

# The Freethinker

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IT MATTERS little, for all practical purposes, whether a man chooses to call himself an Agnostic or an Atheist. To some extent, then, the recent discussion in our correspondence columns over the relative merits of the terms may be considered unimportant. Yet such arguments have been going on at least since T. H. Huxley coined "agnostic", and basically for very much longer. A former editor of this paper, Chapman Cohen, devoted a good deal of time to the subject, and his complementary pamphlets (*Agnosticism or and Atheism*) may be recommended to new readers. Last week, however, an Agnostic critic, John Shepherd, mentioned the name of Charles Bradlaugh, and warned us all against excessive adulation of that great Victorian, whom we seemed in danger of "near-canonising".

Now, in my opinion, Bradlaugh, far from being overpraised, has never received anything like his due deserts—either in his lifetime or since. It was Freethinkers who recognised his greatness while he lived, and it is Freethinkers who perpetuate his name today. Some day, I believe, he will be acknowledged by the world at large as the giant that he was. But I can assure Mr. Shepherd that Bradlaugh is in no danger of canonisation—at least in these columns. Our appreciation is soundly based on his merit, and stops this side idolatry. It is appropriate, in the circumstances, to recall his *Plea for Atheism*.

## No Conception of God

Bradlaugh wrote his 20-page essay in the hope of removing some of the prejudices against Atheists and those—like Voltaire and Paine—who have been wrongly accused of atheism. And I am sure that for many he succeeded (the pamphlet reached its 20th thousand in 1880) but it is little read today. It is plain, for instance, that Mr. Shepherd has never read it. Otherwise he would not equate the Atheist with a fool who proclaims there is no God.

The Atheist, Bradlaugh insisted, does not say "There is no God": he says, "I do not know what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word 'God' is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me". And I defy our Agnostic critics to detect anything dogmatic in that.

Bradlaugh was a Monist. There was, he affirmed, only one existence of which—in Spinozan language—every phenomenon was a "mode" or modification. And if God were defined to mean "an existence other than the existence of which I am a mode". Bradlaugh was prepared to deny God as impossible. "When the Theist affirms that his God is an existence other than, and separate from, the so-called material universe, and when he invests this separate, hypothetical existence with the several attributes of personality, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, infinity, immortality, and perfect goodness, then the Atheist in reply says—'I deny the existence of such a being'."

The conception of creation was also impossible. We are, Bradlaugh said, "utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished, much less can we conceive an absolute origination of substance". Here again we, note the influence of Spinoza, but we might also see it as a philosophical anticipation of Hoyle and Bondi's "steady state" cosmology. (The alternative—and somewhat misleading—appellation, "continuous creation" should not, as Hoyle has emphasised, be taken to indicate creation out of nothing).

As Bradlaugh said: "We cannot conceive either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing".

If we destroy a gold coin, we are only destroying its "condition", not its substance. Creation and destruction "denote change of phenomena, they do not denote origin or cessation of substance".

## Dilemma of Theism

Bradlaugh proceeded with this masterly statement of the dilemma of theism:

"The Theist who speaks of God creating the universe, must either suppose that Deity evolved it out of himself, or that he produced it from nothing. But the Theist cannot regard the universe as evolution of Deity, because this would identify Universe and Deity, and be Pantheism rather than Theism. There would be no distinction of substance—no creation. Nor can the Theist regard the universe as created out of nothing, because Deity is, according to him, necessarily eternal and infinite. God's existence being eternal and infinite, precludes the possibility of the conception of vacuum to be filled by the universe if created. No one can even think of any point in extent or duration and say: Here is the point of separation between the creator and the created. It is not possible for the Theist to imagine a beginning to the universe. It is not possible to conceive either an absolute commencement, or an absolute termination of existence; that is, it is impossible to conceive beginning, before which you have a period when the universe has yet to be; or to conceive an end, after which the universe, having been, no longer exists . . . The Theist who argues for creation must assert a point of time—that is, of duration, when the created did not yet exist. At this point of time either something existed or nothing; but something must have existed, for out of nothing nothing can come. Something must have existed, because the point fixed upon is that of the duration of something. This something must have been either finite or infinite; if finite it could not have been God, and if the something were infinite, then creation was impossible to add to infinite existence".

## Dismissing God

Bradlaugh's refutation of theism is, in my view, overwhelming. The word "God" defines nothing, demonstrates nothing, explains nothing. The Atheist is surely right, then, in consciously dismissing God from his reckoning.

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Bradlaugh on Atheism

By COLIN McCALL

# The Age of Unreason

By GEORGE R. GOODMAN

(Concluded from page 182)

In the Gospel drama, John the Baptist enacts the role of the first-born or natural man, coming first to prepare the ground for the advent of the highly evolved, spiritual man. Therefore, he would stand in the allegory as the son of the Water Mother, Virgo, and, under the astrological symbolism, would be born at the autumn equinox. On the opposite side of the half-circle would stand the Avatar, Jesus, son of the Fish Mother, born in his mother's house of the Fishes, Pisces. These houses are six months apart on the zodiacal chart!

We can discount the Luke fable that John "leaped in his mother's womb" when Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth and found her at the six months' stage of her pregnancy. It is but a simple matter of arithmetic to note that the last three months of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John coincided with the first three of Mary's pregnancy with Jesus, bringing the birth of Jesus just six months after that of John!

But the most significant fact is that the early Christians actually celebrated the birth of their "Lord and Saviour" on March 25th, and only transferred it to December 25th in the year 345 AD, by decree of Pope Julian II. In other words, the Spring equinox (6 months after John's birthday) would have been the correct birthdate of Jesus—if he had ever lived! But it was already in the chart of the zodiac some thousands of years, before it could have happened in Judaea.

The implication is overmastering that the alleged historical occurrence is but a presumption of ignorance, based on the zodiac when the latter became circulated as history among the unintelligent masses. People who were children in intellect took the grand parables and allegories of ancient "science" as veritable history. It was symptomatic of the age of unreason.

It has been said that every time a man opens his Bible, he closes his mind to reason. That those people who are delicately described as "practising Christians" do not criticise the fantasies in their holy book will become apparent when the following two accounts are subjected to reason and logic. Let us consider Jesus's alleged entry into Jerusalem and we shall immediately realise that when myth is turned into "history", it becomes ludicrous in the extreme.

According to Matthew, Jesus sat astride *two* asses, viz., mother and foal; even a circus-born would have the greatest difficulty to emulate such a feat! But Mark and Luke make him sit on the young foal "on which no man had ever sat", implying that an ordinary donkey was not good enough for such an exalted person. Alas,—the asinine writers of this crude canard never considered that the young foal would break down under the weight of a robust saviour!

But, say the gospel writers, it was all done "so that it should be fulfilled where it was written". When one looks up where it was "written", viz., the Egyptian papyri; one finds that the ass was the symbol of the Egyptian god Atum and that such an ass-headed god can be seen on the tomb of Rameses VI. The god was always depicted as creating and procreating in the two characters of Father and Son, Osiris and Horus: Horus the babe and Horus the man. Hence the allegory of the ass and the foal!

In a later period, the god was called Atum-Iu, and, pictured with the ears of an ass, and Iu is both ass and god.

That Iusa was by the Romans turned into Jesus, has already been mentioned.

Coming now to the entry into Jerusalem—how could Jesus have found the populace, whose hostility was so great that it ended in his alleged "death" within a week, to *welcome* him with hosannas and strewn palms? And how could he have got the crowd out for such a reception without the help of publicity? All that is a little more than one can swallow!

Before the Joshua invasion, Canaan was a dependence of Egypt and, according to tablets found at Tel-el-Amarna, a city of the Jebusites was called Urusalim. Later on David made it his capital and called it Jeru-salem (salem or sholom meaning "peace"). The ancient Egyptians believed that, after death, they would go to a "City of heavenly peace" and called that place Aarru-Hetep which was the prototype of the Greek Elysian fields. (Aarru meaning "fields" and hetep, "peace".)

We can find this symbolism amongst all the ancient nations. The Paradise of ancient Persia, the Garden of Allah or Allu (Aarru), the happy Isles and the Indians' happy hunting grounds, then Valhalla, the heaven for the Nordic brave—not forgetting Augustine's "City of God" and Bunyan's "Celestial City". We even have a poetical "Jerusalem" in England's green and pleasant land! And delightful Elysian Fields—Champs Elysées—in Paris.

Thus, from first being a city of the imagination "in the heavens", it became a city on the map! Many nations of antiquity used their capital city as the earthly counterpart of the allegorical heavenly city. But the not-so-bright scenario writers of the New Testament, who copied the entire story from ancient Egyptian papyri messed the whole thing up and, instead of putting the "reception" of the alleged saviour in the "holy heavenly city" *after* his death, put it before. Not possessing enough acumen, they mixed up the locations and thus turned a delightful fable into impossible history!

The Egyptians always pictured the god as riding into the "kingdom of glory" on the back of the ass (a lowly animal), thereby portraying his conquest over his lower animal self. That's why we are blessed with a Palm Sunday and a fabulous triumphal entry into Jerusalem of a smiling saviour sitting astride two donkeys!

Hewn out of the stonework outside Catholic churches, one can sometimes see four curious figures which, according to the district or the local tradition, are variously described as representing the "four evangelists" or the four living creatures mentioned in the Apocalypse and Ezekiel.

Actually, they are merely the four points of the compass and have been adopted from the zodiac in which they are known as the "four fixer signs" and are three months apart. They are Leo the lion, Taurus the bull, Aquarius the water-bearer, and Scorpio, also known as the eagle. According to tradition, the lion represents Shem, the Lion of Judah and the semitic race. The bull symbolises Egypt and the land of Ham. Aquarius is said to represent the mythical Noah and the remnants of the Atlanteans, the Adamic race, driven by a catastrophical flood to the four quarters of the globe. And Scorpio or the eagle, belongs to Japhet who is alleged to have travelled north, thus becoming "the father of the Aryan race".

Whilst all this is mere mysticism, a few indisputable  
(Concluded on page 188)

## Civil Liberties

By DAVID TRIBE

OPENING the 1965 Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties, the Chairman, Mr. Malcolm Purdie, declared that reports about young people in Brighton this Easter had made it necessary to point out that they were not sub-human and had a perfect right to wear long hair and sleep on the beach if they so wished. Taking this a stage further, the General Secretary, Mr. Martin Ennals deplored the number of cases of youths remanded in custody on trivial charges for which, even if proved, the punishment should not be imprisonment. Another matter which disturbed him was the failure to provide satisfactory compensation for those wrongfully convicted and imprisoned. The Council's most sensational recent activities had been in connection with the Challenor cases, where, after some two years' delay, an official report was still awaited. Investigations of the Ombudsman proposals were still under way, and the Council was continuing its representations in favour of a more democratic jury service and more effective race relations bill.

Discussions of motions was integrated with approval of the annual report (published as a very useful booklet, *Civil Liberty*, 1965, 1s. 6d. plus postage from NCCL, 4 Camden High Street, London, N.W.1). Firstly, the Council was instructed to follow up its work in convening the first all-party (Irish and English) conference to discuss political and religious discrimination in Northern Ireland, by calling for a Royal Commission or independent inquiry.

The report mentions certain anomalies relating to young people. They may fight in national wars at 18 but not vote for or against them; bet in a betting shop but not send in football pools coupons; be made bankrupt, but not bring legal proceedings, take out a mortgage, enter into hire purchase agreements or make a will. The AGM considered the age of majority should be 18.

The National Secular Society gladly accepted amendment of its motion on Sunday observance, which originally referred to implementation of Crathorne as a second-best interim measure. Almost unanimously it was agreed that "in order that all citizens may be able to indulge in business or pleasure at all times not debarred by employment agreements, this Annual General Meeting urges HM Government as soon as possible to repeal the absolute Sunday Observance Acts".

More awareness than hitherto was shown of the educational problem of colour prejudice, which depressingly crosses all political and class boundaries. Concern was also expressed at the arbitrary way in which immigration officers determine right of entry, and an appeals machinery was called for. The AGM sought amendments of the Race Relations Bill to include discrimination of employment, colour-bar advertising, an investigating Tribunal, freehold and leasehold property, Northern Ireland and discrimination and incitement based on religion.

There was universal welcome of the proposed appointment of Law Commissioners, but a wish to see the inclusion of suitably qualified laymen. It was urged that "after the lapse of a suitable period of time previous convictions should be deleted from the record", and that bail should be granted more freely, especially to juveniles. The desire of judges to award damages, instead of a jury, was censored, and a resolution instructed the Executive to "investigate the position of the International Court set up by the Council of Europe".

A Progressive League resolution, passed with an overwhelming majority, stated: "This Annual General Meeting deplores the use of state-supported schools for religious indoctrination and wishes to support revision of public policy on religious education in schools particularly with regard to the removal of the compulsory Act of Worship and religious instruction on a purely Christian basis".

The Executive Committee was instructed to seek reform of the system of electoral registration, which is at present disenfranchising substantial numbers of people, and liberalisation of postal and proxy voting procedures. For example, wives do not enjoy the latter privilege—yet another example of discrimination against women, which is the subject of a new NCCL booklet. (Other titles are *Customs Procedures* and *Local Government*). The EC was also instructed to press for full implementation of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has nowhere been applied *in toto*.

Motions remitted to the EC at its request, on the stated grounds that the matters involved needed further study or that the present wording was inadequate, concerned the use of tape recordings as evidence in criminal proceedings, the recruitment to the Police Force of "ethnic personnel in places predominantly inhabited by such ethnic groups", and Religion and the Law. This motion, submitted by the National Secular Society, stated: "This Annual General Meeting urges HM Government to remedy the following violations of individual and group freedoms entailed by the Establishment of the Church of England, viz: (i) inability of the Church of England to change its formularies and forms of service without approval by an external body, viz., Parliament, which may be neither sympathetic nor interested; (ii) appointment of higher Church dignitaries by the Queen acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, who may be of any or no religion and acting according to political considerations; (iii) statutory position of Church courts which are outside the normal appeal court mechanism and state legal aid, and do not enjoy the confidence of the public; (iv) use by the Church of past community charitable and educational endowments and redeemer tithes, which were never voluntarily given to it; (v) presence in one of the Houses of legislature, viz., the Lords, of non-elected members with overt ideological commitment; by disestablishing and disendowing the Church of England".

One of the factors contributing to the liveliness of debate and great press interest was the presence as seconder of Dr. Bryn Thomas, formerly vicar of the Ascension, Balham Hill, and defendant in the notorious Southwark Consistory Court case of 1961, widely condemned as unjust in journalistic, legal, and even ecclesiastical circles. An EC attempt to amend the motion was defeated, but its proposal to remit was then passed.

The NCCL bulletin for May has this paragraph: "At the AGM considerable discussion was provoked on what the Council's policy should be on this controversial issue. The Executive Committee will be examining the question, and will welcome the views of members, both as regards any examples which could be given where the civil liberties of the subject are infringed by the establishment of the Church of England, and as regards comments on the relationship generally between the two. The Council has many members and affiliated organisations who are linked with the Church in one way or another, and it is for this  
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## This Believing World

DURING the Hitlerite regime of bestial murder and torture, the reigning Pope Pius XII had very little to say. After all the Vatican had a concordat with Germany and Hitler had been born and brought up a Catholic. There was always hope that he would return to the fold when he had conquered Europe. We wonder if these thoughts were in Cardinal Heenan's mind when he called Hitler the "father of Continental ecumenism" (*Daily Mail*, 5/5/65). "Certainly", added the Cardinal, "no man has been more responsible for throwing Protestants and Catholics into each other's arms".

★

IN FACT, continued Cardinal Heenan, if England had suffered enemy occupation, the ecumenical movement, which was "making fair progress", would by now be "very much further advanced". And what would a mere "enemy occupation" be compared with the coming together of Catholics and Protestants—with Catholics on top, of course!

★

HOWEVER, a leap forward towards unity between the Christian Church of England and the Christian Methodist Church looks as if it might take place. Whether the idea delights Rome is another matter. She has never liked Methodists or the Non-conformist Churches in general (herself, of course excepted). And many Methodists are by no means sure that there is any real difference between Anglo-Catholicism and Roman Catholicism. Of course, all Christian sects are true Christians but, but . . . ! It is such a big "but". There are so many "separated brethren".

★

AN AWFUL question has upset Douglas Clark (*Sunday Express*, 23/5/65) "Why does the BBC sneer so much at religion?" It axes that masterpiece of perfect piety, *Lift Up Your Hearts*, while the "mockery of faith goes on". Mr. Clark is terribly upset. And he solemnly warns the BBC and its Director General that the people who pay their licences "will not stand for it if the BBC tries to go Agnostic".

★

NOW WHY should the BBC be a "Christian institution" at all? Why should the millions of people who pay licences, and are not Christians, meekly take the primitive and credulous stories of devils, angels, miracles, etc., which are regularly hurled at them, without protest? Up to recently any whisper of agnosticism was cut out of all broadcasts if at all possible. But now we are to have a series of Saturday-morning Humanist broadcasts (see Notes and News). Mr. Clark should listen and learn that religion has had its day, and has miserably failed.

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CONSIDERING the enormous success of biblical epics on the screen, it is certainly surprising to find the Rev. R. Billington (*South London Press* 18/5/65) attacking them unsparingly because, "from a religious point of view they are a complete waste of time and very often very misleading and damaging to the Church". Another cleric calls *The Greatest Story Ever Told* a "disastrous failure", and "full of inaccuracies".

★

THE budget for Billy Graham's Greater London Crusade to be held at Earl's Court next year is £300,000 (*The Guardian*, 3/6/65). This sum includes £166,000 for rent of the stadium and administration, and £60,000 for advertising and publicity. Postal notices have, of course, been going out for months now to anybody who has shown any interest in Graham's past crusades, and a big attendance

is guaranteed. How many will be converted and how many of the conversions will be permanent are anybody's guesses. We should guess low in each case. But it won't prevent Evangelistic Christians thoroughly enjoying themselves, and we have no wish to be a spoilsport.

### THE AGE OF UNREASON

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facts remain. The Hebrews carried the original Egyptian typism, i.e. "the lion of the double face", the old lion and the lion's whelp, exactly like the ass and its foal (as explained before) into their own symbolism over a long period right up to the present time. In modern Israel the symbol of the lion appears even on postage stamps! And it is needless to remind readers that the title "Lion of the house of Judah" is still retained by the monarchs of Ethiopia.

That Taurus played an enormous part, as Apis, in Egypt, and later on in the religion of Mithraism, cannot be gainsaid. And as to the eagle, "travelling North", it is a most curious fact that this symbol has been adopted by most Northern States on the Earth.

Not only is it the national emblem of the United States of America, appearing separately on the flags of New York, Iowa, Illinois and Virgin Islands, but it is also the national symbol of Germany, Austria, Poland, Spain and others, going right back to the Vikings.

### CIVIL LIBERTIES

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reason that we are particularly interested in receiving members' comments on this subject".

It is to be hoped that those who oppose the present anomalous and anti-libertarian position of the Church of England will make their views known to the Council either as individual members or through one of the many organisations, notably trades unions, which are affiliated to it.

Through its affiliated bodies the NCCL now represents 3½ million people in Great Britain. At the AGM there were 121 individual members and 158 delegates from 22 national bodies, 13 district committees, 7 co-operative movements, 14 political branches, 33 local branches and 14 trades councils. Encouraging as this position may be, there is room for further advance, particularly in the field of individual membership. Money is very short and well-wishers are urgently asked to join and canvass affiliations.

### GREEK TRAGEDY AT THE MERMAID

LONDON'S Mermaid Theatre is currently presenting a double bill *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles. And these great plays are impressively staged, with imaginative sound effects and settings.

Bernard Miles is a fine Oedipus, and Liane Aukin is electrifying as Antigone.

Each play gains from being seen with the other. The plays are of course horrifying: men are presented as playthings of the gods, treated sometimes with vicious cruelty, sometimes with arbitrary favour. Despair about the human condition mingles strangely with patriotic eulogies of Athens, but this is great drama which has lived already for twenty-three centuries and deserves to live for many more.

I heartily recommend it.

M. McL.

### THE ABSOLUTE

When searching for "Absolute Truth" you'll find  
How many times the Churches change their mind.

K.M.

## THE FREETHINKER

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### Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

#### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. 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. Every Friday, 7.30 p.m.: L. EBURY.

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

#### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society, (Conway Hall, Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 13th, 11 a.m.: Dr. PRYNCE HOPKINS, "A Humanist's Six Stages of Maturity".

### Notes and News

ACCORDING to a survey published in *New Society* (27/5/65) 90 per cent of the British people want their children to receive compulsory religious instruction—of a Christian variety—in school. This, in spite of the fact that most of the adults never attend church except for the time honoured "hatches, matches and despatches". The crux of the matter, the *Sunday Telegraph* commented (30/5/65), is that "the majority of Englishmen still accept, with certain reservations, a morality founded on Christian assumptions". But do they? Or do they accept a morality which they mistakenly think to be founded on Christian assumptions? Some may wish to detach the accepted morality from its "theological premises", the *Sunday Telegraph* continued, "but unless they know nothing of children, they cannot hope to instruct the young in it without recourse to the images in which theology deals".

★

THEOLOGY deals, of course, in many different "images" (it would be foolish to deny that there are some moral stories in the Bible, for instance). But if the *Sunday Telegraph* means specifically religious images (a god, a devil, heaven, hell, etc.) then we deny that these are necessary—or even desirable—to the upbringing of a child. And it is nonsense to say that "Britain in a cultural if not religious sense, is still fundamentally Christian". A positive way of determining how many of *New Society's* 90 per cent were really concerned that their children should attend RI would be (as was recently suggested) to hold that period before or after school hours. How many parents would bother about it then?

THE REV. R. W. A. Coleman (in a letter in the same issue of the *Sunday Telegraph*) suggested that St. Paul might have been a homosexual. He made no secret of his aversion to marriage and wished that "all men were even as myself". If the homosexual theory has any foundation, wrote Mr. Coleman, "then the very hardships of the Apostle's life in the service of Christ now take on a strange unreality". But Mr. Coleman is sure that, if Paul was a homosexual, "he did not give in to sin", because he went out of his way to write, "none who are guilty either of adultery or of homosexual perversion . . . will possess the Kingdom of God".

★

THE world was likely to become "even more secular and non-Christian in the years ahead", the English Jesuit, Father Christie told graduates at the 69th annual convocation of Montreal's Loyola College on May 22nd. But secularisation of society was never inevitable, he went on, though it was natural to think that what had happened must have happened. The fact is, Father Christie said (*The Gazette*, 24/5/65) that "society is created by a series of choices and we are in many ways responsible for what occurs in our time". He therefore urged the students to bring their influence to bear upon "this secular and non-Christian world".

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SIR Isaac Wolfson, Chairman of the Chief Rabbinate Conference in London which elected Dr. Jacob Herzog to succeed Dr. Israel Brodie as Chief Rabbi, made a plea for unity among the Anglo-Jewish community (*Daily Telegraph*, 31/5/65). Dr. Herzog would expect complete co-operation and loyalty. And with him, Sir Isaac said, "we can hope to combat the evils of creeping assimilation and apathy". By the force of Dr. Herzog's personality, deep learning, sagacity, and real spirit of dedication, Jews could make sure that they were no longer susceptible to the attacks of "those who would desire to make inroads into our ancient heritage", Sir Isaac added.

★

THE British Humanist Association has been given radio time by the BBC for a series of six talks on the Home Service at the peak listening time of 10.30 on a Saturday morning. The first programme will be on October 9th, and Professor A. J. Ayer, Dr. James Hemming, Lord Francis-Williams and Lord Willis are among the prominent Humanists who will be questioned by an independent interviewer. This recognition of organised Humanism—as the *Humanist* (June) points out—brings British broadcasting a step nearer that of several European countries,

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ASKED by a previous correspondent why she regarded religious instruction on the Agreed Syllabus as more acceptable than that given in sectarian, particularly Roman Catholic schools, Margaret Knight replied (*New Statesman*, 28/5/65) that "more acceptable" was hardly the word but that in common with most Humanists she regarded Agreed Syllabus RI as "less harmful than the more full-blooded kind, simply because it is not so intensive, and because the doctrines taught are less frightening and incredible". But the Humanist aim was, she said, that "religious instruction should be what the name implies, namely instruction about religion, rather than indoctrination with the tenets of one particularly religion or sect". Mrs. Knight thanked the correspondent for his expressed willingness to support Humanist schools if there were a demand for them. But, she pointed out that there was no such demand: "Humanists do not . . . want their children indoctrinated with Humanism; they object to indoctrination in any form".

## Reviews

### A Welcome Pamphlet

*Frauds, Forgeries and Relics* by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler. (Published by the North London Branch, National Secular Society: available through the Pioneer Press, 1s. 3d., including postage).

The decision of the North London Branch of the National Secular Society to reprint some of the classic Free-thought writings of G. W. Foote, is to be welcomed as something more than a commemorative gesture to a past President of the Society. There has been a tendency recently among some Humanists and Freethinkers to speak patronisingly of the limitations of the pioneers like Foote, Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, and to imply that their works are only of historical interest. The assumption is that the battle has been won. In one sense, the purely intellectual, this is true, but the news of the victory is being carefully kept from the mass of the people, and as many as ever are still being indoctrinated with exploded absurdities. The Roman Church particularly adopts the practice of proceeding on her imperious way, impervious to the findings of science or history, however deadly these may be to her claims. Lorenzo Valla showed in the 16th century that the Donation of Constantine, on which the Holy Fathers based their temporal power, was a complete fraud. They continued to misgovern a large part of Italy for a further 300 years. The fraudulent claim to power was not even abandoned after the Papal States were forcibly united with Italy in 1870; the Popes continued the dreary farce of posing as "prisoners in the Vatican" until they were bought off by Mussolini in 1929. Similar examples could be multiplied.

The 19th century Rationalists rightly saw the Churches as anachronisms and impostors which had been the major causes of the martyrdom of man. The more courageous of them were not afraid to say so, even at the risk of being guilty of "bad taste". The present attitude seems to be that God is dead, but we must all unite to keep the news from leaking out (Business as usual!), or when necessary to break it as gently as possible to the bereaved. It is time we got back to some Victorian plain speaking.

The present pamphlet is a reprint of two chapters from *The Crimes of Christianity* by Foote and J. M. Wheeler, and shows them at their devastating best, when dealing with knavery exploiting credulity for the greater glory of God, or the aggrandisement of the priest which has always been identified with it—by the priest.

It will not surprise those who reject the supernatural that "revealed" religions should have been forced to forge their credentials. The only surprise about Christianity is the massiveness, impertinence, and imbecility of its forgeries and the combination of ruthlessness and guile with which it has fought—for its own selfish ends—to keep the human race in a state of mental childhood. Foote and Wheeler trace the story from its inception in St. Paul, through the "Fathers" such as Ambrose and Augustine and the legion of anonymous forgers whose productions ranged from the bogus Sibylline prophecies to the Donation of Constantine, down to the Reformation.

The second part deals with the collateral manufacture of relics, miracles and legends. Here Foote finds ample scope for his scorching wit. The case throughout is documented from Christian sources. Their authorities such as Mosheim, Jortin and Millman were franker than our contemporaries, and in addition they held a faith that was, as has been wittily observed, worth rejecting. Foote's wit, like all the

most enduring wit, derives its strength from the deep insight into the nature of the subject on which he was exercising it.

The present pamphlet deserves a wide circulation. To have brought out such a handsomely produced 32 page pamphlet for one shilling, at the present period of high prices is—if the publishers will pardon the term—something of a bargain!

D. J. MCCONALOGUE.

### Points from Books

IN Denzil Batchelor's new novel *The Sedulous Ape* (Macdonald, 16s.), a vicar notices that although America spends "a hundred million a day, or is it a year" on a war in Vietnam, nobody seems to know or care what the war is all about. Losing his faith, he decides to feather his own nest like the armament manufacturers. "Thou Shalt Not Steal" strikes him as a ridiculous commandment for this day and age. Why didn't Moses add: "Thou shalt not put through a business deal?" So he helps to organise an ingenious racket. Does his conscience trouble him when his crypto-homosexual curate gets murdered as a consequence? Not in the least, for he tells himself that penitence will simply be a way of making the best of a bad job if he is found out.

Detective Inspector Johnson, who has to investigate the vicar's sins and those of all the clergy at Pethbridge, is as contemptuous as he is certain that in the end he will make the dog-collared gentlemen feel sorry for themselves. The whole thing ends up on a beach in Italy where the natives are celebrating a dotty religious festival of feeding the cats, and where the local police commandant talks about the case of the nuns who were eaten by choirboys. A delightfully unusual and bizarre thriller.

I have only just come across a book which was published a year or so ago—*Beloved Son Felix* (Muller, 25s.). It is the translation by Sean Jennet of a journal kept by Felix Platter, a medical student in Montpellier in the 16th century. The diary was first respected in Renaissance times when men began to believe in the individual. Unfortunately much anti-clerical dynamite has obviously been lost because in medieval times little worth was set on personal records. Happily, Felix Platter lived when it was becoming possible to think of a diary as a serious chronicle worthy of preservation. It is fortunate indeed that this record has survived, for it gives an unadorned picture of religion in the ascendancy. Almost casually the student mentions seeing Protestants being burnt by Catholics in the streets, the monks from a monastery rushing up additional supplies of straw.

But perhaps the most authentic hypnotic quality of the entries can best be given by one short quotation: "Beatrice, Catalan's former servant girl, who had drawn off my boots when I had first arrived at Montpellier, was executed on the 3rd of December. She was hanged in the square, on a little gibbet that had only one arm. She left us a year before to go into service in the house of a priest. She became pregnant, and when her child was born, she threw it into the latrine, where it was found dead. Beatrice's body was taken to the anatomy theatre, and it remained several days in the College. The womb was still swollen, for the birth of the child had occurred no more than eight days before. Afterwards the hangman came to collect the pieces, wrapped them in a sheet, and hung them on a gibbet outside the town".

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## Thoughts of an Ex-Catholic

By PATRICK KEARNEY

It was Pope John XXIII who initiated the move on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to set up a study committee on atheism and Atheists. Now this is being done under Pope Paul. So the question, what is an Atheist? must surely loom large in the minds of Catholics. In this connection it would, perhaps, not to be amiss for the present writer to state a general definition, appropriately as I myself was reared as a Catholic.

Note, firstly, that Atheists are people who were formerly Catholics and Protestants; that is, they were reared as members of one or other of the main Churches in this country.

Secondly no real Atheist denies the existence of a God. He or she asserts that there is no evidence for one. But he or she constantly studies and searches his heart. It may be that there is a God. But we do not believe there is.

Some Atheists are opposed to organised religion, to the Roman Catholic Church, or the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. Why?

This could—and may well be for some Atheists—an academic question. But as religion permeates every aspect of life, including politics, it behoves anyone who considers himself to be an Atheist to protest primarily at the assumption (1) that there is a God and (2) that a particular Church is the proper aegis by which He can be served.

For the Churches do not confine themselves to serving God. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church the faithful are advised during elections, mainly on how *not* to vote, and in some places (such as Malta) how to vote. Catholics in the Trades Union movement, are sometimes advised when not to support a strike, as when, several years ago, Archbishop D. A. Campbell of Glasgow advised the faithful that a particular strike in the city was “communist-inspired” even though an article in the *Glasgow Herald* by a shop steward (Mr. Loughrin) pointed out that this was not the case.

In Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1943 the faithful were exhorted to support the policies of Hitler, even when it became obvious that the Nazi authorities were set on destroying the original Church. Only—repeat only—in the case of euthanasia did the Church officially protest to the Nazis, and the protest was immediately effective!

Of course it may be that the Roman Catholic Church is right to protect its interests irrespective of the type of government in power. And it may be that the Church of England is justified in owning millions of pounds worth of property in this country and in buttressing the middle-class way of life in the first of the great imperialist countries of the world.

It may also be that the Churches in America can justify so long denying of rights to Negroes—and finding biblical justification for it. It may be that every small sect (of which there are hundreds) can justify itself as having discovered the only true way of worshipping God and as pointing the way to the true moral life.

Atheists disagree. Firstly because they reject (after years of heart-burning and study) the hypothesis, secondly because they are aghast at the moral behaviour of many Christians and Christian Churches and thirdly, because the “ethic” of Christianity no longer meets the needs of changing conditions.

*SPECIAL OFFER* to readers of this paper. The Autobiography of Major Christopher Draper, DSC., entitled *The Mad Major*, First published in 1962 at 25s. A limited number offered at 10s. post paid. 230 pages fully illustrated and autographed from C. Draper, 2 Conway Street, London, W.1.

## Responsibility for the Crucifixion

[The following letter appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle* on May 14th].

THE Pope's recent speech in which he renewed the charge of deicide, may have come as a surprise to a sympathiser like Father Corbishley, who wrote in your columns that “the common attribution to the Jewish nation as a whole of the responsibility for the death of Jesus has never been in any sense part of the official doctrine of the Church”.

It was less surprising to others like myself who have expressed misgivings as to the value of recent interchanges between Jewish organisations and prominent members of the Church of Rome.

Only those who refuse to face historical facts can deny that the Vatican has been the main inspiration of this accusation throughout the ages. One need not look further than the records of such Popes as Innocent III, Paul IV and Pius V. The Pope's speech seems to show that of the Vatican it can truly be said *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

A charge of deicide is, by its very nature, contrary to reason and a travesty of justice. For it is the essence of a charge that each of its allegations shall be capable of proof.

While the fact of killing is capable of proof, an allegation that the victim is a Divine being is entirely incapable of proof. It rests on speculation or, at best, on religious belief and can be rejected by the accused with no less validity than it is accepted by the accusers.

If Jewish leaders were responsible for the death of Jesus, they were motivated by what they conscientiously believed to be their religious duty under the Mosaic Law (e.g., Deut. 13, 2-6). The act had at least as much justification as each of the numerous deaths by burning, strangulation and other methods of torture carried out on dissenters—Jews and non-Jews alike—by the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages and at the Reformation in particular.

Catholics who are guilty of the monstrous injustice of holding the Jews of today responsible for the death of Jesus can, by the same token, themselves be held responsible for each of the countless acts of bloodshed and savagery carried out by such instruments of the Church of Rome as the Inquisition (set up by Pope Sixtus IV).

The persecution to which the Jews were subjected throughout the Middle Ages and after can be traced in largest measure to this same accusation. It was the cry with which the Crusaders, in the name of a religion of love, slaughtered and pillaged the homes of whole Jewish populations of towns in France and Germany.

Even in our own day it has been used as a means of incitement by antisemites, and the fanciful charge of deicide being regarded as a short cut to the grim reality of genocide.

Even today the Moslem Arabs are using the charge as a political instrument in their own war against Israel and are using every means to persuade the Vatican not to discard it.

All these facts add up to a damaging indictment of a Church which has not yet renounced an execrable charge against an innocent people. It should be the first duty of Jewish organisations to state the facts and, so long as that accusation persists, to restate them.

HARRY SAMUELS.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### “THE UNDISCOVER'D COUNTRY”

What consolation can the non-Christian possess to reconcile him to his inevitable death? He has no heaven to look forward to, but he may derive some satisfaction from the thought that he has no hell to fear either, so that Christian beliefs are a mixed blessing. But he may regard death poetically as eternal sleep, the quiet rest

from all the strife and constant battle to stay alive, the same infinite and eternal nothingness from which he originally came into conscious being when born and developed a varying acuteness of consciousness during life. We are all only half-alive much of the time, and physically death is a constant process. But as Hamlet pondered "... to sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub; ..."—can the eternal sleep analogy be pressed to this extent? On what grounds?

Someone once said, "No one can look long at either the sun or death" and this may be true of death if we fear it. Man has a strong instinct of self-preservation, indeed it is his strongest instinct, but he also has a cerebral cortex, a forebrain capable of much conditioning and capable of talking back to the hindbrain in which the instincts reside—thus by "will" he can conquer his fears. But should we run away from the facts by subterfuges and ignore them as best we can, or should we, like Montaigne "Philosophise and thus know how to die", and have death so ever-present that we fortify ourselves and prepare to meet it constantly, ever ready to die at any time. We may rather marvel that we are still alive than pine that sometime we may die.

A rejection of the illusion of eternal life may cause a great clinging to this earthly life and a desperate seeking for means to prolong it, a quest for longevity. Hence, the craze for vitamins, queer diets, yoga, herbs, etc. The worry and self-experimentation so induced may actually shorten life. A more moderate course is the development of sensible and healthy habits ("viability" one might call it) so that the inevitable decay is postponed without loss of vitality, an active present existence combined with a life-preserving tendency—since a tendency is all that we can be guaranteed.

A consideration of the vast universe and the eras of evolution can alter one's values, while an almost mystical appreciation of chemistry and physics can give a merging of the self in the flux of things, a merging into the "stream of life" so that the egocentricity fostered by Christianity is reduced and with it the fear of personal annihilation.

Better still if we can forget ourselves in some impersonal or larger cause or interest so that we value ourselves only for the contribution we can make to it. This may be all very well while we are fit and active but not when we are old or sick or destitute. The achievement throughout life of that detachment regarded by Bertrand Russell (and other philosophers) as the essence of wisdom is perhaps all we can hope for, mortal beings that we are, while taking whatever action to improve this life that is available to us.

D. L. HUMPHRIES, Australia.

#### A REPLY TO CRITICS

There is no vast difference between the Rationalist and the Christian in regard to pain. When a Christian is in pain due to some accident or disease he certainly does not try to reconcile his pain and agony with an almighty God Who is Love. If Mr. Adkins thinks otherwise then there must be something far wrong with his so-called rational outlook.

I know perfectly well that a scientific discussion on cancer is no consolation to a man suffering with cancer, no more than a theological discussion on pain is a consolation to any man in intense pain. What does matter is the removal of the pain, but what if it cannot be removed? The problem of pain is the same for the Rationalist as it is for the Christian seeing that suffering effects us all much the same way. Outside of that all is pure theory, but pain is real.

I'm not against Mr. Adkins and his like enjoying life, as he puts it, but how can you enjoy life in a world full of suffering unless you are a bit of an escapist?

Eric S. Barker thinks I gave views on cancer in my letter. I did not, nor did I imply that we should give up cancer research. If Mr. Barker wants to make his audience happy that's up to him, but I just wonder what kind of an audience he has in mind. A very superficial one no doubt. A man who lives well and happy in this world must do a lot of concealing.

R. SMITH.

[This correspondence is now closed—ED].

#### BROADMINDED

Who could say that the Free Church of Scotland was not broad-minded?

Speaking on the subject of Sunday skiing, the Rev. Angus McKinnon said at the Synod Meeting "that in his personal opinion he could not see it in the category of mortal sin *such as murder!*" The italics are mine.

M. A. WATSON.

#### MORE MYTHS

Your readers might like to learn more about Anup and Aan, the crucified thieves of ancient Egypt, mentioned by George R. Goodman in his article on Easter. These are actually one character,

generally known by his Greek name of Anubis. His appearance as both thieves may seem odd, but Egyptian gods often assume a double form.

John the Baptist also derives from Anubis. Here are some parallels:—

Anubis=Anup, Aan	John=Jan, Jean, Sean, etc.
Anubis baptises Horus.	John baptises Jesus.
Anubis the preparer of the way of the other world.	John the preparer of the way of the Lord.
Anubis cousin to Horus.	John second cousin to Jesus.

In the Gospel, John alludes to his and Jesus's solar nature in the words: "He must increase, but I must decrease". In the Church calendar John's birthday is Midsummer's Day!

As the constant comparison of the sun-god, Anubis might be termed the "beloved disciple". We can detect him again in Ananda, the beloved disciple of Buddha. Grasping a staff, Anubis carries the infant Horus, becoming the original St. Christopher.

Meri is the name of Isis as Nile-goddess, and the Virgin Mary is a carbon-copy of Isis. Joseph is clearly Seb, the step-father of Horus. Peter is Petra, who holds the keys of Heaven and Earth in the ritual.

All this and much more proves the utter impossibility of the historical existence of Jesus and his friends. The mythicist case is one of the best weapons we have in the fight against Christianity, and should be much better known to Freethinkers than it is.

R. J. CONDON.

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