

The Freethinker

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A NOTE OF anachronism seemed to sound forth when the reader of the *Guardian* for July 2nd, discovered that the Methodist Conference had expelled one of its ministers, the Rev. Walter Gill, for heresy. The very charge seemed to be out of accord with the tone of the present day. Bishops defend *Lady Chatterley's Lover* or denounce the traditional Christian belief in God. A few liberal religious groups tend increasingly to humanism of one form or another. Yet, in the midst of the theological chaos which marks the twentieth century, Methodism indicts a minister for departing from the faith of the fathers and expells him with its own version of bell, book and candle. The whole incident seems to those dissenting from all Churches to be redolent of another age and generation.

It is not quite clear where the Rev. Walter Gill has erred. Judging by press reports, he had written some articles in which he had sought to apply the approach adopted by the Bishop of Woolwich in *Honest to God* to the Methodist form of Christianity. The result was tantamount to a trial of heresy. Mr. Gill says that he is standing by his ordination promise that, if he should sever his connection with Methodism, he would go quietly. Apparently, this means that he will not stir up dissension among his congregations in West Hartlepool. It is to be hoped that he will write however some *apologia* explaining his views. Almost ninety years ago, a popular freethought lecture was *From Wesleyan Pulpit to Freethought Platform*, the confession of faith of Joseph Symes, a well-known ex-minister and secularist propagandist of those days. A similar statement from Mr. Gill would clarify the issues and enable the outside observer to obtain some understanding of where the issues lie.

Gorham and Bennett

Heresy trials are uncommon in these days. A century ago, the Church of England indulged in a series which, owing to the state-establishment of the Church, ended for trial on appeal in the secular courts. The High Church party tried to get the Rev. G. C. Gorham, an Evangelical, expelled for heresy over his beliefs concerning baptism. About a quarter of a century later, the Low Churchmen returned the compliment and sought the expulsion of the Rev. W. J. Bennett for his high view of the Eucharist. Both efforts were unsuccessful although both parties had, in the meanwhile, joined forces to seek out the prosecution of broad churchmen. Where the clergyman held a benefice, he was vulnerable at the hands of his bishop. Accordingly, two of the contributors to the famous volume, *Essays and Reviews*, were brought before the courts on charges including the denial of eternal punishment. It was on this occasion that Lord Chancellor Westbury "dismissed Hell with costs" and the heretics won their case.

Colenso and Voysey

Lengthy litigation followed the publication of his views on the Old Testament by Bishop Colenso of Natal. Once

again, sentences of excommunication and deposition were reversed by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. On the whole, the broad church heretics succeeded so far as the law was concerned. The last of the trials was that of the Rev. Charles Voysey who, in 1871, lost his appeal and was deprived of his benefice. Voysey had, in effect, ceased to be Christian at all and was already propagating the views of pure theism, which he was afterwards destined to preach for many years in London from his own pulpit at the Theistic Church which he had established. By this time, heresy trials were becoming unfashionable and too many of the public at large were inclined to

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Twentieth Century Heretic

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

laugh or to sympathise with the heretic. Since those days, it has been much easier to use the increasing episcopal power and merely to squeeze out those of unpopular views. An unbeneficed clergyman enjoys few rights which the bishop cannot take away and the squeezing out of the Rev. J. M. Thompson of Magdalen College, Oxford, over half a century ago for his modernist view of the New Testament miracles set the seal to the later fashion. Squeezing out is much easier and more successful whether it be by Anglican bishops or by chapel deacons. The reader of Mark Rutherford will recall the frequent fate of the theologically or politically non-conforming in the democratic free churches!

Walter Gill

There are several viewpoints which arise directly out of the latter-day history of heresy. The Church of England stood in a peculiar position. It was state-established, a fact which enabled the broad churchmen to plead that it must be widely inclusive in its membership. Most of the heretics were defended by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, a lay body which owed no allegiance save to the law and which set out to include where legal inclusion was tolerable. It is not without interest that the recent ecclesiastical legislation has taken from the erring clergyman this court of appeal, so that future heretics could not appeal to its unsectarian safeguards. Heresy trials have become in large measure unfashionable and the state Church must take notice of the fact. But the sectarian bodies, such as the Methodists, are in stronger position and their limits are more clear-cut.

It might well be argued that a religious denomination stands for a specific position and is entitled to maintain this position against those who deny it in some measure. There is always an "outside" to which the dissenter may go. A political Conservative could not really feel aggrieved if his resignation from his party was caused because he had become an exponent of dialectical materialism. Such a view would be that of the Methodists who had expelled the Rev. Walter Gill. Of course, it has one fatal weakness in that it inhibits the Church from any growth, development or fundamental change of view after a certain fixed point at which the doctrines have consolidated. From the Roman Catholic standpoint in theology,

this is not a weakness but a strength. Yet it is a specific weakness in theological or ecclesiastical systems which allow some place for the Reformation doctrine of private judgment or for any conception whatever of a progressive revelation.

Bishop of Woolwich

The alternative view would lie among modernist members of various Churches who act upon its implications. The Church is a social organism which is the mouthpiece of a continuing revelation. It is entitled to reassess itself in the light of all new knowledge and, like Mr. Gill, to restate some such basic doctrine as that of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. A fundamental message and a final mysticism may be sought behind the various symbols and mythologies which the ages have created but which the present age may have outgrown, even including traditional symbolisms which describe the nature of God himself. If he is rightly understood, this is the position of the Bishop of Woolwich and his co-disciples. It has carried them far beyond the old neo-Unitarian theistic liberalism which marked the older forms of liberal Protestant belief from Professor Harnack to Bishop Barnes of Birmingham. There is implied a fundamental departure from history. In such a viewpoint, the place of the Church is that of a society of fellow-explorers using a transitory symbolic ritual to seek to get to the truth underlying it.

Begging the Question

The argument is attractive but once again exhibits fatal weaknesses. In accepting some mystical foundation, it begs the question with regard to the true nature of the universe and seems to chime badly out of accord with such writers as Bronowski and others who accept the standpoint of present-day physics. Whilst it provides a bond of union deeper than the outward symbolic differences of the sects, it could provide an argument for carrying on its plea into the differences between the various religions, a fatal blow where Christianity as a unique revelation is concerned. Its rejection of history is a rejection of historic Christianity and a departure from the whole traditional position of the Christian Church. Such a Church rapidly becomes a society of people who seem to have lost their way, a haven for muddled thinking and a place which has little part to play in the world of today. The fate at the present time of some of the minimal free religious movements, strong at the close of the last century, is a vivid illustration of the lack of appeal which must bedevil amorphous groups of this kind.

Decay

But the fate of the Rev. Walter Gill leads to reflections concerning the emergence of yet another valid viewpoint. It is that both orthodox and heretic are irrelevant to the neo-humanism which is becoming more and more marked in culture as the twentieth century speeds on its way. Christian orthodoxy is clearly dead for the vast majority. It has no sort of creative or formative place in shaping either their lives or their morality. Recent discussion of marriage and divorce, of family planning and the availability of contraceptive techniques to the young, of the reforms of the laws restricting abortion, are indicative of a secular society which increasingly forms its judgments upon utilitarian grounds. Indeed, Lord Devlin, whilst he wishes certain broad moral principles to be fortified by the law, has recently illustrated the point by enshrining his demands within a general statement that the society of today is secular in its concepts. The movements towards a utilitarian morality are indicative of the extent to which the old authoritarian sanctions of the theology have disappeared, a sure indication that the clear-cut theology which once existed in its own right is in a state of irredeemable decay.

On the other hand, the heretic who compromises with the theological background also seems to have little place within modern culture. A secular age which looks to scientific analysis for its ultimate sanctions is scarcely interested in seeking a refuge among Bultmann and the "demythologisers." It is possible for the freethinker to feel a great deal of sympathy with the honest heretic as he gropes his way towards the truth as he sees it, and as brickbats are hurled at him on every side. But he is still in a state of compromise. His position may be of interest or relevance to others who are still "within" and disturbed. Old associations have a tremendous pull, and those brought up within a religio-ecclesiastical tradition may find a clean break impossible. There may be much heart-searching, contradiction and swaying backwards and forwards before the break finally comes.

Milestone on the Way

But the difficulties and the interim positions adopted or defended will have little to offer to those for whom the break is already a fully established reality. The historic passage of Blanco White from Romanism to Anglicanism and then to Unitarianism or that of Francis Newman from Evangelicalism to Plymouth Brethrenism, to the Baptists and finally to a pure theism far to the left of Christianity, are of a complete and abiding interest to the student of human thought. But at no stage can those who have reached what is for them a final goal be expected to accept some position which is really only a milestone on the way. The Rev. Walter Gill is of considerable interest and relevance to the modernist still within the Methodist fold. But his heretical position is not of importance or significance to the humanist or freethinker who has long broken away and stands outside. He will merely be left wondering how long Mr. Gill, now a free man untrammelled by any form of ecclesiastical authority, will be satisfied with his present standpoint of modernist compromise. Will he seek a new association within an ecclesiastical atmosphere which he deems to be more free and only succeed in subjecting himself to further disappointment, an experience by no means unique? Or will he move on into a humanist position which is solely concerned with man's salvation of himself by his own efforts within the only world that he knows?

Certainly, THE FREETHINKER will find the case of Mr. Gill of some interest. It illustrates the passing of the traditional theology just as it illustrates the dissatisfaction which must be felt by an agile mind with the ecclesiastical leading-strings woven from thought-forms of the past. But it will also illustrate the need, in the name of intellectual clarity, for a vigorous freethinking and secular propaganda which shows that the whole detailed battle between orthodoxy and Christian heresy belongs to bygone generations and has no real or fundamental place in the emerging secular culture of the present day.

IMPISH

MR. KHRUSHCHEV, the *Daily Telegraph* informed us (26/6/64) had "derisively" invoked God when he appealed to his biggest supplier in Sweden for cheaper iron and steel prices. "If you continue to make such high-quality products and if God gives you sense enough to reduce your prices a bit, you can count on us as loyal customers for a long time to come," said the Soviet leader. But, he added, "You know I am a man with atheistic convictions. So when you hear me invoking God, you will understand how little faith I have in getting price reductions." Mr. Khrushchev seemed, as the *Telegraph* said, to be in an "impish mood."

A Theological Centenary

By F. A. RIDLEY

THIS YEAR is pre-eminently distinguished by the already widely publicised fact that it represents the quatercentenary of the birthday of Shakespeare. As the author of the Shakespearean canon was a writer of universal range, no doubt he has something valuable to say even upon religious issues; though speaking purely for myself, I am rather surprised that Freethinkers in particular have not devoted, I will not say less attention to Shakespeare, but more to another product of the year 1564, Galileo, who besides being hardly inferior in genius had—or so one might well be excused for thinking—more affinity with Humanism than had even the Stratford poet. But even the birth of these two giants did not exhaust the commemorative value of the year 1564, which also witnessed the death of John Calvin.

It is, of course, true that one always ought to be decidedly cautious in comparing a quasi-science like theology—scientific in form but fundamentally pre-scientific in substance—with bona fide sciences. However, one must surely judge people by their own standards and not by ours (a point of view which does not appear to commend itself to some critics of a recent article of mine on Newman). When judged by his intellectual powers and by his enormous contemporary and posthumous influence, Calvin was undoubtedly a great man, as was St. Augustine of Hippo before him and Cardinal Newman in more recent years. It would, in my submission, be both unhistorical and ungenerous to deny it. It is true that we are unlikely to see a Newman or a Calvin arise in the ranks of contemporary Christian theologians; at present we have to be content with South Bank! But then—for reasons so well known that it would be superfluous to dwell upon them—these are not any more the ages of faith, when theology reigned supreme as “the queen of the sciences.” One can in fact, probably define them more accurately as the dog-days of Christianity, as of supernatural religion in general.

John Calvin was a Frenchman by birth, and started as a lawyer, but soon became caught up in the theological controversies of the Reformation. In 1534, at the age of 25, he fled to the relatively free atmosphere of Switzerland where, the next year, he published at Basle, the first edition of his masterpiece, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Its influence was so great and so far-reaching, that it has been variously dubbed as the “Koran of the Reformation” and as the “revolutionaries’ handbook of a century of religious radicals.” So immediate was its influence that, by 1542 when Pope Paul III refounded the Roman Inquisition, Cardinal Caraffa (the later Pope Paul IV), the first Grand Inquisitor, gave orders to deal with special severity with Calvinists evidently already a name of dread to the Counter-Reformation.

In 1536, Calvin was invited to Geneva, then a town of some 16,000 inhabitants, where the French reformer remained for the rest of his life, and where he created that grim and inhuman regime which his personal disciple, John Knox, was later destined to introduce into Scotland, and his posthumous disciple, Oliver Cromwell, into England in the course of the following century. That “dictatorship of the saints” or “democratic theocracy” was amusingly satirised by Lord Macaulay. The Puritans, he said, “objected to bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.”

In Geneva, Calvin established a regime of Draconian

severity in which the smallest breaches of the moral law were punished with excessive severity. In 1553, there occurred the pitiless execution of the Spanish Unitarian doctor and scientist, Servetus, whom Calvin first denounced to the French Inquisition and then had burned alive in Geneva. The most that one can say in favour of Calvin’s behaviour in this disgraceful transaction, was that he did unsuccessfully plead for the substitution of the more humane mode of execution by decapitation for the horrible roasting alive on a slow fire.

Against this, one has to record that Calvin, like his fellow reformer, Luther, had started by condemning religious persecution. One of the famous theses that Luther originally nailed to the door of Wittenberg Church at the very commencement of the Reformation, laid down the then strange proposition that, “the Holy Spirit does not desire the death of heretics;” whilst Calvin had commenced his own literary career with a French translation of Seneca’s booklet, *De Clementia* (On Mercy), and definitely declared himself in favour of religious toleration. One cannot but reflect that had the original reformers only adhered to the initial standpoint, what an immense amount of human suffering would have been avoided.

The historical significance of John Calvin, however, was as a thinker and not as a man of action. His real importance lay not in his spartan Geneva regime, but in the revolution which he wrought in Christian theology and in the immense influence that Calvinistic ideas had during the century after his death upon contemporary radical movements in both church and state. That very able writer, the late Archibald Robertson, devoted a chapter to this theme in his perceptive book, *The Reformation*. Here, Robertson notes that, “Calvin approached his subject first and foremost as a theologian. He does not, like Luther or Zwingli, make contemporary abuses a handle for the assertion of general principles; he starts with general principles and works down to their practical application in life. He is singular among theologians in the rigour of his logic, in thrusting into the foreground anomalies which most divines leave in decent obscurity, and in stretching theology to a point from which no further advance is possible that does not strike at Christianity itself.”

Calvin’s basic tenet of Predestination which he describes himself as “the horrible decree,” was not actually invented by the Protestant reformer: it can be found (as Robertson goes on to point out), in the New Testament, particularly in the Pauline Epistle to the Romans where, however, it is not logically developed. St. Augustine formulated this doctrine more coherently, but as a Catholic bishop he was forced to modify God’s absolute power by granting an intermediary position to the Church. Calvin retained the Church in his system as an assembly of believers, but did not apparently grant it any intermediary position between God, who predestines and the individual man who is predestined.

Logically, it would appear that such a position makes both the Church and intercessory prayer superfluous, for if one is already predestined from all eternity, it is surely as useless as it is unnecessary to need the intervention of priests and/or sacraments. Indeed one might go even further: Calvinism is surely *de facto* atheism when pressed to its logical conclusion. For what is the point of praying

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This Believing World

So the Methodist Church has expelled one of its ministers for the shocking crime of heresy. The now ex-Rev. Walter Gill had the temerity to challenge on that great marvel of history, guaranteed by prophecy and the Precious Word of God—the Virgin Birth, and he was sacked for his impudent unbelief. It may be, of course, that Mr. Gill did not believe in miracles either, and he refused to acknowledge “our Lord” as the veritable and only Son of God as well—so what could an all-believing Church do?

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However, Mr. Gill was not subjected to the much greater dishonour of being completely expelled by “Bell, Book, and Candle,” that time-honoured method of excommunication still in use by the Roman Church to the greater glory of Almighty God, which at one time used to make even kings and emperors tremble, and which we regret to say only causes mocking laughter these days. How ironical it is though, to think that Dr. John Robinson retains his Church of England bishopric, while Mr. Gill has lost his Methodist ministership.

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As he landed in Summerland, the first person to greet Lord Beaverbrook was Hannen Swaffer, who immediately reported the fact to *Psychic News*. “I have seen the Beaver,” he said, “He is in very good condition. I will talk to him later.” This astounding message, which must give the friends of both the greatest comfort, came through a medium, Estelle Roberts, and the only feeling of regret we have is that Mr. Swaffer at the time was not accompanied by any of his many aristocratic friends there—Edward VII, Lord Northcliffe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and many others—to greet the Beaver on the landing stage.

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It should not be forgotten that Mr. Swaffer, when in this Vale of Tears was always meeting the departed spirits, most frequently Lord Northcliffe, who once “jokingly” told a medium at a seance that in Summerland he was producing *St. Peter's Gazette*. Northcliffe wanted Beaverbrook to go to a sitting with Dennis Bradley, then employing an American medium called Valiantine. Poor Valiantine was later caught in gross frauds, but this never made any difference to Swaffer. A medium was a medium, fraud or no fraud.

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Just for the record, it appears that Mr. John Huston, who is the American director of the £5 million film, *The Bible*, is not particularly religious himself, though he thinks the Bible is full of “truth” and good storytelling. On the other hand, Christopher Fry, the script writer, and Dine de Laurentiis, the producer, are “deeply devout.” We can hardly wait to see how Mr. Huston will show us God creating the Universe, galaxies and all. He has, we are told, “a fine contempt” for his predecessors in the field, and his own approach will be “very different indeed.” But will it produce converts? Or, what is far more important, the cash? The latter seems likely, the former less so.

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Methodist are greatly concerned with “the drift” from their Church, and are going to set up “Christian strongholds” in the centre of many towns. No doubt this will be just as successful as some of the other ways of combating apathy and downright unbelief, for their Church lost 8,500 members last year and appears to be frantically trying to stop the rot. Their idea is to appoint “an out-

standing preacher, a good pastor, a sociologist, and men and women expert in psychological techniques,” (*Daily Express*, July 4th) in these centres. What optimism! Is it not a fact that Methodism would have died years ago were it not for the handsome contributions by wealthy Methodists to keep it alive?

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged. £182 17s. 2d.

Pius John 23rd, £5 2s. 10d.; S. Clowes, 5s.; T. S. Plewinski, £3 9s. 10d.; A. J. Hewitt, 11s.; R. McGilliland, 6s.; R. Brownlee, £1 1s.; S. Ellam, 10s.; G. Foges, £1; A. G., 2s. 6d.; W. Craigie, 7s. 6d.; R. Tungate, £1; Mrs. McPherson, 10s.; V. G., 10s.; S. Ellis, £1; W. Aitkenhead, 3s.; O. Grubiak, £1 2s. 6d.; J. V., 2s. 6d.; R. S. Astbury, £1; T. H. Darlington, £1 1s.; S. Mills, £1 5s.; H. Etherington, £1; J. A., £1; A. Hiley, £1; H. W. Day, 7s. 6d.; T. O. B., Australia, £2; D. Hoyle, 5s.; O. A. P., 10s.; O. Kiltinen, £1; C. Jones, 5s.; W. Scarlett, £1; J. Wilson, £3. Total to date, July 3rd, 1964, £214 14s. 4d.

A THEOLOGICAL CENTENARY

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to a god who has already irrevocably (as Calvin explicitly taught), predestined your eternal lot for good or ill? God becomes superfluous, a mere dummy figure. It would accordingly, I submit, be correct to state that the “Christian atheism” of the present South Bank theologians was implied in the essential structure of Calvinist theology from the start. Rather ironical, that the theologian who burned Servetus for unitarianism, himself propounded a theology that leads logically to an at least *de facto* atheism!

Be that as it may, it is nevertheless quite certain that Calvin's more radical contemporaries did not view the Geneva reformer in that light. For the practical and even social and political influence of Calvinism during the century which followed his death was so great that one could relevantly compare it with the similarly vast revolutionary influence exercised by Karl Marx on both the theory and practice of the last century. For all the major upheavals in the century after Calvin's death in France, Scotland, Holland and England were inspired and usually led by Calvinists. John Knox, William the Silent, Oliver Cromwell, not to mention Calvin's own countrymen, the Huguenots, were ardent Calvinists, who unfalteringly believed that they and the causes they represented were divinely predestined to victory.

John Calvin was certainly a formidable and somewhat sinister figure. But his influence was so great and on the whole socially progressive enough to warrant a commemorative article.

A CATHOLIC COMPLAINT

Sir,

Contraception: I look forward to the day when, beneath a letter on this subject, I shall read: “This correspondence is now closed.”

You will then be able to devote more space to items of news such as, for example, the centenary of the Austin Friars of Hoxton.

H. FRANCIS VAUGHAN.

—letter in the *Catholic Herald* (3/7/64).

My God! did they overlook that?

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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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

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Richmond Community Centre), Thursday, July 23rd, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER, "Socialism or Religion—Which?"

Sutton Humanist Group (Red Cross House, 11 Park Hill, Carshalton Beeches), Saturday, July 18th, 7.30 p.m.: A speaker from Alcoholics Anonymous.

Notes and News

WE PRINT this week, an article on Cardinal Newman by our founder G. W. Foote, first published in THE FREETHINKER on August 17th, 1890, soon after Newman's death. This contemporary freethought assessment of the famous cardinal is of interest, we feel, in connection with recent correspondence.

WHAT EXACTLY is meant by "in the usual manner?" A friend who asked us this was referring to our brief comment last week on Archbishop Heenan's reply to John Grigg's criticism of the dual system in education. Some explanation, we agree, is called for. We were thinking particularly of Dr. Heenan's imputation of intolerance to Mr. Grigg, the shrugging-off of Mr. Grigg's arguments, and the inevitable talk of "the legitimate wishes of citizens." Perhaps the most interesting of Dr. Heenan's remarks, however, were his assurances that, "Members of Parliament are determined not to allow education ever again to become a religious battleground or a plank in Party politics;" and "Christians and Jews are equally resolved to protect denominational schools." How many MPs and Jews Dr. Heenan speaks for, we can't say. He certainly doesn't speak for all Christians. Indeed, one of the Rev. Raymond Efemey said in the very same issue of *The Observer* (5/7/64) that he supported Mr. Grigg's appeal for secularised state education.

MR. STEPHEN J. ABRAMS, an American research student at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, has been appointed to the Perrott-Warrick Studentship in psychical research at Trinity College, Cambridge, "the only post in the British academic world providing for full time investigation into extra-sensory perception" (*The Guardian*, 6/7/64). Mr. Abrams was a fellow in parapsychology at Duke University USA (where else!) in 1958 and 1959. But after a visit to Russian ESP research centres in 1962, he is now reported to be "particularly occupied with repeating Soviet experiments on the induction and termination of hypnosis by presumptively telepathic signals." We like that "presumptively."

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"BUT THE seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work . . ." the Commandment is strictly observed at the Hotel Deborah in Tel-Aviv, the world's largest kosher hotel, "a synagogue with bedrooms," as it has been called. But it required ingenuity, as *Time* pointed out (12/6/64) to run a modern hotel at a profit and "still provide for the 613 commandments Orthodox Jews must observe at all times." An Orthodox Jew cannot press a button on the Sabbath, so the lifts are preset to go up and down automatically all day long stopping at every floor. All food is cooked before Friday sundown and left to simmer through the night. Lights in the lobby are turned on and off automatically by electric clocks, but any light left on accidentally must burn through the night since switching off is forbidden. "Tearing toilet tissue is also forbidden by halacha," so on Friday afternoons maids put white baskets containing separate sheets of paper in all the bathrooms." No wonder Israel's youngsters are rejecting religion, as an article next week will show.

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"WE ARE the victims of a paraphernalia which is archaic, wasteful and expensive," said the Bishop of Woolwich at the Church Assembly at Westminster. This time, though, he was reading a speech by the Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Mervyn Stockwood, who couldn't be present. Dr. Stockwood said that most Church of England ceremonies could well be abolished and referred to a bishop's confirmation (preceding his enthronement) as "this curious charade" costing £205. The purpose of the ceremony of consecration was threefold, he added: "To ascertain that I was really Mervyn Stockwood, that I was born in wedlock, and that I was born free and not a serf" (*The Guardian*, 7/7/64). The speech was read in opposition to the Legal Officers' Fees Order 1964, which was, however, approved by a large majority.

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A "MYSTERIOUS" crater appeared near Charlton in Wiltshire last year, and Robert Randall caused quite a sensation at the time by declaring that it had been caused by a flying saucer. He was interviewed on TV, quoted in the press and generally, it seemed, treated seriously. All praise to *The People* (21/6/64) for debunking Mr. Randall and his foolish fancies. The paper also revealed, however, that Mr. Randall has lately been offering to provide the frequency of a radio link with the planet Uranus—as well as membership of the Ce-Fu-X Society—for a fee of £1. Mrs. Joan Nelstrop of Bramhall, Cheshire, Vice-President of the Cheshire Direct Investigation Group of Aerial Phenomena—another society interested in flying saucers and people from other planets—had sent her fee several months ago but had heard nothing—either from Mr. Randall or Uranus!

The Two Newman

By G. W. FOOTE

THE death of Cardinal Newman cannot have come as a surprise. A man of ninety holds a precarious tenure of existence. No "blind Fury" is needed to "slit the thin-spur life" with "abhorred shears." Death at such an age is rather the visitor sung by Whitman—

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

For all practical purposes Cardinal Newman had been dead for years. Though the sweet old man's presence was still dear to his friends, to the outer world he was an historic name. His work was long since finished, his books had become classics, and the public thought of him as the protagonist in an ancient battle. No one looked for anything more from his pen, his obituary was docketed in the offices of the daily papers, and except for his writings he was no longer reckoned as a living force.

Some things the newspapers could not help saying about such a man. They were not called upon to form a judgment of their own. There were accessible verdicts on Newman by very eminent writers. We hear, therefore, what is perfectly true, that he was a singularly attractive personality, a great scholar, and a magical master of English. For our own part, we are prepared to go still farther. We will assert that Newman is the purest stylist and the greatest theologian in our language. His perfect eloquence charmed his worst opponents; his subtlety of mind was in itself a fascination; and such was his persuasive power — so keen his dialectic, so consummate his marshalling of resources, so exquisitely urbane his manner — that a confirmed Atheist might almost regret the necessity of differing from him. We have often felt, even when dissenting from him most strongly, that we could kiss the hand that wielded the pen. "Here," we said to ourselves, "is one who is more than a Catholic, more than a theologian; one who has lived an intense inner life, who understands the human heart as few have understood it, who follows the subtlest workings of the human mind, who helps the reader to understand himself, who throws over every page the glamour of a lofty character as well as a capacious intellect."

Knowing Newman through and through, as far as it was possible without personal intercourse; studying his writings carefully as those of the greatest soldier in the Army of Faith; we could never share the distrust of his sincerity. He was a Catholic by temperament. Like Pascal, another profound intelligence, he saw there was no logical halting-place between Rome and Atheism. Follow reason absolutely, and faith dies; follow faith absolutely, and reason becomes its slave. Newman saw that no religious dogma has ever been able to resist the solvent power of the human mind. To conserve his faith, therefore, he was obliged to set limits to his intellect. Certain first principles were to be assumed. Reason did not, and could not, prove them; but once admitted, reason could be exercised in illustrating and defending them. When Newman flung himself at the feet of Father Dominic, the Passionist, and was received into the communion of Rome, he showed his conversion was a matter of temperament. The Father was greatly his inferior, but he represented the Catholic Church, and only within that Church could Newman find rest for his soul. Protestantism acknowledged in theory, though never in practice, the sovereignty of reason. Newman's nature constrained him to square practice with

theory. He would hold his faith, but hold it consistently. He told the Protestants, after his conversion, that "reason was the substance of their faith," and that "private judgment does but create opinions, and nothing more." What he required was certitude, and he found it (such as it was) in the Church of Rome. The proof of this is patent to any judicious reader, who perceives the exuberance, the spring, the glow of Newman's writings after he became a Catholic. His genius was depressed by Protestantism. He left it with long pain and travail, but, having left it, he felt a mighty relief.

Properly to understand the elder Newman we must couple his case with that of his brother Francis William. A generous view of both was given by Thackeray in *Pendennis*. The words are Thackeray's, though put into the mouth of Arthur Pendennis. He is answering the old question about truth.

I see it in this man who worships by act of Parliament, and is rewarded with a silk apron and five thousand a year; in that man, who, driven fatally by the remorseless logic of his creed, gives up everything, friends, fame, dearest ties, the closest vanities, the respect of an army of churchmen, the recognised position of a leader, and passes over, truth-impelled, to the enemy, in whose ranks he is ready to serve henceforth as a nameless private soldier. I see the truth in that man, as I do in his brother, whose logic drives him to quite a different conclusion, and who, after having passed a life in vain endeavours to reconcile an irreconcilable book, flings it at last down in despair, and declares, with tearful eyes, and hands up to heaven, his revolt and recantation. Thackeray was not exaggerating. John Henry Newman had nothing to gain, but everything to lose, from a worldly point of view, in going to Rome. For some time he did actually serve as a private soldier in the Catholic army, performing all the duties of a humble curate, and wasting his exquisite eloquence on illiterate and stupid congregations. Francis William Newman, on the other hand, was going through the bitter experiences recorded in his *Phases of Faith*. While his brother was moving from Protestantism to Catholicism, he was moving from Protestantism to Rationalism. Bit by bit his creed crumbled away. Doctrine after doctrine went, the divine claims of the Bible at length disappeared, and with them the "perfection" of Jesus. All that remained was a belief in God, and a somewhat faint belief in a future life. During this process he lost the "private friendship and acquaintance" of his brother, he was "cut off" from other members of his family, and dear friends fell away on every side. "My heart was ready to break," he writes: "I wished for a woman's soul, that I might weep in floods."

Both brothers were honest. They went their several ways, according to the logic of their first principles. The one gravitated naturally to Rome, the other as naturally to Rationalism, or, as it was then called, Liberalism. And what is Liberalism? "Liberalism," said Cardinal Newman, "is the mistake of subjecting to human judgment those revealed doctrines which are in their nature beyond and independent of it, and of claiming to determine on its grounds the truth and value of propositions which rest for their reception simply on the external authority of the Divine Word." This is from the *Apologia*. In the *Grammar of Assent* there is a remarkable passage, tracing the development of three Protestants; one becomes a Catholic, the second a Unitarian, the third an Atheist. The Catholic was entirely logical, and so was the Atheist. The Unitarian was half-logical. He let his reason play

upon the Scripture, but not upon the contents of Natural Religion. He retained his belief in God and a future life simply on grounds of faith.

Thus of three Protestants, one becomes a Catholic, a second a Unitarian, and a third an unbeliever: how is this? The first becomes a Catholic, because he assented, as a Protestant, to the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, with a real assent and a genuine conviction, and because this certitude, taking possession of his mind, led him on to welcome the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and of the Theotocos, till his Protestantism fell off from him, and he submitted himself to the Church. The second became a Unitarian, because, proceeding on the principle that Scripture was the rule of faith, and that a man's private judgment was its rule of interpretation, and finding that the doctrine of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds did not follow by logical necessity from the text of Scripture, he said to himself, "The word of God has been made of none effect by the traditions of men," and therefore nothing was left for him but to profess what he considered primitive Christianity and to become a Humanitarian. The third gradually subsided into infidelity, because he started with the Protestant dogma, cherished in the depths of his nature, that a priesthood was a corruption of the simplicity of the Gospel. First, then, he would protest against the sacrifice of the Mass; next he gave up baptismal regeneration and the sacramental principle; then he asked himself whether dogmas were not a restraint on Christian liberty as well as Sacraments; then came the question, What after all was the use of teachers of religion? Why should anyone stand between him and his Maker? After a time it struck him that this obvious question had to be answered by the Apostles, as well as by the Anglican clergy; so he came to the conclusion that the true and only revelation of God to man is that which is written on the heart. This did for a time, and he remained a Deist. But then it occurred to him that this inward moral law was there within the breast, whether there was a God or not, and that it was a roundabout way of enforcing that law to say that it came from God, and simply unnecessary, considering it carried with it its own sacred and sovereign authority, as our feelings instinctively testified; and when he turned to look at the physical world around him, he really did not see what scientific proof there was of the Being of God at all, and it seemed to him as if all things would go quite as well as at present without that hypothesis as with it; so he dropped it, and became a *purus putus* Atheist.

Francis Newman has verified this truth. Though still a Theist, he is constrained to admit that the proofs of God's existence are not what he once thought them. He can hardly be said to retain any *positive* belief in a future life. We gather from his later writings that he considers some form of Theism essential to human morality and elevation. But this is not judging according to evidence. It is in every respect an *act of faith*, as John Henry would have shown him.

Cardinal Newman dreaded Atheism, but he never argued against it. He knew that was hopeless. His controversial writings were addressed to Protestants. He was always pointing out the intellectual unsoundness of their basis. Reason was their boast, and Newman told them plainly that reason was unable to find half their doctrines in the Bible, that reason affords no proper evidence of a future state, and that the very existence of God could not be rationally proved so as to produce a conviction. He admitted that the "unaided reason," if "correctly exercised," led to these beliefs; but unaided reason had a general tendency to exercise itself *incorrectly*; and considering the faculty of reason "actually and historically," it had nearly always led to "simple unbelief in matters of religion." Thus, when Christ came, religious knowledge was "all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active and had had a career." And at present, outside the Catholic Church, things are tending rapidly to "atheism in one shape or other."

Here, then, is the reason why many Atheists complained that Cardinal Newman was not in contact with modern thought. He had nothing to say about Darwin

and evolution, and so forth; his polemic was antediluvian. The complaint was excusable, but it overlooked two important facts. First modern science has invented no new *argument* against Theism, and Newman was perfectly familiar with the old ones. Secondly, if Darwinism has triumphed in science, Catholicism is still living, and seems likely to live. It is as the logical, uncompromising, and infinitely dexterous defender of this citadel of superstition that Newman is worthy of study by those who are engaged in its attack; his other qualities being chiefly interesting to the lovers of literature and psychology. And if the Atheists who study Newman are struck by his saintliness, if they find that the champion of superstition is terribly strong and adroit, it will be a double lesson to them—first, in human sympathy, and secondly, in the perfecting of their own weapons and methods of warfare.

Some Notes on Unitarianism

By H. CUTNER

AN aphorism current in Freethought circles when I first joined was that Unitarianism was a kind of "halfway house to Freethought." Naturally, I subscribed to it—though quite unthinkingly. It was the opinion of my betters, and who was I to question their opinion?

Years later, I began to have doubts, though I did not bother very much about it; for, as far as I was concerned, Freethought criticised the God idea thoroughly in its criticism of Christianity, and there was no reason to bother about Unitarianism. Whatever else we thought of it, Unitarianism really was superior to Christianity because it had never been a persecuting religion.

But what exactly does Unitarianism mean? If one thinks about it carefully, it will be found under many names—Deism, Theism, Islam, and Judaism, among others. Roughly speaking, it simply means belief in one God, in contradistinction to Christianity or Hinduism, which believes in three Gods, or a three-in-one God. And it is not an unfair question to ask—why is it better to believe in one God than in three, or three-in-one, or three hundred, or even three thousand? It is *supposed* to be better philosophically and ethically, but I have never discovered why. Both Judaism and Islam make great play that their belief in one God is far superior to the Pagan belief in a multiplicity of Gods—but surely belief in one God or many is virtually the same folly?

The Deism of Thomas Paine is almost pure Unitarianism, and only differs from Theism or Judaism or even Islam in a few terms of reference. Paine's God performs no miracles—in the Biblical sense—it is true, but his fervent description of the God of Nature "creating" the Universe always seemed a miracle to me greater than all the other miracles put together. Deism in fact is, as far as "creation" goes, like Judaism. Putting it bluntly like that also describes the position of Unitarianism, for though Unitarians do not believe in the Bible "as divinely inspired and infallible," they do believe in the Bible God. As Karl M. Chworowsky, the writer of the article, "What is a Unitarian?" in *Religions of America* (1955) says—and he is an "authority" on the subject—they *like* to be called "Christians," believing as they do in the religion of "the real human Jesus of the Gospels." Not for them are there any doubts about the "living" Jesus, even if he is not still actually living in the flesh.

Moreover, the "Scriptures occupy a position of high esteem among Unitarians," and a Unitarian service usually "includes a reading or a sermon from Holy Writ." Thus, even if the Bible is not divinely inspired and infallible," it is, according to Mr. Chworowsky, "Holy

writ," which is what many Christians would also heartily subscribe to.

Jesus is for Unitarians "the great Galilean," and "one of the rarest personalities that have walked among men"—a description which Renan would have agreed with. But they "stubbornly refuse" to make him a God. Strange, I stubbornly refuse to make him a man, for he is undoubtedly a God.

In any case, says Mr. Chworowsky, "Unitarians worship God as earnestly and reverently as those of any other faith or Church." I thoroughly believe it. In fact, the most religious of all the parsons I have met have been Unitarians.

Do they believe in salvation? Certainly—in "salvation by character" whatever that is, for I haven't the slightest idea. And they believe in baptism as "an act of dedication." As for Communion, Unitarians claim it is "symbolic," but they like it because "it is intended to remind the participants of the Last Supper." Sharing bread and wine is "in solemn fellowship of reverent memory and devotion." It is even more than that. Communion "brings back the inspiring image of him whose life was devoted to the establishment of peace and good will on earth." Even if you can prove it was nothing of the kind—for Jesus himself said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. 10, 34)—that would not shake the religious faith of a Unitarian. Obviously, Jesus meant the very opposite of what he said so clearly here.

However, Unitarians do not believe in the Christian heaven and hell—in eternal bliss in the one, and eternal torture in the other. As for immortality, they appear to differ about it like "traditional Judaism and Christianity" (though I have always thought Jews do not believe in immortality). Anyway, "life goes on" according to "God's eternal way"—which is quite as obscure as most things in Paul. Naturally, Unitarians believe in prayer which they like to call "meditation" or "aspiration;" but, thank heaven, they do not believe in praying "in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." But why do they reverently think that just praying to one God alone is not just as silly?

When you come to analyse the actual beliefs of Unitarians, you will find there is precious little difference from those of other religions. For belief in a God is sheer superstition, and the great count against Unitarianism is that it has *perpetuated* this belief in the past, and will do so as far as it can in the future.

Unitarians personally may well be the salt of the earth but their beliefs, their faith, cannot stand analysis in the light of modern science. And one day it will disappear like all other religions.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE FRANCO ARMS DEAL

Government spokesmen are attempting to make political capital out of what has turned out to be, the loss of financial capital. Let Franco go begging elsewhere! Just as he did to Hitler and Mussolini.

It has been said also, that it is highly doubtful that Franco's ships would fire on the population. Perhaps they have forgotten the bombardment of Barcelona, Almeria and other towns by ships supplied once to Franco by Germany and Italy.

Some people believe that Franco has changed. This is just a lot of wishful thinking! The murder of Grimau, Granado and Delgado; the constant persecution of workers and intellectuals; those who are in prison for political reasons; the outgoing of thousands of Spaniards to find better life abroad; and the thousands of us in exile, are all proof of the "changes" of the regime.

No amount of talk can deny the fact that arms to a fascist state will only strengthen it militarily, against the people of Spain.

We are sure that the Trade Unions and people of France, the USA or any other country would be equally opposed to the manufacturing and export of arms for a fascist regime as the British Labour movement is.

A. ROA, Secretary.

Liaison Committee, National Federation of Labour of Spain in Exile.

AS SAFE AS THE BANK OF ENGLAND . . . ?

I read recently that the Bank of England has contributed a considerable sum to the cleaning of St. Paul's Cathedral, and I have waited in vain to read healthy protests. For one cannot believe that authority, which has permitted the tragically un-inspired Barbican scheme, is seriously interested in architecture; and one can only presume that the contribution was granted on sentimental and religious grounds. But surely the Bank is now nationalised, and by what right does the Bank give our money to religious charities?

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

P.S. The other night I found myself in "The Shakespeare" pub, a creation of the architect of the Barbican scheme. The only "character touch" the architect seems to have been able to think up is a bust of The Bard in each bar. Otherwise the place struck me as chilling. And what can one say of the skyline of the building in which the pub is sited, and the ungainly use of pillars? It would be happier for the cathedral as architecture if any funds collected from legitimate sources were employed to pull down the Barbican buildings.

THE PROBLEM OF LEISURE

I felt as though I had been waiting all my life in discomfort, hunger and weariness. Suddenly my time came and I was sent to Heaven. Then I saw light, and it was revealed to me that the local Authority had tackled the problem of what to do with unoccupied time an Eternity ago.

He had provided a big open space with blue sky and white clouds and lots of wings and things. There were Angels with pretty long hair and they had musical instruments to strum and blow. Suddenly a great crowd appeared, worshipping and shouting Hosannas and screaming with joy, and I knew that they had been sent like me, for they were beside themselves.

Then the din woke me up, and I was at London Airport where a Pop Group was being greeted by its Fans.

ISOBEL GRAHAMIE.

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