vigorous in his presentation, a quick talker, with a logical argument and a convincing delivery. Everyone was considerably impressed by him. He did an exceptionally fine job.

The Supreme Court can now come up with several interpretations. They can find that the exercises violate the establishment clause only or that they violate both clauses. It is unthinkable that they could say that the exercises violate neither because the case is so clear. Also, the justices were quite open in their remarks and one could deduce what they felt and thought. We still feel that the decision will be for us, possibly a 9-0 decision, or an 8-1 with Stewart dissenting.

The opinion will be handed down in about two months. During that time, we must prepare for it, because there will be a tremendous outcry. The justices will be accused

(Concluded on page 135)



# Doubts in Dialogue

Between a Christian Missionary and a Sceptic

By CHARLES BRADLAUGH

CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY—Do you deny immortal life?

SCEPTIC—The words immortal life are to me contradictory. By life I mean "the totality of functional ability, its activity and result in each individual organism". To speak of life as immortal is confusing.

C.M.—But you ignore the soul?

S.—I have no meaning for the word "soul" if you imply an entity other than the living animal or vegetable.

C.M.—But where does the life go when a man dies?

S.—Do you ask where the life goes when an oyster dies?

C.M.—That is an evasion, and there is no fair comparison between the life of an oyster and that of a man.

S.—Each organism differs from all other organisms, or it could not be distinguished in thought. The word "life" only expresses state of organism, i.e., the state of the particular organism described as living. Normal life is health; abnormal activity, excess, or collapse, would be disease. Cessation of activity, and negation of its possible resumption, is death. You do not ask where the life of a sheep has gone when you have converted the sheep into mutton pie.

C.M.—But sheep is not intelligent as is man.

S.—Sheep is more intelligent than oyster; but why do you mix up intelligence with this assertion of immortality?

C.M.—The soul, which is immortal, is intelligence as well as life.

S.—What you call intelligence, which you do not define, is to me the totality of nervous encephalic ability, its activity and results in each animal. I cannot conceive the individual intelligence of any animal continuing in activity after the individual animal has died.

C.M.—But where do you say life goes when the breath leaves the body?

S.—When an animal permanently ceases to breathe, no breath leaves his body and there is no life to go anywhere.

C.M.—Yours is a black doctrine of annihilation.

S.—Instead of finding unpleasant colour for a doctrine that I do not hold, explain your own view. Do you say that a man does live when he has died and whilst he is dead?

C.M.—I say that the Bible teaches that man has an immortal life—that man is a living soul.

S.—Before dealing with the supposed teaching of any book let me be sure that I know what you mean. Do you mean that man continues to live notwithstanding that he has died.

C.M.—Man's soul lives.

S.—The body ceases to be a living body?

C.M.—Yes; the body is mortal, it is the soul lives on.

S.—Can you afford me any means of distinguishing what you call a soul as separate from the body, or of identifying a soul living on after the death of the body?

C.M.—You reject the Bible.

S.—Apart from the Bible, can you answer my question?

C.M.—The best and most intellectual men believe in the immortality of the soul.

S.—My question is, can you afford me today any means, apart from the Bible and apart from the belief of others, of identifying a soul as living on after the death of its body?

C.M.—If you will not believe, it is useless to reason with you.

S.—It is not a question of my willingness or unwillingness to believe, but it is rather a question of your ability to make yourself clear on the proposition to which you ask my assent. What do you mean by soul?

C.M.—Man's immortal spirit.

S.—That is only a change of words; it is not an explanation of meaning. What do you mean by man's immortal spirit?

C.M.—That which is intelligent and living in man.

S.—Is that which is intelligent and living in an ox its immortal spirit?

C.M.—The intelligence of an ox is very different from that of a man.

S.—But the ox lives: has an ox immortal life, or when it dies it ceases to live?

C.M.—That is always the way with infidels; you try to reduce man to the level of the beast.

S.—That is not true, and if it were true it would at least as to dying have the scriptural justification, "As the one dieth, so dieth the other"; but as you say the soul is that which is intelligent in man, I will ask you whether the basis of intelligence is sensation and memory of sensation?

C.M.—No doubt the soul uses the senses.

S.—Leaving aside "soul", which you have not defined, what kind of intelligence would you expect to find in a person born without sight, hearing, taste, or smell?

C.M.—You take an almost impossible case.

S.—Or in the case of a congenital idiot? Do you say that the intelligence of the idiot boy is his soul?

C.M.—I do not deny that there are some mysteries, but these do not justify your disbelief.

S.—But does your absolute inability to explain what you mean by "soul" justify your requiring me to believe that which to me is meaningless, and with you is inexplicable?

C.M.—But what explanation do you give of life and intelligence?

S.—It is rather on those who assert that the onus of explanation should rest. Functional ability is inherited, and depends on the parents and their surroundings, meaning by parents much more than the immediate father and mother. Functional ability may be developed under good conditions; may be checked and arrested under hostile conditions. Individual life varies according to heredity and life surroundings. The sensitive abilities are results of heredity, the scope and intensity of their exercise varying; the ability to remember sensations, differing; the brain, as to quantity, quality, and convolutions, peculiar to each individual; the nervous centres and nerve system different, though like. Life and intelligence are the word—labels of physical states and results. When the man dies, it is absurd to describe him as living.

C.M.—But your argument would make consciousness a mere attribute of matter, and we all know matter cannot think.

S.—By matter, if I use the word, I mean the totality of all phenomena and of all that is necessary for the happening of any phenomenon: that is—existence—everything. By totality I only mean infinite—that is, indefinite—quantity. The material phenomenon, iron pot, or granite block, does not think. The material phenomenon

(Concluded on next page)



## This Believing World

In "The Observer" (April 14th) Mr. Paul Ferris calls attention to the way the BBC radio ignored the Bishop of Woolwich and his book, *Honest to God*, because it "still looks on itself as part of the establishment of religion rather than an instrument for examining it". Of course. In its religious programmes, we are almost always in the days of the "early" Church, say of the second or third century, with all its superstition and credulity—and for that matter, its dictatorship.

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All the same, some of the truth regarding religion does trickle out—generally on the Third Programme, where it is not listened to by faithful Christians. As Mr. Ferris points out, "Humanists, Buddhists, and other non-safe speakers are let loose in that unique Third Programme climate of quarantined anarchy". It may not yet be, but the day must come when no matter how much Christians may protest, we shall hear an uncensored survey of religious beliefs, and that may well presage the end of Christianity.

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As a typical example of the influence the Churches have on the BBC, take the many discussions on marriage and divorce we hear both on TV and radio. Without any exception, these talks, generally by priests, parsons and bishops, take for granted that the only legal marriage is a church one, and is subject literally and absolutely to what "our Lord" said in the Gospels.

★

We have never heard it pointed out that Jesus, if his words are reported correctly, actually *believed* in divorce, and said so quite clearly. We are always told he did not. We are never, *never* told that a church marriage as such is not legal in this country—nor in France for that matter. Either the church marriage must be performed in the presence of a registrar appointed by the state, or by a parson who is a registrar. Otherwise, it is the register marriage only which is legal. Whatever else may be said on a TV or radio programme about marriage these facts are carefully concealed.

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Once again there is a call for a "fixed date" for Easter, and the London *Evening News*—probably to the disgust of most earnest Christians—prints what the Rev. J. P. Clarke has to say on the question. He calls the present movable date "lunatic", and blames the Church for its "full moons, Golden Numbers and similar eyewash". The truth is, even if Mr. Clarke does not know it, the Easter date for the crucifixion of Jesus is actually "eyewash" because nobody knows it, or ever did know it. It is based on sun and star myths, and has no more to do with Jesus than with jam tarts. Fixing a date for the mythical event will not and cannot prove the truth of the Crucifixion any more than the truth of the Resurrection.

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Although the Archbishop of Canterbury benignly claims that Christianity is easily holding its own in this wicked and infidel world, the Rev. C. B. Perkins, described by the *Daily Sketch* as "the man who knows more about gambling than anyone", is appalled at the gambling taking place all over the country with Christianity quite powerless against it. We have now "the appalling picture of people spending night after night playing Bingo". And horror stricken, he adds, "It has no mental value . . .". In fact, even the saving grace of Jesus is quite powerless in gambling.

## Selling Buttons

"ONE DAY," said the priest as he slammed his front door. The poor pedlar thought how unfair it was. He was doing no harm. He was only a travelling salesman. Of course he was a bit of an anachronism in the days of supermarkets, but he was still doing an honest job. The priest had no right to say such things. What did the priest in his comfortable house sell to people that was any use to them? Now if they put the priest in prison, that would be—a perfect piece of casting!

But the pedlar, in his role, had to trudge up the long drive to the big house which he'd heard had been turned into an advanced school. He had very little hope of making a sale, but things were so bad he couldn't overlook any possibility. Still, the suitcases packed with cards of buttons and reels of thread felt very heavy in his hands. At least, he thought, they will not insult me if it is a modern school. They will understand something about life.

Meanwhile, he imagined that his skeleton was shrinking within the folds of his yellow flesh. One day the sanitary inspector would pick out the tiny bones from the shroud of his flesh and maybe he would find one tiny drop of blood.

Where was that Christian charity they spoke about? A man might as well build a fire and burn his buttons in it. Had not the gypsies, who'd lived in the forest before the sanitary inspector got them, called a fire The Forest Slop Pail? And when he'd burnt his stock, he could throw himself into the flames just because he could no longer pay for a meal of beans like a baby mandarin's finger nails.

Wearily he rang the bell at the big house, and nothing happened. He could write a book about nothing, only his knowledge of it would be too deep. Was it holiday time? Were all the advanced school-masters and advanced pupils and advanced staff rioting abroad on some advanced vacation? How strange that some people were able to take holidays. How could a man like himself retire from life?

He rang again and knocked; and then the door was answered by a naked little girl. Involuntarily, the pedlar exclaimed, "Good God!" The little girl said coldly, "I'm sorry, there is no such person;" and she shut the door in his face.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## DOUBTS IN DIALOGUE

(Concluded from page 131)

man, or cat, does think. There is no general consciousness in any animal, there is an ever varying state of mind as long as the animal lives and thinks.

C.M.—But surely there is a vital principle in man.

S.—Why more than a digesting principle?

C.M.—But the huge majority of humankind believe that there is a vital principle in man, and that the soul is that principle.

S.—It would be as conclusive and relevant to say that the huge majority in every nation have at some period believed as true some proposition which at another period the huge majority have rejected as false. And the "huge majority" scarcely ever believe: they acquiesce, and drift with the stream; having much the same effective relation to the creed of the day that the clay has to the river which holding it in suspension, carries it towards the sea.

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# THE FREETHINKER

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TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

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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

Hornchurch Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, corner of Gubbins Lane and Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, April 30th, 8 p.m.: JAMES ALEXANDER, "Christian Reunion and the Humanist Movement".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, April 28th, 11 a.m.: E. ROYSTON PIKE, "Some Pioneers of Social Change."

## Notes and News

JOSEPH LEWIS, Secretary of the Thomas Paine Foundation (257 West 38th Street, New York 1), was recently in England making arrangements for the erection of a statue to the great revolutionary author of *The Age of Reason* and *The Rights of Man* in his native town of Thetford in Norfolk. Sir Charles Wheeler, PRA, will be the sculptor, and Mr. Lewis is hoping that the unveiling ceremony will take place in June, 1964.

D. H. TRIBE, whose closing contribution to the Charity-Charity debate appears on page 134, had a good letter printed in *The People* (7/4/63) on the adoption article which was also criticised by Margaret McIlroy in our Views and Opinions last week. Mr. Tribe expressed his astonishment that adoption societies should (as reported in *The People*, 31/3/63) regard those who say they have no religion as "cranks", and "aggressive people with strong views who are apt to thrust them on a child". Religious parents much more frequently thrust their views upon children, said Mr. Tribe, whereas atheists and agnostics "seldom avail themselves of their right to withdraw them from religious education at school". Many who write "C of E" on official forms, he went on, "are not practising Anglicans but practising liars". And, "Local authorities, and so-called non-denominational adoption societies, should inquire into the character of prospective adopters and not into their religious beliefs".

CHARITY. Cassandra of the *Daily Mirror* pointed out (9/4/63), was not conspicuous in the admonitions he received from "practising and proselytising Christians"

when he slipped up in his criticism of the amended Psalter. He quoted, for instance, the first sentence of a letter from Rev. K. Denerley of Airedale Vicarage, Castleford, Yorkshire, viz.: "A man has a right to his opinion, but there's no need to be a bloody fool". And, said Cassandra, the blazing scorn does not abate.

ANOTHER CLERGYMAN, Canon A. Eric Smith of Hayes Rectory, Kent, welcomed the new Psalter in a rather more gentle letter of reproof to the *Daily Telegraph* (10/4/63). He stressed how badly the revision was needed and hoped it would "remove inaccuracies and obscurities" yet "still retain the familiar rhythm and beauty of the language". "Those of us who have grown to love the Psalms in the familiar Prayer Book version are apt", he said, "to forget its occasional infelicities, frequent archaisms and not infrequent nonsense". In his experience more young people were "put off" by the Psalms than by any other part of Anglican worship. In our experience most young people have little time for any of it.

TWO ADDITIONS to our recent murder series. According to the *Daily Express* (4/4/63), "Donald Hume, confessed murderer of Paul Setty, whom he killed in London, cut up, and threw from a plane into the Channel, has been given a transistor radio in his cell at Regensdorf Prison, near Zurich—where he is serving a life sentence for killing a Swiss taxi driver—so he can listen to Sunday church services in English". According to the police in New Rochelle, New York, 30-year-old Chuck Hansen "killed his sleeping wife, son, and three other relatives" (*The Guardian*, 9/4/63) and then "walked quietly into a Catholic church and gave his revolver to the priest".

CROWDS GATHERED outside a house in the old quarter of Madrid on Easter Sunday, after a girl of 16, Conchita Orihuela, "was said to have developed the Stigmata" (*Daily Telegraph*, 16/4/63). The wounds were said to have bled on Maundy Thursday, but alas, "several doctors and the girl's own parish priest have said they believe the occurrence is not of supernatural origin".

WE WERE recently informed by an uninvited visitor that he had formed a group to study the occult. Qualifications for membership seemed to be: celibacy, vegetarianism and belief in the spirit world. When we remarked that we were married, a flesh-eater and a materialist, he left.

## DEFINITION

A poet is born  
to make a revolution.

In a world of terror and conformity  
he sings freedom and defiance.

A poet is born  
to unseat the mighty,  
overturn the stalls of the righteous.

Creeds and covenants are not for him.

Saints and saviours he weighs in the balances  
and finds them wanting.

A poet is born  
to be a pariah among his fellows  
(he exposes the clay feet of their gods).

A man of sorrows,  
his cry is a cry heard  
only in the wilderness.

—GUSTAV DAVIDSON.



# Evangelical Challenge

By DENIS COBELL

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH represents a stolid foe, against which THE FREETHINKER is most devout in waging war; if other branches of the Christian Church receive less attention at times it is surely because they seem to pose fewer ideological problems. The Evangelicals, who are contained within many brands of Christian faith, from Low Church of England to Plymouth Brethren and many varying shades of non-conformity in between, figure high at the Freethinker's front-line defence, although the opposition is based on rather different grounds from the opposition to Roman Catholics. Contrary to the views of many Freethinkers, not all evangelicals are woolly minded and below average intelligence—most universities and colleges possess a Christian Union which is usually of evangelical sympathy in addition to a Catholic Guild.

But the numerous tracts and pamphlets circulated by evangelicals are mostly designed to attract those incapable of reading words more than two syllables in length. I have recently seen a copy of a "Good News Paper" entitled *Challenge* which in style and format resembles the tabloids and might easily be mistaken for the *Daily Mirror* at a cursory glance. The front page article of the February 1963 number of this paper is an example of Christian propaganda at its lowest and most pathetic. Headlined "Prayer-at-Wicket Man", with a photograph of cheery-faced Australian Test cricketer Brian Booth, it states: "Oddly enough, up to Brisbane Brian had totalled only about 120 runs on the tour, and could hardly have expected to be more than 12th man in the Test. But Brian, as a Christian, was not worrying about personal prestige. He wanted only to do his best—for God and his team—wherever he was needed". Booth believed God "wielded the willow" for him—one must presume the umpire was guilty of atheistic ideals when he lifted his finger to the appeal "howzat"! Moreover, bad luck for David Sheppard, playing for England in the Test Matches—he must have forgotten to say his prayers.

Evangelicals are united in mocking their own intelligence by the naive manner in which they are tied to Billy Graham and his followers—people like Eric Hutchings, whom I hear is conducting a "crusade" in Bristol this summer. One of the most unfortunate aspects associated with their fervour is its inability seriously to study arguments from another point of view; thus, Billy Graham can answer the question, "Would there be fewer atheists if there were less suffering in the world?" "I doubt if suffering and atheism have much to do with each other". He obviously did not hear Colin McCall in the recent radio discussion of atheism! A few young intelligent evangelicals were confused about their own conversion after reading Dr. Sargent's *Battle for the Mind*; indeed it led Martyn Lloyd Jones, himself a physician and minister of Westminster Chapel, to write, "Reports have come to me that a number of Christian men and women, some of them undergraduates, have been profoundly disturbed by it and have been asking: 'Is this, after all, what has happened to us? Have we been deluded the whole time?'" He added, "The answer to the suggestion which pervades this book is that the explanation of the events and experiences such as Pentecost, the conversion of the apostle Paul, John Wesley and others, is not psychological but, always and essentially, theological!"

There are, of course, a few evangelicals who occasion-

ally loosen the flaps of their tents and look outside—the majority soon close them again and continue with their "songs of Zion". Of the few who bother about realities in the world, the world soon learns that it has either to accept their beliefs or forfeit its right to eternal bliss. One fundamentalist who took a longer look outside than most was Dr. C. H. D. Clark, a former lecturer in chemistry at Leeds University, who wrote a short book, four years ago—*Christianity and Bertrand Russell*—in which he sought to dispose of Russell's *Why I am not a Christian* line by line. Dr. Clark thought it curious that Russell, as an agitator for abolition of nuclear weapons, should also reject Christianity. In conversation with a BD student of London Bible College, I was informed that he felt nuclear weapons were a necessary defence for the modern secular State—in which Christians had no right to interfere!

Dr. Clark also criticises Russell with the outworn argument that his attitude to Christianity is not on an intellectual par with his philosophical opinions. This can be answered firstly by stating that Christianity itself is not on the same level as Russell's philosophy, and secondly by asking whether or not his views on Christianity are founded upon his rationalist-empiric philosophy anyway?

In so far as evangelicals exert little power or influence in politics and social life, unlike their Catholic counterparts, they are of diminutive significance to the Freethinker in his fight for the light of reason. However, since they are numerically much larger than Humanist and Secularist organisations, they are a secondary force which is ready to pounce on any progressive movements within society. The Lord's Day Observance Society shelters under a cloak provided by evangelicals. The decline of fundamentalist Christianity has been halted awhile by the techniques employed in modern "evangelistic crusades"; *Battle for the Mind* also indicated the exigency of having a firm belief of one's own to avoid being overtaken by the convictions of these organisations, as so many feeble minded have been.

## More on Sexual Ethics

By D. H. TRIBE

ETHICS IS THE study of "desirable" human relationships. Without necessarily accepting the full Freudian analysis, most people recognise today that the *libido* operates in many ways, e.g. platonic friendships, teacher-student rapport, of which those concerned are unconscious. Sexual ethics concern relationships where the sexual element is overt.

Because of its intensely personal nature, sexual behaviour has always been especially vulnerable to priestly intervention; and what is "desirable" is made to accord with theological formulae. In monastic communities and times of chiliastic fervour, where sexual preoccupations are understandably held to be dangerous competitors to spiritual exercises, sex is taboo; though objective documentation suggests that even in these holy circumstances human nature will out. Sexual behaviour is also vulnerable to economics. Tiny, isolated communities that wish to keep up their birthrate cannot afford to be squeamish about incest. Highly stratified societies with



patriarchal inheritance tend naturally to polygamy among the wealthy classes, with consequential homosexuality among the lower orders. (Incest and homosexuality have numerous psychological and other determinants, both known and unknown.) Traditional "ethical" behaviour is simply conforming to the social pattern of one's community. It is ridiculous to talk about some universal "natural law" or "moral order of things" in such arrangements.

Christian "chastity" is a warhorse by western property inheritance out of Oriental asceticism. For many centuries it was regulated entirely by arranged marriages between mature, sometimes old, males and frequently prepubertal females. Sacrosanctity was preserved not by bonds of affection but by chastity belts. To this was added in the nineteenth century a myth—unknown, it seems, to dramatists of an earlier age—that sex was an institution for the enjoyment of men and the heroic suffering of women. It was expected that young men would have their fling, and a blind eye was turned if they "got girls into trouble", so long as they came from a lower social class and could be packed off out of sight. Most noblemen had their mistresses, the petit bourgeois their brotheis. Today, when people expect to find genuine affection, sympathy, and physical pleasure for both women and men inside marriage, and, if they fail to find it there, outside; when children demand the right to marry for love and not family status and inheritance; when many adolescents feel that they cannot commit themselves to a lifetime arrangement without prior experimentation; when men as well as women of heterodox nature seek the legal right to come together with those of their kind; above all, when the lower orders dare to claim the privileges of sexual pleasure and the divorce court, which have always been available to their betters, what a howl of outraged indignation is set up! How the Band of Hope, the Legion of Mary, the Mothers' Union, the *Church Times*, and the *Catholic Herald* shout their horror to the heavens, and, brazenly falsifying history, sigh for the heyday of Christian piety which is no more. Fleet Street erupts with an answering wail; and even in so-called freethought circles a pious sob breaks out.

Informed opinion quietly pursues its researches. It urges responsibility, sincerity, integrity. It says that intercourse gained by the false promise of matrimony is wrong, not because it is lust, but because it is fraud. Seeing the advantages to society as well as to individuals of emotional security in its members, especially the very young, it advocates stable family groups, relying on mutual trust. Such stable groups depend on mature personalities, whose maturity may or may not come from premarital intercourse, or, where appetites are disparate, extramarital intercourse by consent. The individual himself or herself best knows what fosters maturity for him or her and mate. Males have no right to expect to marry virgins if they are not virgin themselves. As sexual experimentation has always taken place, and will always take place, the main duty of society is to minimise evil social consequences like the spread of venereal disease or the production of unwanted babies. Neither promiscuity nor abortion is to be advocated. If mistakes are made, it is better for the baby to be brought up by the mother's family or made available to eager adopters than destroyed; but better to be destroyed medically than by back-street abortionists or infanticide. Hypocrisy and intolerance do not check passions, but do check the prevention and cure of unhappy consequences. We—or some of us—now know Mrs. Grundy for what she is: not a high-minded matron, but a promoter of sex-neurosis, sedatives, and suicide.

## US SUPREME COURT CONSIDERS RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

(Concluded from page 130)

of everything up to and including treason. It is important that you know how to convince people to accept the decision. We repeat, the question to be determined is very narrow, and is: Does the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the reading of the Holy Bible in the public schools violate the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States in either the free exercise clause or the establishment clause, or both?

### A Letter from Madalyn Murray

1526 Winford Road, Baltimore 12, Maryland, March 10th, 1963.

I give up! I started out to answer all the February mail, and such a stream of events have occurred that it is absolutely impossible. I must resort to this, sending out very meagre notes to everyone. Let me tell you.

When we came home from the Supreme Court, after three days in DC [District of Columbia], our windows were broken again. All the ground wires into our house had been yanked out. Bill's aerial was this time broken beyond repair. When Garth and Bill returned to school they both had trouble. This is the first time Garth has been pushed around at school by other 8 and 9 year olds! Bill had a hard time. It culminated with a dozen fellow students ganging up on him, but four boys out of his radio club at school came to his rescue. A real fray ensued. Then, Bill and Garth got trapped in the drug store and had to have the police rescue them. Out of this we got *one name*, and went to have a warrant sworn out. Again the police magistrate refused to have the warrant issued, and we had to bring in our attorney to get even a "show case" summons.

On the good side: the FBI has all the new letters with death threats and I've spent some time there with them giving information. The FBI is really working to track down the threats. Another TV station has given us a half hour, free, to discuss "Atheism". We are taping it this week. Another group has asked me to speak next week. This makes five public speeches this month. We are inundated with mail, addressed merely to "The Murrays, Baltimore, Maryland".

So, with one more TV programme to do, conferences at both schools, five speeches, floods of mail, a radio tape to record (a New York station), a scheduled trip to Kansas to inspect the land given to us, another newsletter to get out, a court hearing to attend, *plus* keeping a home, shopping, cooking, checking homework, washing, ironing . . .

Meanwhile we still need to stay in Maryland, until the decision is handed down . . . When I was first fired in June, after I filed in Supreme Court, I asked you to help me with a sustaining fund for about ten months. The ten months will be up on May the first. We should have a decision just about that very time. Please continue with your pledges or contributions to the sustaining fund.

We want to report that in January the Guardians of the Constitution, PO Box 75633, Sanford Station, Los Angeles 5, California, printed up a composite of our newsletter and sent it to every congressman . . . I have four invitations to speak within the next month. The good news just goes on and on and on. But the best news is of our effort to organise militantly.

Yours in almost certain victory.

MADALYN MURRAY AND THE BOYS.



## CORRESPONDENCE

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

### THIS BELIEVING WORLD

You often seem to be feeling the strain of satisfying your insatiable urge to pour scorn on what you call "This Believing World". To quibble over the statement by the Rev. L. Barker that he had "laid poor Jenny to rest once more" seems infantile. If you really did not know what this meant, as you said you did not, then I suggest that you are seriously lacking in imagination.

In truth this is the fault with "This Believing World"; it is heavy and unimaginative; takes things too literally. You should watch the BBC's *That Was The Week That Was* and see how religion can be ridiculed with a more delicate but more telling touch.

DAVID F. JENKINS.

### ATHEISM AND MORALITY

I was very interested in Mr. Ridley's and Mr. Simons's thoughtful articles in *THE FREETHINKER* (April 12th).

Mr. Ridley's article, though incontrovertible as far as it went, did not touch on the most fundamental ethical problem confronting atheists—what is the basis of our moral judgments? By what criteria, do we, as atheists, praise certain actions and condemn others? Mr. Ridley in the course of his article says correctly that "it has taken a good deal more than seven days even to reach our present still very imperfect, moral level". But the phrase "imperfect moral level" implies that Mr. Ridley has some conception of a "perfect moral level", and this in turn involves a belief in absolute moral standards.

The atheist's dilemma in this connection is well brought out in the discussion on *The Existence of God* between Father F. C. Copleston, SJ, and Bertrand Russell broadcast in the Third Programme in 1950. The following relevant extract is slightly paraphrased:

Copleston: What is your justification for distinguishing between good and bad or how do you view the distinction between them?

Russell: I don't have any justification, any more than I have when I distinguish between blue and yellow. I can see they are different.

Copleston: You distinguish between blue and yellow by seeing them, so you distinguish good and bad by what faculty?

Russell: By my feelings.

Copleston: You think then that good and evil have reference simply to feeling. Let us take the example of the Commandant of Belsen. That appears to you and me as undesirable, as evil. To Adolf Hitler we suppose it appeared as something good and desirable. So I suppose you would have to admit that for Hitler it was good, and for you it was evil?

Russell: No, I shouldn't go quite as far as that. I think that people can make mistakes in that as in other things. If you have jaundice you see things yellow that are not yellow.

Copleston: Yes, one can make mistakes, but can you make a mistake if it is simply a question of reference to feeling or emotion? Surely Hitler would be the only possible judge of what appealed to his emotions

Russell: This is a little too simplified. You have got to take account of the effects of actions and your feelings towards these effects. Thus, you can very well say that the efforts of the actions of the Commandant of Belsen were painful and unpleasant, not only to people in the camp but also to outsiders contemplating them.

Copleston: Yes, but only in imagination to the outsiders. That is my point. I don't approve of these terrible actions, and I know you don't approve of them but I don't see what ground you have of not approving of them, because after all to the Commandant of Belsen himself these actions are pleasant.

Russell: Yes, but I don't see any more ground in that case than in the case of colour perception. There are some people who think everything is yellow, and I don't agree with these jaundiced sufferers. I can't prove that the things are not yellow, but most people agree with me and most people would similarly agree with me that the Commandant of Belsen was making mistakes . . .

It is difficult not to believe that Copleston had the better of these exchanges. If morality is only a matter of individual opinion or taste, we have no more right to attack a man for preferring cruelty to kindness than for his preferring biscuits and cheese to ice cream.

As an atheist, I am not of course suggesting that the theistic belief that God is the source of moral values is any answer to this problem. Indeed, I believe it completely begs it. I do think,

however, that atheists and humanists have tended to sidestep the difficulties involved, and would be glad to hear of a suggested solution from Mr. Ridley or any of your readers.

Regarding Mr. Simons's article, I wish only to correct one point of detail. He says that "the First Cause Argument must be believed by every pious Catholic irrespective of what modern criticism is levelled against it". To be fair to the Catholic Church, this is not the case. Aquinas is not regarded as infallible, and a Catholic is free to reject one or all of his "five proofs", provided of course he believes in the existence of a personal God on other grounds.

JOHN L. BROOM.

## OBITUARY

Alfred Rowberry Williams, of whose sudden death on Christmas Eve, we have heard belatedly, was born in Malvern, Worcestershire, in 1888, the youngest of a family of nine, and spent most of his working life as a schoolmaster in Walsall. He moved to Worcester when he retired, and devoted most of his time to writing, mainly short stories, of which he wrote about 140. He published four books, *Barny and Sally*, *Short Measures*, *Tales for Teachers* and *Legends of the Severn Valley*, and was a frequent contributor to *THE FREETHINKER*, as well as a frequent attendee at National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association functions, where his genial company was eagerly sought.

In the first World War, A. R. Williams refused military service, but accepted alternate employment as a farm labourer in Evesham, where he was quite happy doing hard manual work for a mere 18 shillings a week. He was a bachelor.

Frederick William Cliff, who has died at the age of 77 was an Honorary Life Member of Leicester Secular Society, of which his daughter, Mrs. Vernon, was for a time secretary. The funeral took place at Croydon Crematorium on April 10th, when a secular service was conducted by Mr. J. W. Barker.

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