

The Freethinker

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QUITE RECENTLY, two entirely diverse books were published at about the same time and both should be of the greatest interest to Freethinkers and Humanists generally. In the *Future of the Law*, Dr. D. C. M. Yardley, the Oxford jurist, discusses the existing law, its possible reform where such may appear to be desirable, and an interweaving of the questions involved with the life of the ordinary citizen. It is a work which will be of the highest interest to the professional lawyer, for it enters into the various ramifications of the legal system. But it should also be read by the ordinary man who is concerned with the structure of the system within which he lives. Dr. Yardley does not delve into religious or metaphysical issues, yet his general approach must lead inevitably to a conclusion that, where social behaviour is of a type serious and specific enough to demand more than public opinion for its sanctions, it becomes associated with either the common or statute law, and that law is therefore concerned with issues of social behaviour which raise in themselves moral questions.

It is interesting to notice the rationalistic and utilitarian manner in which Dr. Yardley approaches possible questions of reform and the implicit suggestion that a satisfactory social structure could be reached, so far as the existing generation be concerned, along the line of specific reforms brought about by such an approach. One traces in Dr. Yardley the high note of a jurist of an empirical school which has evolved from the days of Blackstone and Bentham, but one notices nothing of a spirit of "Thus saith the Lord" or of an attempt to invoke any power higher than that of social utility and personal responsibility.

The other work recently published is the *Mystery of Oxford Group Movement* by Tom Driberg, MP, where, in dealing with a movement claiming to concern itself with the moralities of social responsibility, Mr. Driberg subjects it to an exposure such as has overtaken few religious movements in the present age. The idol has indeed feet of clay, and proud claims to "absolute honesty" reveal a tendency to deceit and to misrepresentation which would be considered disgraceful in an ordinary secular environment. Buchmanism is not alone among the religious movements of history allowing its enthusiasm to draw cheques upon the bank of faith which only too often run the risk of being marked "No account"!

Much of the story which Mr. Driberg has to tell will already be known. Frank Buchman was an obscure Lutheran pastor in America. He seems early to have shown a distaste for humdrum parochial work and his first enterprise was along the lines of running some sort of denominational settlement-house. This met with disaster, possibly through the obtuseness of the governing body and possibly also through the sheer maladministration of the warden. But, whatever the case, Buchman resigned in a fury and came to England. He had already dabbled in various evangelistic enterprises in several parts of the world. It is

not easy to track down his career step by step for, among other reasons, his biography in *Who's Who* was varied from year to year and contained some entries which, as A. P. Herbert was able to show, were merely untrue. For example, Buchman never studied — as he claimed — at Cambridge University. He underwent some form of mystical conversion whilst attending the well-known annual evangelical convention at Keswick and, over the years,

became the founder of the First Century Christian Fellowship. Never modest in his claims, Buchman was quite ready to believe that he alone was marked down to lead Christianity back to its pristine purity. It was this movement which attracted a rather adolescent

undergraduate type and later evolved into the Oxford Group Movement having, as A. P. Herbert said, about as much to do with the University of Oxford as Eiffel Tower lemonade has to do with the city of Paris. At this stage, the movement was definitely an essay in evangelistic Protestantism but, in 1938, it transformed itself into the Moral Re-Armament Movement. Its role is rather that of an ideology nowadays, and it claims to influence lives far beyond the Christian confines. Of recent years, it has been extremely active as part of the anti-Communist front and its associations with the "cold war" of John Foster Dulles and the Pentagon are there for all to see. At the same time, it does not accept that this is a mere secular and alternative ideology. Its claims are based on a semi-theological belief in absolute moral standards.

Confession

A psychological study of Buchman himself would be of interest and possibly the time has come when it should be written. He was essentially an extrovert exhibitionist with a power-father complex. In some ways, this is reflected by his constant efforts at social climbing and the vulgar tuft-hunting with which he sought to secure well-known names and the presence of the great. Mr. Driberg has an amusing story of a tea-party which Buchman gave for Queen Marie of Roumania, a somewhat minor royalty. Always a snob, he acquired and never lost the gentle art of name-dropping. His meetings included the notorious cultus of public sin-sharing. One person after another got up and testified to their previous sins and shortcomings, a ritual practice which was decidedly exciting for the rest of the audience. Buchman himself was an adept at getting the ritual under way. The whole background suggests the tremendous extrovert who was given to exposing in public for general admiration his innermost self. It is impossible to avoid speculating as to the general results of this behaviour. Moved by emotion and atmosphere, devotees would make the most startling of confessions. Once they had done so, they had put themselves in the power of the somewhat nebulous organisation to which they had attached themselves. There must have been many who did so, only to regret it bitterly next morning when the excitement had worn off and the sin-sharer of last night realised that he had made an exhibition of himself in

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Law, Morals and MRA

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

public. It is noteworthy that the great safeguard of the confessional in the Catholic Church, the seal of confession, was entirely absent and that the protection of secrecy was lacking. One wonders how many cases there have been of people who had cause to regret in later life some shortcoming of the past indiscreetly shared in public.

God-guided Dictatorship

Following Buchman's teaching over the years, the movement claims that God speaks to the individual in his "quiet time" and guides him into right courses of action. The price to be paid for a God-guided life is utter surrender to God. So far, there is not any very marked difference between this teaching and that of a hundred other evangelical sects. But, across the canvas is the shadow of Buchman. The leader's guidance was never wrong to his followers. It was the God-guided leader who directed their courses and mapped out their affairs. In fact, many lives were blighted or damaged by this conception of individual guidance. It is impossible to say how such a movement was financed. Buchman threw his house-parties at the best hotels and lived on a scale which suggested that he stood high among income-brackets. His claim that God is a millionaire was the sort of shrugging-off answer which would scarcely have satisfied a court of law. Certainly, the nebulous character of the organisation and its lack of proper financial statements were to be commented upon in 1939 by Mr. Justice Bennett in the Chancery Division. During the inter-war years, the ubiquitous Buchman was here, there and everywhere spreading his gospel of brotherly love. Mr. Driberg gives excellent grounds for thinking that, whatever his present-day followers may say, he did praise Hitler as late as 1936 and that he did speak words of praise for Himmler. Indeed, it would appear as if Buchman found his natural home in totalitarian fascism. It is after all, as Kingsley Martin pointed out at the time, a short step from God-guided dictatorship to a dictatorship of a far more secular kind.

Unsubstantial Claims

With the war, several of Buchman's leading supporters created a bad image by a rapid migration to the still neutral United States of America. At home, there was much criticism of the manner in which others attempted to escape conscription into the war-effort. Because he would not countenance the claim, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Bevin, was made the subject of typical Buchmanite abuse. Since the war, the movement has been notorious for certain aspects of its behaviour. Vast claims, unsubstantiated by the facts, have been made for the manner in which a revolution has been stopped here, a Communist dictatorship overthrown there, or an industrial dispute healed in some third place. Of course, it has all been done by the old technique of God-guided "life-changing". Reference must be made to the well-stored pages of Mr. Driberg to substantiate these statements as also to particularise the charge that, having put large-scale advertisements into various national newspapers paid for at the ordinary rates, the wily followers of Buchman were not above later quoting them as the editorial opinions of the paper in question.

Latterly, there has been much Buchmanite attention to the question of sexual conduct and much parade of the denunciation of promiscuity and the rest by the Buchmanite Dr. Claxton of the British Medical Association. It must come as a shock to the ordinary, rather naive reader to learn how open to criticism are both Dr. Claxton's statements and his statistics. Certainly, the sexual problems of the day are not met by the guided and the changed in any sober spirit of research and analysis. It is interesting to contrast in this respect the quiet legalistic approach which Dr. Yardley applies to problems where

the law takes cognisance of sexual conduct with the un-scholarly hysteria of the *New Morality* by Arnold Lunan and Garth Lean, a work which has been visited very strongly with Moral Re-Armament approval. Above all, the post-war years have been devoted to a crusade against Communism and, with it, a denunciation of any social or political approach which refuses to adopt the attitudes of Dulles and the Pentagon. Many in England were shocked by the James Bondish exposures of Communism which appeared monthly in the *World Intelligence Digest*, edited by the right-wing propagandist, De Courcy, who has since been sent to prison for fraud. But De Courcy, even in his most far-reaching flights concerning the red terror, could still have learned from the followers of the ubiquitous Frank.

Absolutes

All of this makes a very curious picture of absolute honesty and absolute purity, or of the moral claims made by Mr. Peter Howard in a series of works starting with *Innocent Men* and his own "changing" from Beaverbrook journalism. It leaves a feeling that the movement is sticky, slimy and unhealthy and that on general grounds the ordinary decent citizen would be wise to have nothing to do with it. But one of the nastiest charges made by Mr. Driberg is that of the manner in which a powerful movement, which has collected itself a certain number of people in key positions, will deal with critics or opponents. The smear-tactic is ever at hand; slander or the rumour of which it is not possible to trace the source are not far round the corner. The critic may be written off as a homosexual who is shamed by the demand for absolute purity. A suggestion may be made that absolute honesty evades him and that he has always been a critic, thus shrugging off the need to consider his criticisms. Of course, it is also always possible to allege that the opponent is a "Communist"; it is less than likely that any sober critic of MRA would adopt the Dulles-Pentagon line which would seem to be the Buchmanite political orthodoxy. Failure to convert England can always be put down to the fact that the country is rotten with Communism. Wild criticisms of opponents have come from religious fanatics before but these of the MRA would seem to take frequently a personal form. One can only hope that it may be possible to trace some of them to their provable roots and that the perpetrators may find themselves mulcted in heavy damages.

Such is the nemesis of a movement claiming absolutes in morality, and screaming hysterically to defend extreme right-wing courses where morality becomes a personal piety shaped and guided by the God-given instructions mediated through the movement itself. One turns with a sigh of relief back to one's law studies and picks up again the work of Dr. Yardley. The distinguished jurist offers no absolutes. There is no promise that God will guide changed lives and lead them to moral heights. The learned author merely considers the legal structure and the place of the citizen within it. But, with Mr. Driberg's revelations in mind, a perusal of his book does underline the point that deepening moral insights do in fact arise from the work of the utilitarian lawyer, with his concern for social order and for the law as the protector of human freedom. The reader should be thankful that English social life is likely to develop increasingly along these secularised moral lines, that it will look with amused contempt upon the fanatics who claim the guidance of unprovable moral absolutes, and that it is as likely to refuse God-guided dictators with the same decisiveness which led it to turn its back upon Hitlerite methods just at the moment a generation ago that the God-guided Dr. Buchman was praising the Fuhrer and regarding him as a deliverer.

Christianity and The Exclusives

By H. CUTNER

I AM SORRY TO SAY that until recently I knew very little about the Christian sect known as the Plymouth Brethren. I cannot remember if any account of them has ever appeared in these pages, and I have never been able to find any pamphlets or books written by Plymouth Brethren—or if I have seen one, it certainly did not seem to me to be worth bothering about.

The publicity given in all our national papers to the activities of the "Exclusives", as they like to call themselves made me look into their history, and a most interesting one I have found it. Its principal founder was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a brilliant controversialist and linguist, and a thorough believer in his own conception of Christian theology. He bitterly attacked every writer who did not believe in the divine origin of Christianity, and, as far as I can judge, was a firm believer in God sitting on a cloud in Heaven with Jesus at his side. Every word in the Authorised Version was true though Darby re-translated the whole of the Bible. I regret that I have never seen a copy of his translations.

F. W. Newman's *Phases of Faith* received a breathless attack from Darby in 1852, entitled *The Irrationalism of Infidelity*; he also attacked the "Puseyites" as they were then called (now known as extreme Anglo-Catholics), replied to *Essays and Reviews* and to Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, and attacked Roman Catholicism in general—which in any case was a favourite occupation of Protestants during most of the nineteenth century. Altogether, Darby was in the thick of the fight for Christianity, yet he is hardly ever mentioned in works dealing with the history of Christianity. Even John M. Robertson has never, as far as I know, dealt with him and his work. But the sect appears to have always flourished in its own small way, and seems to have always had "Exclusives" as strict and as uncompromising as we see today under the leadership of Big Jim Taylor.

According to Marshall Pugh in the *Daily Mail* (July 28th), Taylor's is not the Gospel of Love which we have all inherited from gentle Jesus meek and mild, but a Gospel of Hate. Our newspapers have been full of news of broken homes and marriages, all due to Big Jim. Inspired by "the vision of Heaven" Brother James has created "a petty hell," Mr. Pugh says. Whether this is true in Taylor's case or not, the "petty hell" he has inspired has almost always been one of the objectives of the Plymouth Brethren. They have always been "exclusive," almost to the point of ostracising everybody who does not believe as they do. This has not always been possible, but they have done their best. And in any case, if this is, as they believe, the will of God and Jesus, they gladly accept the holy burden.

Mr. Pugh states that through the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren in general and of Taylor in particular, "homes have been broken, children separated from their parents, suicides believed brought about by the demands of this life-denying belief. A village grocer will no longer deliver to a family which has lost the way . . ." and so on. Quite a catalogue of infamous conduct, all due to the "mistaken" beliefs of a bunch of Exclusives who call themselves Christians and are not! But is this true?

Let us go to the fountain head of true Christianity, the Gospels, and see what gentle Jesus himself has said. For Mr. Pugh and indeed all Christians, Holy Writ is the Precious Word guaranteed by God, and all written down

through Inspiration. What therefore did Jesus himself say?

Here are his own words as becomes a God and the only Son of God. You will find them in Luke 12, 53 and Matthew 10, 35 :—

The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law.

For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

These famous (or infamous) sayings of Jesus are never, or very rarely, quoted by his adorers. I have never heard the hundreds of priests, parsons, and bishops who have appeared on TV and radio ever refer to them, any more than to that famous teaching which I have sometimes quoted (often only in part) in this journal. Here it is :—

If any man comes to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14, 26).

And let me quote another gem—supporting Jesus as the greatest Prince of Peace that ever lived :—

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. (Luke 12, 51).

Of course, if a Christian has to face these texts, he has a perfectly good explanation. He will angrily complain that they have been torn out of their context, or they appear only in a forged Protestant or infidel Bible, or they mean exactly the opposite, or it's perfectly useless to argue with a blatant Atheist. Gentle Jesus is meek and mild, and that is universally recognised. But any unbiased reader will see how well Big Jim Taylor has assessed the true teachings of Jesus, and how "our Lord" supports him and the Exclusives to the utmost.

Naturally, some of our bishops are infuriated against him. Dr. Stockwood calls his campaign for Jesus "a mixture of tosh, intolerance and sadism" (*Daily Sketch*, August 3rd) while the Bishop of London — who ought to know the Gospel — considers "the views of the Exclusive Brethren quite inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ." This proves how little these people know their own Holy Writ. Or perhaps they can talk like this because they know full well the average Christian does not know his Bible at all.

Both bishops talk a lot about marriage and religious tolerance and the awful consequences of "a caricature of Christianity" — as if even an outright unbeliever could "caricature" it as "our blessed Lord" has done in the passages I have quoted. No, in the work and teaching of the Plymouth Brethren and the sect's "off-branch," the Exclusives, we have genuine followers of the Christianity which the earliest Christians certainly accepted, and which gave them the reputation of being, as some Roman historians have recorded, "enemies of the human race." The modern Christian Churches, even if they are preaching a mild and pink Christianity, have at last become ashamed of much that Jesus taught, and hate to support any of their sects who refuse to become civilised.

WITHOUT COMMENT

The Church has never ceased to preached justice, peace, and brotherly love. Those who look at the Church in a sinister manner do so because they do not know her, or know her only in the light of the calumnies and hatred of her enemies.

—*The Faith*, Malta (September, 1964).

This Believing World

The one thing which nearly all parties in this 1964 election have avoided like poison is the question (or problem) of religion. Naturally, most of the leaders are professing Christians, but then they nearly always were. Yet early this century, the "Cowper-Temple Clause" was as hotly debated as nuclear disarmament is these days.

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To the disgust of all good Christians W. F. Cowper-Temple, who was Education Minister at the time, opposed compulsory religious education, and he did his best to substitute for it a "conscience" clause. Any scholar could withdraw from a religious class, and only "non-denominational" teaching was to be given. This meant that "plain" Bible teaching was to be given in public elementary schools—and naturally the Churches were furious. Alas, in these much more secular days, few really care two hoots about "doctrinal" religious education and the three main parties in this election all appear to have left the question of religion out of any discussion. It no longer matters.

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But if it is now a dead duck in politics, it is by no means dead elsewhere. The Seventh Day Adventists are busily advertising their wares (*Daily Express* October 2nd) and making a big splash of the undoubted fact that Jesus Christ created the world, that the Biblical Sabbath must be kept, and that there is no doubt whatever of the "personal return" of "our Lord". Moreover, the Adventists base their faith "wholly on the Bible", a pious recommendation which should ensure a huge rush of converts. Finally, there will be a nation-wide "Crusade for Christ" with a hundred ministers in charge.

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Not to be outdone the Christadelphians are also on the warpath (*Daily Mail* October 3rd) with a pathetic plea for "one Bible", but why "so many Churches?" If you want a "soberly reasoned" and "thoroughly Biblical review" of religious problems and failures, you can get an unanswerable proof that only the Christadelphians are right, and everybody else hopelessly wrong from them direct. Now, why did not Jesus himself foresee all the "errors", and make his religion foolproof? We give it up.

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But we must not forget Joanna Southcott the Mother of a new Messiah (who never came) whose followers still from time to time implore twelve bishops to open her precious box, which, it is claimed, is still in existence and unopened. Advertisements regularly appear to tell us that all the tribulations we suffer are due to the box remaining closed; and the bishops refuse to listen. Incidentally, authentic boxes have been opened in the past, but their contents, rabbit feet and naughty novels, were never considered either edifying or authentic. And yet Joanna still lives on.

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One can gather from Mr. Christopher Hollis's account of what is happening in the Vatican Council (*The Observer*, September 27th) that, whatever the bishops may think, the Curia still hates freedom of religious belief. Cardinal Ottaviani, for example, argued "that it was not lawful to admit freedom to spread a religion when this might harm the unity of a Roman Catholic nation". It might also harm the Roman Catholic religion.

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We have never been quite sure whether William Joyce, known as Lord Haw-Haw throughout the late war, hated England more, or only as much as his great Fuhrer; but his reputation as a supreme renegade and traitor has never been higher since the publication of his biography recently.

In the extract given by the *Sunday Express* (October 4th) we learn, however, that though he was not a practising Catholic, he looked upon the Catholic Church as "the great and holy Church", and that for him "God was the supreme reality".

FALLACIOUS CONCEPTS

WHEN we talk of a "concept of God" as "transcendent", we commit theological fallacies, leading necessarily into a muddle. "God" is never a proper name in the Bible, and "concept of Jack" (a proper name) is an absurdity. Properly a concept is of a class name like "god", meaning its definition, namely "a mythical being of the highest order with a proper name", "Transcendent", when stripped to its Latin sense, means "climbing over", but no climbing over can logically lead to anything but further space-time relations. So "transcendent", supposed to be what it is not, becomes a self-contradiction, and as such can have no referent at all. That is the absolute end to the whole of the theologian's argument. That is the proper verifiability principle: not to be in space-time means not to be at all; or: either somewhere or nowhere.

The only correct way to analyse the meaning of "god" in the Hebrew-Christian-Muslim mythology is to check the original terms. The proper name of the god of Israel and of "Jesus" is Yahweh (repeated about 7,000 times). But the Hebrews had no single word to refer to what the English call gods. They had the proper names of what the English call gods, goddesses, angels, demons, devils, monsters, souls, kings, judges, but they referred to them all by one word "elohim", which is derived from "el" having the sense power, mighty one.

To the Jewish Christian, Yahweh, Yahweh's Breath and the Messianic King such as "Jesus", were all "elohim", the mighty ones, whereas to us the first is a god, the second a personification of respiration, and the third a heavenly hero like Hercules.

But as soon as we leave the Hebrew text confusion starts. The Greek Septuagint never reproduces Yahweh, but replaces it by *Kyrios* (lord) or by *theos* (the god), both with articles, so that "the mighty Yahweh" of the Hebrew becomes "the lord god". The same taboo on the four letter word YHWH is kept in the Greek New Testament.

When Islam arose, it took its formula "There is no god but the god" (*la ilah illa al'lah*) straight from the Hebrew Bible, both therefore referring to Yahweh. "Allah" is not a proper name but "the god", i.e. of the Old Testament prophets. It is an illusion that Islam has a different god from the Christians.

When the Vulgate was translated into English, only "the Lord" (with the article) and "God" (without the article) were to be seen everywhere in the texts, and the muddle (except in the American Standard Version) was never corrected.

The term "the god" (no absurd capital!) is always to be analysed with respect to its particular religion, because there exists no one general religion, but only particular religions; and similarly there exists no one general god, but only dozens of proper names of particular gods.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS

CATHOLICS ACCUSED OF SAME SINS AS COMMUNISTS

THE United Church of Canada has accused the Roman Catholic Church of committing the same sins as Communism, according to the *Toronto Evening Telegram*.

The charge was contained in a report by the committee of international affairs to the United Church's 21st General Council meeting at St. John's, Newfoundland.

"The Catholic Church, especially in Latin countries, has often committed the very sins for which it is critical of Communist countries in respect to the freedom of their people", the report said, and it maintained that Cuban dictator Fidel Castro might never have succeeded in his revolution if Roman Catholics in Cuba had been helped to maturity by their Church.

The Catholic Church, the report suggested, depends too much on top-level diplomatic manoeuvres when it should be stressing the principles of Christianity.

Referring to the Vatican's diplomatic services, the report added: "These are not just the vestigial trappings of former pomp and power, but the Catholic Church still thinks in terms of cordats".

But, the report said, the time is coming when the Vatican will cease its diplomatic agreements and "depend far more on its spiritual power".

Catholic laymen in every country eventually will be forced to accept more personal political responsibilities and depend less on their bishop working through Vatican channels.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (Tie 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 J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: 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

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, October 18th, 6.45 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "The Jesus of History and Christ of Theology".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 18th, 6.30 p.m.: DIANA PURCELL, "Answering Readers' Queries".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 18th, 7.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Mods and Gods".

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Community Centre, Sheen Road, Richmond), Friday, October 16th, 8 p.m.: R. PERCHERON, "The Buddhist Path—A General View".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 18th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, "The Dilemma of the Churches".

Tuesday, October 20th, 7.30 p.m.: GUILFOYLE WILLIAMS, "Science Survival and Religious Sentiment".

Sutton Humanist Group (Red Cross House, Park Hill). Saturday, October 17th, 7.15 p.m.: MRS. ROTHSCHILD, "A Visit to Sarawak". (Illustrated).

Notes and News

POPE PAUL, we note, has reaffirmed one of the most distasteful teachings of his mentor, Pope Pius XII, that it is unlawful to sacrifice the life of an unborn child to save the life of the mother. "Innocent human life, no matter what its condition may be, is from the moment of its existence to be secure from every direct voluntary attack", the Pope said when speaking to members of the New England Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society (*The Glasgow Herald*, 5/10/64). And this "fundamental right" was "valid for the life of the child, just as it is valid for the life of the mother". If it was impossible to save both the mother and the child, Pope Pius had said in 1951, nothing remains "but to bow respectfully before the laws of nature and the dispositions of divine providence". Respectfully indeed!

BECAUSE—as *The Montreal Star* remarked on September 22nd—Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Bergsma "are honest people they have twice been denied the Canadian citizenship that they seek". The Bergsmas, who arrived in Canada from Holland ten years ago, were refused citizenship by Judge W. W. Leach of Cayuga County Court when they told him that they had no religion, attended no church, and did not believe there was a God. The Bill of Rights provides for freedom of religious belief, the courts recognise that an Atheist may affirm, rather than swear but that, apparently isn't good enough, said the *Star*. Yet the Bergsmas are the honest type we need, even though their philosophy is not that of the majority".

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ATHEISM, was not a problem in the citizenship court of Judge Eric Chown. If applicants were Atheists or had some other reason for not taking the usual "so help me God" oath, they could use the alternative "I solemnly affirm". And Minister of Justice, Mr. Favreau, told the Canadian House of Commons that atheism should not bar a person from citizenship. He had advised the Citizenship Department that in his opinion the oath need not be taken on the Bible. A person who did not believe in God should simply affirm his allegiance without reference to the Deity. Earlier three Democratic MPs had complained that many people were denied their Canadian citizenship papers unjustly or through mistakes of government officials (*The Montreal Star*, 26/9/64) and they called for a revision of the Citizenship Act.

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ACKNOWLEDGED atheism can however, still be a disadvantage in this country—or at least in Wales. "If I had to choose between two men of equal qualifications, the first being an atheist and the other a man who had religious principles, I would choose the second man", declared Morgan B. Roberts, Chairman of Aberystwyth Rural Council Salaries and Staffing Sub-Committee (*Western Mail*, 29/9/64). And, in fact, applicants for the post of deputy public health inspector to the Council were asked, "Are you an atheist?" The British Humanist Association, the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association all made strong protests against Aberystwyth's vetting applicants for the post on religious grounds. And on October 2nd, the Archbishop of Wales Dr. A. E. Morris thought the question "rather irrelevant" though, he added ominously, "I can imagine instances where such scrutiny might be relevant in the teaching profession".

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A BOMBSHELL was exploded at Middletown, Ohio, according to *The Times'* "special correspondent on board the Goldwater train" (in his report from Dayton on September 30th, printed the following day). Not surprising it was the Republican presidential candidate himself who did the detonating. He had no objections to foreign aid, so long as it was administered by Republicans. The Republican way was the Christian way, Senator Goldwater said, making no apologies for talking about Christianity to the "good people of Middletown". We must, he continued, "offer a helping hand, like we promised in Hungary, and unfortunately did not go through with".

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CHARLES SOUTHWELL, pioneer Freethought writer and editor, was born 150 years ago. He died in New Zealand at the age of 46, and it is fitting that our tribute to him should be by James O. Hanlon, Editor of the *New Zealand Rationalist*, in which paper it first appeared in July/August. The same issue contained a reprint of G. L. Simons's FREETHINKER article, "Religion versus Secularism."

Humanism and Sex

By L. K. EVANS

THE ASSOCIATION of Christianity with a puritanical, repressive attitude towards sex is so marked that it cannot be purely coincidental but must have some deep psychological cause. Perhaps the reason is something like this. The sexual instincts and tendencies of most people, even when strong, can be repressed, sometimes completely, without danger to their lives. Pain and fear seem to have been naturally evolved to teach men to avoid dangers in their environment, and these sensations were used in early societies to teach their members to obey the group's traditions. There was considerable sexual repression in early Jewish society and this was largely taken over and developed by Christianity.

Now, the severe repression of all sexual activities of the young by pain and fear, or even simply by frustration, would be expected to produce some severe neuroses, and the sort of symptoms to be expected agrees surprisingly well with many of the phenomena of Christianity: feelings of guilt, fear of punishment, need for forgiveness and for worship, conviction of the absolute truth of its dogmas, obsession with chastity, suppression of pornography, and much mystical experience. Of course sexual repression is not the only factor in the psychology of Christianity, though it does seem to be very important.

The production of a communal neurosis is not necessarily a bad thing. It provides a basis for a common ideology to unite the individuals into a society, and the neurotic symptoms can be satisfied and relieved, at least to some extent, by ceremonies of a religious kind. These organised ceremonies generally require a hierarchy of officials, and the senior officials exercise considerable control over the members. Similar separate groups might unite, thus eventually forming large unions with a complex hierarchy and central control. The most valuable and influential members of a Christian society would probably be those men with strong sexual impulses but capable of a high degree of sublimation. The almost continuous urge due to repression would provide a fairly continuous and inexhaustible supply of energy for initiating vigorous actions. The subordinate position of women might be accounted for by their more variable sexuality. It should be remembered that Western civilisation, which is generally considered a great achievement, was developed in a Christian Europe.

None of us can escape mental conflicts; our instincts often clash and we have to learn to repress present urges in order to gain future benefits. There are degrees of neurosis, but few of us can be entirely free from some neurotic symptoms. Neurosis may be regarded as a normal mental phenomenon, but we need to know much more about its uses and abuses. Sexual repression may be one way, though not the only one, of obtaining increased energy for social activity, but it may not always be worth the price of unhappiness involved. It seems to me that some degree of deliberate repression is desirable for most people, but that the amount and nature of it will vary with the nature and circumstances of every individual.

As early as 1927 Freud, in *The Future of an Illusion* (English translation 1928), described religion as "the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity." This theory has not become generally accepted, and even psychiatrists and psychologists have not given it their full support. There are probably several reasons for the prevarication

of the experts. In the first place, many of them are already Christians — at least nominally — while others accept the discipline of the highly conservative British Medical Council. Again, we are living in a society imbued with Christian ideology, which is obsessed with a compulsive horror of anything which might arouse an interest in physical sexuality, as liable to "deprave or corrupt," not only the young but also normal adults. Many people who are not Christians have nevertheless inherited the Christian sexual obsession, and it would be difficult to convince them that their opinion was neurotic. But perhaps, the main reason is that it takes great moral courage and very confident faith to be able to accept the hostility and obstruction, and perhaps the distress of relations and friends, entailed by opposing the stream of the present highly puritanical public opinion.

Another practical reason for the silence of psychiatrists may be that the older a neurotic patient is and the longer the neurosis has lasted, the more difficult it usually is to effect a cure; indeed, a cure may not be possible with present techniques. Such cases are more quickly, easily and cheaply dealt with by the use of drugs which, though they may reduce the patient's conscious level nearer to that of a vegetable, do often also reduce the patient's anti-social symptoms and unhappiness. Deep analysis is, in any case, expensive and so generally only practicable for the rich.

It seems that if a neurotic accepts his symptoms as real and commits himself to them, his unhappiness is reduced and, if he joins a group with others similarly committed, and so is able to feel that he is a help to others, this effect is enhanced. If doctors were to describe all such groups and religions as neurotic, they might lose many patients. Doctors may quite reasonably think that they can do more good if they accept the beliefs of their patients without criticising them.

Reading recent articles and books by psychiatrists, I get the impression that many make little attempt to reform society so that less neurosis will be produced, but are content to accept society as it is and to confine their efforts to trying to get their patients into a condition in which they no longer need constant professional care. I think this is a mistake, because they are indirectly encouraging the perpetuation of neuroses in the young by their neurotic elders. A certain amount of neurosis is probably unavoidable in young children and adolescents, but they should be helped to grow out of it as soon as possible. Unfortunately, today many people remain neurotics for life.

Perhaps the most effective way to produce a revival of Christianity today would be to enforce sexual puritanism and to reintroduce severe corporal punishment of children for disobedience. Perhaps Christian leaders realise this consciously or unconsciously. The reintroduction of corporal punishment would not be very likely to obtain general acceptance, because expert opinion is generally against it, but the Establishment might well succeed in getting puritanical laws passed, because they can rely on a considerable backing from the general public, while the experts are divided and many will not commit themselves. However, with the growth of humanism and the knowledge that severe punishment and fear may cause a universal neurosis, and with the availability of science through universal education and its spread by modern methods of com-

munication and travel, it would probably be difficult in the Western world, even for a dictator, to enforce a national neurosis successfully.

It is not easy to estimate the present state of public opinion on sexual matters today in this country. Perhaps for want of anything better, we may take the views expressed in the National Marriage Guidance Council's publications and in the women's journals, answers to correspondents' questions as representing an average point of view. These sources show that, while tradition and religious ideas still have a strong influence, they are seldom brought out into the open; scientific evidence is preferred whenever any can be found to support the views expressed. Conventional lifelong marriage is assumed to be the only possible foundation for a civilised society, and the child's own family the best environment for the nurture of the very young. Premarital chastity is strongly advocated, as previous heterosexual experience (beyond the "necking" stage) is said to damage the prospects of a future successful marriage. The dangers of venereal disease and of unwanted babies are also stressed. However, owing to the revolt of youth, this view of premarital chastity seems to be weakening. Masturbation is admitted to be harmless (and perhaps regarded as aiding premarital "chastity"). Children should have instruction in sex.

Marriages should result from "falling in love," romantically. There should preferably be no sexual intercourse between engaged couples; but once married, couples are encouraged to try every variety of sexual practice they mutually agree upon, including some which only a few years ago would have been considered "unnatural" and unthinkable. What married couples want to do together cannot be "indecent." It is claimed that almost any incompatibility, mental or physical, in a marriage, can be cured and a happy marriage assured and maintained, if the advice of suitable experts is sought and acted upon. Birth control is recommended, but abortion is condemned, except for serious medical reasons. Sexual deviants are regarded with considerable tolerance. The present position shows a great change from that at the beginning of the century, and indicates the rapidity of the revolution now taking place.

On many matters concerning sex, even experts can give only tentative and highly controversial opinions today. We are only just beginning to overcome our sexual taboos and "conspiracy of silence," and our ignorance is still profound. While we remain so ignorant and have so little reliable evidence, we remain in the power of the prejudices of those in positions of authority. It seems that professional psychology today is still more of an art than a science and that success in this field depends more on intuition and experience than on established theories. Psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists and similar specialists should be encouraged to speak (or write) their minds and to develop and, particularly, to test, their theories.

Meanwhile, Christians have been forced, by the strength of the objective evidence, to moderate their repressive puritanism in some directions. This has reduced the strength of the Christian neurosis, thus allowing more freedom, and so on. In this way the former vicious neurotic circle has been broken and the "reality," relevance and influence of Christianity are declining. It seems to me that it will not survive indefinitely, but it is so well entrenched that its virtual disappearance may take many years. Those who do not want its power to be prolonged should beware of attempts to introduce sexual puritanism by legislation in Parliament, where the well-organised and disciplined religious organisations have far greater

influence than the numbers of their convinced adherents warrant. For example, it seems to me that the new Bill, nominally to strengthen the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, goes beyond the intentions of the original Act and further reduces individual freedom. It has been pushed through quickly and with little publicity.

In the present confused sexual situation, adventurous individuals will experiment and many mistakes will be made. Experiments are probably desirable to provide more data, and I think it would be best to be as tolerant as possible, only intervening in an obvious emergency or when the freedom of others is threatened. We must try to avoid imposing our own prejudices on others. There are far too many moralists telling people how to behave. Today we need to know how people *do* behave and what are the consequences of their behaviour. More knowledge may enable us greatly to increase happiness throughout the world.

We are all involved in an interesting and exciting period of human history, in which rapid and important changes in our fundamental ways of thinking, especially regarding sex, are taking place. Our knowledge of human nature and human behaviour, however, is still very small and much more reliable data is needed urgently. Meanwhile each of us must try to form our own provisional basic ideology upon the most reliable information available.

It seems to me that Western civilisation, which in the past has been founded on force and whose cohesion has largely depended on the production of a communal neurosis due to repression, is changing into a civilisation based on individual freedom, with a minimum of coercion, in which people co-operate through sympathy (love) and understanding based on a thorough knowledge of human nature and its variations. What we have to ask is, whether such a change is practicable and desirable. If so, how can we help to speed this revolution and see that it takes place with the least amount of suffering?

Charles Southwell

By JAMES O. HANLON

IN THE Symonds Street cemetery in Auckland, within a few feet of the noise and bustle of a modern city street, is the grave of a Rationalist who fought against the intolerance and bigotry of his day, a brilliant man who suffered much in the cause of liberty. Carved on the simple stone the passer-by can read the inscription: "In memory of Charles Southwell, editor and lecturer, who died August 7th, 1860, aged 46 years." It is therefore 104 years since Charles Southwell, a man who had been associated with Holyoake, Henry Hetherington, Robert Owen and other stalwarts of the last century, passed away so many miles from the scenes of his greatest activities.

Southwell was born in 1814, the year before the Battle of Waterloo. He was the youngest of a family of thirty-three children of the one father. His father was a freethinker in days when it was a dangerous matter to hold heretical views. At the age of twelve and, in regard to education, possessing as he has said, "knowledge enough to puzzle pedants, and ignorance enough to disgrace a Hottentot", Charles embarked on a voyage through life destined to be full of adventure. In the course of his brief existence he was orator, soldier, actor, Socialist, Free-thought advocate, writer, editor, and prisoner in the cause of liberty of speech. His period of soldiering occurred in Spain, where he joined the Spanish Legion which was formed for assisting Isabella II in her fight for the crown. We have not much information concerning

his life on the stage, but we have the opinion of Holyoake that he was a good actor. We have also Holyoake's description of Southwell as having versatility, infinite animation, chivalry and daring.

On his return to England from the Spanish campaign, Southwell came to the fore as an orator, and he aroused Freethinkers by reason of his fervid eloquence. In 1841 Southwell published *The Oracle of Reason*, the first avowedly atheistic English periodical. The boldness of its articles alarmed the clergy from the archbishops down to the country curates, and they threatened Southwell with all the rigours of the law. Southwell hit back hard, and, in the fourth number of *The Oracle of Reason* published an article, "The Jew Book", which, as he afterwards declared, he made as offensive as he possibly could. He was promptly arrested and tried in Bristol, and, in spite of a most eloquent defence, was fined £100 and imprisoned for a year. While he was serving his term young Holyoake stepped into the breach and edited the paper. Holyoake, in turn, was sentenced at Gloucester to six months' imprisonment for saying, in reply to a questioner at a lecture which he delivered in Cheltenham, that he did not believe there was such a thing as a God, and that he would have the deity served as a subaltern by placing him on half-pay. Thomas Paterson then became editor and was sent to gaol in respect of charges of exhibiting profane post cards. George Adams and his wife, Harriet, took over only to be sent to prison.

For just over two years *The Oracle of Reason* had a precarious existence. Nevertheless, it influenced thought and led in due course, to the formation of a properly organised National Freethought Party. Released from prison, Southwell carried on a Freethought mission in many places, and then, in 1856 he came to New Zealand and became editor of the *Auckland Examiner* in the same year. He continued in that post until within a few weeks of his death. When he died the *Southern Cross*, contemporary of the *Examiner*, recorded that "possessed of more than ordinary talents, supported by large general reading, he kept afloat for three years a journal which was a terror to all evil-doers and sometimes to more than they."

It has been said that Southwell recanted his Freethought in New Zealand and edited a Wesleyan or Methodist journal. There is no evidence in support of such a statement. Rather there is everything to indicate that he remained to the last a staunch and dauntless champion of Freethought.

As Rationalists we believe that the man, Charles Southwell, ceased to exist with his death. He cannot receive the tributes that would be his due. But the service he rendered for the cause of Freethought, the privations he endured in the fight against intolerance and bigotry, can spur us to take our full share in the same fight in which he was a conspicuous leader, for the battle is not yet won and calls for stoutness of heart and steadiness of purpose to achieve the final victory.

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NO NEED FOR RESIGNATION

It is a pity Mr. Ridley closed his informative article on "Religion and the British Political Parties" with remarks of resignation: "... to wait for better days when 'the times do alter'". Marx was right when stating, that the philosophers have interpreted the world, we, however, have to do something to change it.

Germany, as few besides, has suffered through centuries to this day from the unfortunate liaison between militant church battalions and state armies.

At a moment, when Franz-Josef Strauss is about to go it alone with the Bavarian CSU, disconnected from the so far all-Bundes-republican CDU/CSU; when the crown of the "crowned king" has moved to Munich from Cologne (Cardinal Doepfner, active in the Rome Council, instead of Cardinal Froese, now an old man)—this country was consecrated to Saint Mary in 1954 after the September elections had been won with the help of John Foster Dulles and the forces behind him—when laws and regulations bypass the 1949 Grundgesetz-constitution, every single person conscious and aware of the dangerous position we are in represents an asset for tomorrow's activities. With "nothing is permanent except change" Freethinkers are requested to work at new formulae as possible platforms for a better tomorrow, who ever cries for "emergency-laws" desperately—as does the present government in this country—shows openly all the weakness that goes with it. There is no need for resignation.

In this country it is even difficult at present to keep contact with friends and like-minded persons, but where there is a will there is a way. The present rift goes between the leisure-class and workers of hand and mind in all walks of life. The new atheism must be based on sociological and psychological studies of the species *Homo sapiens* combined with *How to win Friends*.

GERDA GUTTENBERG
(Nürnberg)

VOLUNTARY CHURCH RATES

I was extremely interested in the articles by Gillian Hawtin upon the Dean of Gloucester and his efforts to get state aid for church preservation. Indeed, I should be interested to know how far the Church of England is really interested in its old buildings from an antiquarian and historical point of view, how far it is really the patron of the arts and of architecture, or how far it loses this interest when circumstances so suit and it transfers its attention to the profits to be made out of selling the sites of redundant churches even though the buildings sacrificed may have considerable architectural or historical merit? It was also interesting that Gillian Hawtin should cite the 1868 Act abolishing compulsory church rates but authorising the continued levying of a church rate, payment of which shall be voluntary. This may be done in a manner which suggests to the susceptible that the rate is really one of which payment can be legally enforced! Nor is it true to say that the voluntary church rate was something which faded out in Victorian times. Formal demands for the payment of a voluntary church rate were sent out in the parish of St. Mary Abbots, Kensington, only some twelve years ago to the open annoyance of some residents in the area. I am quite unaware of who was then responsible for sending out the notices or whether the policy has since been continued. Does any reader know of similar post-war cases elsewhere?

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.
 [A few years ago the Secretary of Leicester Secular Society was amused to receive a request for a voluntary rate payment to the parish church. But it is true, as Mr. Micklewright says, that the susceptible might think that such a payment could be legally enforced—ED].

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