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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

For the Glory of God

SETTING aside the full Shakespearean catalogue of lies, we may note now but two—the lie by commission and the lie by omission. The one in greatest use by the B.B.C. is the latter—particularly where religion is concerned. I have several times given illustrations of this mental dishonesty of the B.B.C. Now I wish to give two examples of its methods: the first is the method of suppression, the second a sample of the intellectual quality of the "talks" where religion is concerned.

A few weeks back the B.B.C. celebrated the 400th anniversary of the publication of the epoch-marking work of Copernicus, which ultimately displaced the Ptolemaic theory. It should be noted, however, that the theory of the earth as a moving body, and not a stationary one, dates back to the ancient Greeks. They led in this as they led in other matters. The speaker selected for the occasion was J. D. Griffith Davies, assistant secretary to the Royal Society. It should be said at once that the major fault in the address was probably not his. The B.B.C. never hesitates to cut out anything that tends to weaken faith in Christianity, nor is it delicate in using the lie direct as well as the lie suggestive where the interest of the Christian Church is to be served. In the case of a Newton celebration, for example, the phrase "Newton's theory was opposed by the Churches" was altered to the harmless and useless sentence that it "met with opposition." On no account could the B.B.C. sanction the truth in such a case.

Here are the sentences in the address bearing on the attitude of the Church—or Churches—towards the Copernican theory:—

"It is an irony of fate that Copernicus's book, dedicated to Pope Paul III., should have been banned by the Papal authorities for more than 200 years. . . . It is an irony of fate, too, that Copernicus never saw the book in its published form. Always reluctant to announce his conclusions, he delayed publication;

and it was only at the request of his pupil Rheticus that he at last agreed to send his manuscript to the printers. As he lay paralysed on his death-bed, the book was placed in his hands a few hours before his death, on May 24, 1543."

The italics are mine, but the whole structure of the passage seems to indicate either that the B.B.C. "doctored" the passage, or the lecturer, knowing the policy of the B.B.C., refrained from putting the series of incidences in their proper light. A brief outline of the facts will, I think, justify my going over ground that is well known to all those who are acquainted with the history of the publication of "The Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies."

Science and Religion

There is no evidence with which I am acquainted that Copernicus was at all reluctant in announcing his revival of the older theory concerning the movement of the earth. Why, then, did he hesitate? The truth is that Copernicus had already demonstrated his theory in Rome, to privileged persons only, but it was the *publication* of the movement of the earth as a demonstrable truth that made him pause. He knew how solidly Christian tradition had based the belief in the position of the earth as the centre of the universe, he also knew the consequences of flouting the dictum of the Church. Later, Galileo was condemned for asserting that the earth moved round the sun, and Bruno burned at the stake for this and other religious offences.

If Copernicus could not have his book printed at Rome, to what other quarter could he turn? Not to Protestants. Calvin, in his "Commentaries," strongly condemned those who asserted that the earth is not the centre of the universe. The Anglican Church followed suit. Martin Luther thundered against those who "gave ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament. This fool (Copernicus) wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the Sun to stand still, and not the earth." And Melanethon, second in authority to Luther, said: "The eyes are witnesses that the heavens revolve in the space of twenty-four hours. . . . But certain men have concluded that the earth moves. . . . The example is pernicious. It is the part of a good mind to accept the truth as revealed by God and to acquiesce in it." In the seventeenth century, in this country, divines of authority could be found who denied, on the authority of the Bible, the Copernican theory. Later, Wesley took the attitude that the theory of the earth's movement "tended to infidelity." In the seventeenth century most of the colleges on the Continent opposed Copernicism—on religious grounds. In 1722 the famous Thomas Burnet, in his "Sacred Theory of the Earth," upheld the theory of the immovability of the earth. It would be interesting to learn how far the old theory of

the stability of the earth still holds its place with some Christian sects.

Where, then, was Copernicus to turn to get his book printed? Had he given his thesis to the world as a mere hypothesis it might have escaped persecution by the Pope and the Inquisition. But he stated his conclusions as a factual discovery, and that would not be permitted. At length he entrusted his manuscript to a friend at Nuremberg for publication. But at a critical moment the friend, Osiander, drew back; the risk was too great. On his own authority he wrote what White calls "a grovelling preface," and asserted that Copernicus had set forth the movement of the earth as a mere hypothesis, not as a demonstrated truth. One of the greatest of scientific discoveries, which had been buried and forgotten by the Christian world, was compelled, to again cite White, "to sneak and crawl" into existence on the 24th of May, 1543. On the grave of Copernicus no mention of his great work was permitted, and many years passed before that was added. So far as the Church was concerned, the discovery of Copernicus remained, in the words of the Index, "that false Pythagorean doctrine utterly contrary to the Holy Scriptures."

Later, Galileo was to suffer for daring to teach the Copernican theory as a demonstrated truth, and paid the price of his boldness. The half-century that separated the persecution of Galileo from the publication of the work of Copernicus served only to strengthen the determination of the Church to suppress a truth that so openly contradicted "God's Word."

Here is the official statement drawn forth by the persecution of Galileo:—

"The first proposition that the sun is the centre, and does not revolve about the earth, is foolish, absurd, false in theology, and heretical, because expressly contrary to Holy Scripture. The second proposition, that the earth is not the centre but revolves about the sun, is absurd, false in philosophy and, from a theological point of view, at least opposed to the true faith."

Galileo, an old man of seventy, was forced, on his knees, to say:—

"I, Galileo, being in my seventieth year, being a prisoner and on my knees and before your Eminences, having before my eyes the Holy Gospel, which I touch with my hands, abjure, curse and detest the error and the heresy of the movement of the earth."

So the Roman Church—approved by large numbers of Protestants—kept the sun travelling round the earth. Not until 1822 did the Church permit the relation of the sun and the earth to be changed, and "the printing and publication of works treating of the motion of the earth and the stability of the sun in accordance with the general opinion of modern astronomers." In other words, with the consent of the Pope of Rome, the sun was permitted to rest—in relation to the earth. The Church took over two centuries and a half to agree with a demonstrated truth.

We have space only for a mere mention of another anniversary celebrated on the same evening as the address on Copernicus, dealing with the great anatomist Vesalius. What the speaker originally said we cannot tell, but the B.B.C. version gives as an explanation of the opposition of the Church to Vesalius the belief that "the human body

was sacred." That leaves the underlying belief which led to the opposition in the air. The truth is that the opposition was mainly caused by the idiotic belief in the resurrection of the physical body, and for it to be used for dissection would have made the process of physical resurrection rather puzzling.

In what has gone before we have given a fine example of the way in which the B.B.C. talks on matters affecting religion deliberately mislead its uninstructed listeners. If this kind of thing merely happened occasionally one could pass it with a smile. But it is not occasional. It happens whenever and wherever the perpetuation of the well-being of the Churches and their doctrines is concerned. The plain facts we have given, only one set of facts out of a very large number, might, if they had been broadcast, have made many pause and reflect on the value of the Christian Churches and their influence on social development. So all we learn is that "it is an irony of fate that Copernicus's book, dedicated to Pope Paul III., should have been banned for more than 200 years." Some mention had to be made, and it was set forth thus. If the speaker had said that this was but one case of thousands running right through Christian history in which scientific theories and discoveries had been banned and development obstructed, it is certain that the semi-Papal concord that sits in control would have forbidden him the microphone. For where religion is concerned, fairness and justice and the mere desire for truth and progress are the last thing that trouble the completely Christian mind.

We have been dealing with the distortion of fact achieved by keeping to Christian truth without telling a plain, comparatively healthy falsehood. Next week we will deal with the quality of the religious propaganda of the B.B.C.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"CHILE PASTE"

CHARGES are sometimes made against the Roman Catholic Church that it is a reactionary force, and that Roman Catholic countries are socially backward in comparison with non-Roman Catholic countries. It appears that such allegations, for which there is undoubtedly much justification, occasionally penetrate the thick skins of those who administer the affairs of the Roman Catholic Church, and, touching some remote nerve of real social conscience and shame, stimulate a defensive response to the allegations.

The result is usually a tissue of misrepresentations, if not deliberate untruths, calculated to confirm in the minds of the believing robots of Rome the erroneous idea that their Church is the greatest force on earth for social good.

Such charges recently stirred "A Special Correspondent" of the "Catholic Herald" to dash to the defence of Mother Church with a laudatory article on the State of Chile. Endeavouring to show how progressive that country is, the writer offered examples of social legislation which, he suggested, had, in Roman Catholic Chile, anticipated the Beveridge proposals of our own "Protestant" country. A careful study of the article, however, shows that most of the examples he quotes have actually been in operation in this country for many years, some in rather different form and, judging by his own quotations and figures, on a more comprehensive scale than is the case in Chile.

But careful comparison and analysis, with strict mental honesty in reaching conclusions, were never marked qualities of Romanist writers (nor, indeed, of any religious writers, on the whole), and it is not surprising, therefore, to find "Special Correspondent" gilding the rather pale Chilean lily, and concluding his article with the following kick in the Protestant pants:—

"It will be seen, therefore, that . . . the war . . . has not prevented Chile from getting beyond the stage of words and dreams. In many respects she is far in advance of our own social system, and those who so glibly talk of the backwardness of Catholic countries would do well to study the Chilean economy."

Now, if all that the writer claimed were true—and I am prepared to grant that, despite the influence of the Church, Chile has made much progress in secular matters of late years—there would still remain two questions. To what extent is this due to the Roman Catholic Church? How does it alter the substantial fact that Catholic countries are backward in those respects that make for real humanitarian progress, happiness and culture?

But as "Special Correspondent" began the boastful comparisons between the Roman Catholic country, Chile, and our own non-Catholic country, I want to carry them a little further in the interests of sociological accuracy. Then we shall find that the "Chile paste," which he plastered on with a trowel, develops a burning sensation when vigorously rubbed in.

Roman Catholic Chile, held up for esteem by the "Herald's" special correspondent, is about the world's worst example to be chosen for Catholic propaganda purposes. There are two respects in which Chile stands head and shoulders above the rest of the world—but they do neither Chile nor the Roman Church any credit, and they do not seem to fit the argument of the "Herald" writer that Roman Catholic countries are socially progressive. Chile leads the world in its number of illegitimate births, and in its infant death rate!

The infant mortality rate of Roman Catholic Chile reaches the staggering figure of 248 per 1,000 births—the world's highest; whereas in non-Catholic, 10 per cent. Christian, 90 per cent. "nothingarian" England and Wales, the figure is only 57 per 1,000 births.

But what does it matter if a quarter of the babies born in Chile are doomed to die before reaching the age of one year? Chile can afford it, for she has a birth rate of 34 per 1,000 of the population, against 15 per 1,000 in England and Wales. On that basis Chile should be piling up customers for the Church hand over fist, despite the infant death rate, shouldn't she? Until we examine the death rate, when we find that against our 12 per 1,000, Chile has a rate of 25 per 1,000. In other words, Chile has a birth rate roughly two and a-half times our own, and a death rate two and one-twelfth times our own. Surely a costly social price to pay for the privilege of living in a "progressive" Roman Catholic country! And as the actual rate of population increase is relatively only slightly higher in Chile than in this country, there seems to be a substantial argument in these figures in support of the contentions in my last "Freethinker" article, dealing with the birth rate in this country.

When it is also considered that in England and Wales we suffer from the highest population density in the world (geographical, not mental), whereas Chile has quite a low density, it must be admitted that "Protestant" England can give many points to Roman Catholic Chile in the consolidation of social improvements and the development of the family idea. The figures in this connection are: England and Wales, 703 per square mile; Chile, 15.

The "moral" superiority of non-Catholic England becomes even more apparent when we consider the figures for illegitimacy—generally a sound guide to the strength or otherwise of the

family life of a nation. Here again Chile leads the world. Out of 149,459 births, there were 54,702 illegitimates, or more than one-third of the total born! In England and Wales the comparative figures were 621,204 births, of which 26,379 were illegitimate, or one in 24 against one in three.

All the figures in this article, by the way, refer to a five-year period, 1934 to 1938, and are averages, not figures specially picked from one bad or one good year.

But now let us leave Chile (for she is trying hard to mend matters despite the heavy drag of a powerful Roman Church) and let us examine the whole of Christendom to see what sort of family and social influence the Roman Church has in her "own" countries, compared with non-Catholic countries. Here are some interesting figures:—

INFANT MORTALITY RATES PER 1,000 BIRTHS

Catholic Countries	Non-Catholic Countries		
Chile	248	New Zealand	32
Eire	69	Australia	39
Argentina	101	Scotland	77
Belgium	77	Czechoslovakia	125
Italy	102	Finland	72
Venezuela	135	England and Wales	57
Mexico	140	Germany	65
Poland	137	Netherlands	39
Spain	112	Norway	43
Uruguay	96	United States	56
Portugal	147	Sweden	45
Total	1,364	Total	650

In non-Roman Catholic countries the infant mortality rate averages less than half that of the Roman Catholic countries! Which leads me to wonder just how much sincerity there is in the Roman Catholic claim that birth control is wrong because it strikes at family life, which, it is claimed, is based on the "law of God"—whatever that might be. In the non-Catholic countries, where, we may safely presume, birth control is more widely and more honestly practised, there is clearly a greater practical and moral regard for the family idea. This is plainly to be inferred from the infant mortality figures, which show that where there is a greater tendency to have children by choice, instead of by chance, there is a greater tendency to care for them, by both social and individual care, and to bring them safely through the first twelve months as beloved members of the family, rather than as unwanted burdens.

Illegitimacy figures also show a similar state of affairs in the two types of country, and even if we assumed a similar "promiscuity rate" in all countries, Catholic and non-Catholic alike (which is doubtful, on serious consideration), it still remains obvious that more practical regard and respect is entertained for women and girls, and more attention paid to the rules of family life in the non-Catholic countries.

In view of these figures, and the conclusions to which they lead, even with the most cynical construction put upon the sexual behaviour of men in non-Roman Catholic countries (that they take greater care), we may now anticipate that Holy Church, being sincere in its pretensions about being concerned for family life, will withdraw its violent but stupid opposition to birth control.

Or may we? I rather doubt it, for, as ever, the solid "logic" of Romanist apologists can be brought to bear even upon these damning facts and figures, to explain them away. For did not Jesus say, "Suffer little children to come unto me"?

Besides, there's always "God's Will."

F. J. CORINA.

ACID DROPS

WORSHIP is the nectar of the gods, and in Manchester a few months ago a move was made to bring the Christian deity sustenance. All the principal newspapers were provided with information, and if they had been independent leading articles it would have justified the assumption that a revival of godism was at hand. But the whole thing appears to have been little better than advertisements of a customary missionary crusade. The business men who were responsible for the alleged revival were already members of a Church; the leading clergymen who appeared in due course and advertised the revival had played the same part in other revivals; the papers that announced the revival of God had written the same articles. And now we see from letters that have appeared the whole thing has hung fire, and God is left listening in vain for the announcement from Cottonopolis that the prayers to him have increased in number and quality. It is not easy to turn the world backward.

There is no reason in the nature of things why there should be more or less dishonesty in the case of clergymen than there is in the case of laymen. The fact needs pointing out that this is the case only because there is about ten times the cant of morality in the case of the clergy than occurs with ordinary people. It is for this reason we note a speech by the Bishop of Bradford at the Church Congress in which he called attention to the "very grave irregularities with regard to the collections made in churches for purposes outside the actual parish where the churches were situated." The Bishop said that money collected for a Missionary Society had not been handed over. A secretary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel discovered that money collected had been put to the secretary's private account. Of course, these things occur outside religious circles, but we are so often told that there is no guarantee of honesty apart from religion that one may well ask, "What security is there with it?"

At the annual conference of the Wesleyan Reform Union a resolution was passed containing the following: "We record our conviction that the Christian Sabbath is necessary to national welfare, and we earnestly call upon the Government to safeguard the day against worldly entertainments, or anything that will interfere with worship." Read the last seven words three times and you will discover that the Wesleyans are still cute business men!

At the same conference the Rev. W. H. Jones "deplored the fact that so many good and loyal people never felt any obligation to enter a place of worship." We suppose that (in normal times) every tradesman in the country deplores the fact that so many nice people who have money to spend never enter their places of business.

This question is the more pertinent than ever because so many of our leading and highly placed clerics are telling us that the only solid foundation for ethical conduct is the belief in God. Of course, that is nonsense, but then if we take nonsense away from religion the whole structure would collapse. The fact is that this cant of "morality" in the mouth of the clergy and defenders of religion is something new where Christianity is concerned, the main historic Christian teaching being that morality was not capable alone of leading to salvation, and that without religion morality disintegrates. The Christian teaching of death-bed repentance, the teaching that "Though your sins be as scarlet, yet they shall become as white as snow" through belief in Jesus, has the same significance. And there was never a time yet when man for man and status for status the conduct of the non-Christian was not better than that of the average Christian.

The tricks and turns, the dishonesties and falsities of Roman Catholic advocates where the interest of their Church is at issue are well known. It was quite willing to help the Church of England get control of the schools, provided their own schools were left entirely under their control, and the whole of the cost paid by the community. To get this they produced a number of

organisations which used as many as ten or twenty men in uniform marching on and off the stage to give the impression of a large army. First the priests took a hand, then the Catholics formed another union, next a union of parents saw the light, a union of Catholic teachers followed suit, and so forth. It was all a parade of a stage army, but it served as propaganda.

There were, and are, further moves of the same kind. In the "Catholic Herald" for July 9 there is a leading article which may be taken to illustrate what has been said. There is a Catholic Parents' Association which holds by the Papal statement that the right in education is "vested in the parents," which is simply not true as stated. The parent has a right to protest, but there is no civic State that can allow either the fact of education or the quality of the education to depend wholly upon the parent. But the slimy character of the statement is seen best when one remembers that in the article from which we have quoted, it is laid down that the Church, in this and in all matters affecting faith and morals, is "God's authorised teacher" and so decides what education shall be given. The parents are just dummies to be moved as the Church may decree. It is the priest who drives the parents, and the Papal authority is behind the priest. We shall see to what extent the Board of Education is to be manipulated by the Roman Church in this country.

We knew it would come at last. One of the questions asked the erudite "Anvil" the other evening was whether there was any mention of Jesus Christ outside the New Testament. The answer from the Free Church representative was given unhesitatingly. Jesus was clearly mentioned by Josephus in his famous history of the Jews—his trial, crucifixion and resurrection, and that was evidence good enough for anybody. He was so enthusiastic about Josephus that even Father Andrew tried to demur a little by pointing out that some authorities at least were inclined to the view that the passages referred to were—well, anyway, might be—forgeries; but that was brushed aside as nonsense.

From this the members of the "Anvil" turned to the alleged doubtful testimony, Tacitus, Pliny and Suetonius to the historical existence of the God Jesus. No attention was paid to the weighty evidence offered on the critical and heretical side, nor was there any suggestion that a pagan historian writing in the second century might well accept "Christ" as the founder of Christianity without this being any stronger evidence for the historicity of Jesus than the acceptance of "Mithra" as the founder of Mithraism proved the historical existence of that god. Still, it was something to the good even in the raising of the question, and that may open the eyes of some of the more thoughtful of Christians.

Dr. Welsh who, is the B.B.C. Director for Religious Broadcasting, is seriously concerned with the ignorance of Baptists concerning the Anglican service, and also with the Anglican ignorance of Roman Catholic practice. So Dr. Welsh sees to it that, with money provided by millions of non-Christians, "Christianity" is on the air two or three times a day "with worship and instruction for those who cannot, or will not, attend a place of worship." We wonder how long it will be before Dr. Welsh develops a sense of fairness strong enough to put "on the air" the opinions of non-Christians who do understand both the Anglican and Roman beliefs and ceremonies? After all, the salary of Dr. Welsh is provided by all users of the B.B.C. services, and common decency should see to it that they are not altogether neglected.

General Dobbie, late Governor of Malta, told a Lancashire audience the other day that the work done by human beings in defence of the island was magnificent, but it was "God's hand over Malta that kept the island for us." That seems rather slighting to the men and women of Malta, the work of the airmen and sailors, and hardly complimentary to God. For if the victory was owing to God, one would like to know what God was doing that he did not check the danger at its source by blasting the Germans and Italians. God seems rather too fond of manifesting himself in the limelight.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

The General Secretary, N.S.S., gratefully acknowledges a donation of 3s. from Mr. S. C. Merrifield to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

J. E. LYONS.—Thanks for calling our attention to the book.

F. J. C.—We fully appreciate your interest in the cause.

T. M. MOSTLY.—Please send on place and time of the meetings you are holding. A postcard will be sufficient.

E. WATSON.—Thanks for report. Of all the foolish manifestations of Christian stupidity, that of a "sacred" day is the most primitive and now the most idiotic. We never heard of anyone being the worse for playing cricket on Sunday. But we have heard some queer results, particularly concerning young people, from Sunday school associations.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

THE Archbishop of Canterbury says that the unity of the people can be secured only by "a spiritual movement" through "a great Christian fellowship." Differently worded, that is exactly what every social tyranny has said throughout the ages. The Roman Catholic Church said it, and still says it. Knox in Scotland, Calvin in Geneva, Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, all have said this. And it is all absolute nonsense; as great a lie as anyone can coin. But it is good to find the man who claims to be a leader of advanced Christians to get it put into plain words.

Paradoxically as it may sound, it remains solidly true that social unity can exist only when there is recognised the right and freedom to differ on every subject that is of consequence. Unity does not consist in every person holding the same beliefs or opinions, but to agree upon certain general rules of practice. And the one that really matters is to agree upon the right to be different from our fellows so long as being different does not interfere with the equal right of others.

The Rev. Mr. Charles will occupy the platform of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. to-day (July 25) at the Key Book Shop, 115, Dale End, Birmingham, and will speak on "Education and Religion in the U.S.S.R." The lecture begins at 3 p.m., and should lead to some very interesting discussion.

We were pleased to see in the "Pianomaker and Radio Retailer" for June a protest against that perfectly idiotic B.B.C. performance, the 7-55 a.m. "Thought for the Day." The writer protests that in order to get the beginning of the news one has to run the risk of a parsonic platitude known as "Thought for to-day." The "Thought for to-day" is all the writers say about it—and then some. It is shocking that time should be taken up in broadcasting the greatest piece of senseless drivel

one can conceive. It is an insult to every subscriber. If we were asked to pick out a sample of the state of imbecility to which a religion may sink we should with confidence select the B.B.C. 7-55 a.m. outburst.

We were interested to learn from the "Two Worlds" that Mrs. Teresa Myers, who has reached the age of 90, has had for years as her chief control no less a person than Charles Bradlaugh. It is to be assumed that Bradlaugh has learned the error of his ways, otherwise we might reasonably have counted on him sending some kind of a message to the National Secular Society—of which he was president for so many years—a message that would have been of some help.

Here is a conundrum worth considering. The Roman Catholic press recently urged, in opposing birth control, that where it was considered necessary to avoid childbirth for the health of the mother, abstinence should be the method, as "there is evidence that abstinence has no ill effects" and it "does not contradict God's law." In view of the variations in physical temperament it is obviously ridiculous to generalise about abstinence; but our conundrum is this: How can it be any less an offence against "God's law" to refrain from having children by abstinence than it is by using a contraceptive? Roman Catholic parents would do well to consider this point and, having decided that "God's law" is broken anyhow, to use the more modern and more practical methods of birth control.

According to the "Scottish Daily Express" of July 5, the Rev. J. McCallum suggests that absentees from Church should be fined 1s. each for every offence. That is one way of making the clergy far more wealthy than they are at present—unless it should turn out that the absentees decided that freedom from the parson was worth more than 1s.

Someone has been writing to the editor of the "Universe" asking what were the surnames of Adam and Eve. To this comes the solemn reply that "Double names were only required when the human race began to multiply." That is hardly correct—surnames are of a comparatively late date. The earlier fashion was merely to mention to what family he belonged. Another piece of information is that marriage began "by the divinely ordained union of Adam and Eve," and that makes us pause. If Adam and Eve were to marry, the choice was very limited, and as there was no possible choice, there does not seem much room for a "divinely ordained" union. And if Adam and Eve had not "married," the story of the human race would have been very, very small. Even the Roman Church would not have existed.

Very abruptly we were asked by a casual acquaintance, "Do you never worship God?" We replied, "No, but we often feel sorry for him." That seemed to end the conversation—on that topic at least. Yet what else can one feel for the gods but sympathy—particularly the Christian deity. One does not find so much to pity in the old pagan deities. First of all, they are dead, and the difference between a dead god and a living one is very marked. On the whole, the ancient gods were rather jolly; they had, while they lasted, a good time, and when they reached Nirvana their one-time worshippers could think of them much as one thinks of a business man who has retired from the field of active enterprise to some unknown but, one hopes, comfortable refuge. The old gods had their day of jollity, endeavour and, above all, success. The rest might well be silence.

But the Christian God has a far different history. He made the world, declared it "very good," only to find it was really very bad. His worshippers forsook him by the millions, and in his few thousand years of recorded activities he has had an almost unbroken series of disappointments and at least comparative failure. To-day when he looks round at his existing followers he finds them poorer in quality and fewer in number than they have ever been. The lightning no longer strikes to his order, the germs of disease have ceased to operate at his command. In war and peace God has become for a large section of the public a negligible quantity. One feels a spasm of commiseration at the sight of a fugitive king; can we deny it to a God who from being everything is becoming with increasing speed—Nothing?

DR. MARIE STOPES AND THE BISHOPS

THANKS for your open letter to the Bishop of St. Albans. It is doubted that you will receive a reply; and even so, it is still further to be doubted that such reply—if any—will be couched in the same even terms of logic, morality and imagination as is your own effort.

This is because the worthy Bishop has not your own knowledge and experience either of people or of contraceptives on the one hand; nor has he the viewpoint of the Freethinker on the other; and, without these twain, his imagination is bound to run riot with his reasoning.

You ask the Bishop to "answer my charge." He may or may not reply. It would be interesting to read a letter from him in the pages of "The Freethinker." He may reply, but to "answer" you is impossible unless he denies, in some part or in whole, his professed faith or religion.

And, presume that he indeed does logically reply and answer you. What then? His case would only be half a case, for, until woman is the fundamental master of her own body; until woman is the deciding factor in her own personal "birth-rate," the idea of liberty and equality is but an idea, and the "pursuit of happiness," of which we now hear so much and experience so little, is but a myth, and a phantom myth to boot.

"Man is a slave, and woman is a slave's slave," wrote the mighty Ingersoll; but scientific knowledge of the correct uses and purposes of contraceptives, having done something, under suchlike guidance as your own, to free women from their age-old slavery to the male, is tending toward freeing woman from this slave complex—to the consternation of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

Hence it is safe to assert that millions of Freethinkers are behind you and endorse your attitude. It is safe to say that the information you give us in your open letter will be intelligently read by such Freethinkers who were not acquainted with the facts, and also appreciated by such Freethinkers as stood already instructed.

But, to Freethinkers, the matter goes rather deeper than the actual use or non-use of contraceptives as such. We require to know various things of the Bishop, over and above your own charge to him. We would, therefore, like to join your charge to our own, or ours to yours, in this manner.

The Bishop, for instance, says that the decline in the birth-rate is "appalling," and that the Church must "face boldly" this question of decline; that the Church should bring pressure to bear on Parliament to ban the sale of contraceptives; that refusal to accept the responsibility of parentage is "not only unpatriotic but against the law of God."

It may safely be presumed that the basic "Law of God" which is available to the Bishop is obtained from the Bible, or in lieu, from the acts of God himself.

Let these be reviewed briefly, therefore, that we may see both the words of God and the acts of God, and so discover for our selves whether "refusal to accept parentage is against" "the Law of God," for surely God would not object to his own act and deed, plus his own word being weighed in the balance of the minds he gave us!

God, the Father, with one Son only to his credit as a begotten child is not a good example. "Blessed is he who hath his quiver full of them," does not tally with this act of God. It must be remembered that all we others were, originally, created—not begotten, as is alleged by the Bishop.

Neither was the Son a begetter of children, although of age to be a parent. Would the Bishop care to assert that this particular "refusal to accept parentage" was "against the Law of God"? "The Greeks have a word for it," and it runs, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

It may well be that the Bishop is unaware that Gods die. They actually do. Zeus, Venus, Pluto, Cybele, Isis, Baal. All dead as a door nail; and, at the same rate of "expectancy," God, nor the Son, did not exhibit much desire to repopulate Heaven with gods for, behold, if these gods should die—as so many have done previously, where will the next generation of gods come from?

It could hardly be a logical answer to this to assert that "God the Father is Eternal," for, when so many "eternal" gods have already died, to assert this is mere assertion.

So much for the example that the present Trinity of Gods has set us. Three Gods, yet one God; with one Son who is himself his own Father, would depopulate the whole Heaven of Gods in one generation.

Now, how was this position interpreted by the Church? "Yet she on earth hath union, with God the Three in One," "From Heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride," and yet the Bishop's parent Church is a celibate Church.

Thus the picture unfolds before us that neither the Gods nor "its" bride, the Church, do much in the way of example to "be patriotic" or conform to the Bishop's alleged "Law of God." The Greeks also have a word for this, and it also runs, "By their fruits shall ye know them."

Isn't it "appalling" when we "face boldly" the facts as illustrated by the examples of God and his bride, the Church?

As God's acts do not appear to give the Bishop much support, let us turn to the word of God and see how, or if, this word supports the Bishop.

"The Law of God" ordained, according to his holy man Elisha, that when 42 little urchins shouted "Old baldhead, old baldhead!" after him, that "two she-bears" should tear these little morsels of innocent life into shreds. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

But what encouragement is there for women to bear children if the "Law of God" uses them so brutally.

"Suffer little children to come unto me"; "if they come ready dressed" seems to be the implication, for it is certain that "they"—the little children—could have come in natural order had not a mental contraceptive been used by Jesus.

"The spirit of the Lord came to Jephthah," and so Jephthah burns his own daughter; for so Judges informs us. Indeed, worse than that, Exodus informs us that "at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt." "The leopard cannot change its spots nor the Ethiopian his skin."

But still, "If thou buy an Hebrew servant . . . the wife and children shall be her master's"; and what, therefore, is the use of women childbearing if the "Law of God" dooms them to this lifelong slavery, as is shown in Leviticus?

It would appear that both Jesus and Paul recommend celibacy; in fact, Jesus recommended castration; and celibacy and castration do not tend to increase the population, nor do they appear to be "patriotic." Yet they very surely do appear to be the "Law of God."

Are they, or are they not, my Lord Bishop? And, when you have answered Dr. Stopes, then please answer my charge!

"BILL THE BOGEY BUSTER."

WAR

What concern to me are humanity, benevolence, modesty, temperance, gentleness, wisdom, piety so long as half an ounce of lead shatters my body, and I die in torments unspeakable, surrounded by five or six thousand dead or dying, the shrieks of women and children—and the whole for the pretended interests of a man whom we do not know?—VOLTAIRE.

THE LAST ROMANTIC

"Legacy to Love." By John Gawsworth. (Collins; 5s.)

Fashions in literature are insidious things, not so much because they affect the lesser fry. For every great and original experimenter in words like Yeats or Mr. T. S. Eliot attracts followers who try to imitate the superficial qualities of the master without ever appreciating the subtleties that lie underneath. For that reason, if for no other, a modern poet who has remained obstinately opposed to "modernism" deserves consideration, and now that Mr. John Gawsworth has gone overseas with the R.A.F. he has left us a legacy which is ripe for analysis.

"Legacy to Love" is a curious collection, which will appeal to a very diverse public. It contains what the poet regards as his best work, selected from books published in the ten years from 1931 to 1941, together with a few brief lyrics written since his enlistment in the R.A.F. It shows a complete mastery of a severely limited medium, and it proves that the spirit of the Elizabethan love-poets is not yet entirely dead. For what other poet living to-day could have written:—

Ah, leave the fretful men to chafe,
The quiet women to make sighs,
And sleep you soft and sleep you safe
And close your earth-tormented eyes.
The-worthy are not always just
Nor are the noble always brave,
And yet all mingle in the dust
Of the one grave.
When faced with power's dominion,
With ruin of all good you prize,
Choose death; spread the dark pinion,
Fly into final skies.

I know that some people will feel inclined to say that he is too fluent, too smooth, and that the best poetry in this day and age must necessarily be difficult to read. It may be so; but the fact remains that if this be "escapism," it is very pleasant reading. And it must not be forgotten that Gawsworth has always been a poet who has taken the eternal themes for his province. Love, patriotism of a realistic cast, the face of death—these have been his problems, and, if he has been a little too much aloof from the political movements which have claimed the support of so many of the poets of our day, it is not altogether a bad thing that one figure should remain, aloof and solitary, to prove that the romantic movement in English literature is still a living reality.

No better close to this brief recommendation of his selected poems can be given than the last poem in the book:—

These are my acres, bare and brown;
Beneath my cottage beech-roots creep,
And soon the structure they will down
And soon I shall lie down to sleep.
It will not matter then what man
Is overlord and what man slave,
The conscript as a craven can
Outface the boaster and the brave.
So I must be considered one
Who fought to save his farm and field
And left his shy place in the sun
To prove not even poets yield.

Under the skies of North Africa the cottage in the English countryside must seem a long way off; and it may well be that his experiences in this war will provide Gawsworth with a political philosophy which will give added force to his poetry in the years ahead. But in the meantime I think that what he has done will be found to compare very favourably with anything that has been achieved in the ten years from 20 to 30 by any of his contemporaries.

S. H.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held July 15, 1943

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, A. C. Rosetti, Bryant, Ebury, Lupton, Silvester, Horowitz, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary. Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted; financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Chester-le-Street, Newcastle, Jarrow, Bristol, Glasgow, Birmingham, West London, North London Branches, and the parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of branches of the Society at Bristol and Jarrow-on-Tyne. A report of the Annual Conference was put before the meeting and accepted. Messrs. Clifton, A. C. Rosetti and Mrs. Quinton were elected as the Benevolent Fund Committee. Mr. P. V. Morris was co-opted on the Executive. The case of a leading aircraftsman punished for refusing to attend a religious service was taken up by the Executive; a communication from the Air Ministry stated the punishment would be cancelled and the record expunged from his official papers. Correspondence was dealt with from Birmingham, Bath, Preston, Leicester, London areas and India.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE JEWS AND JESUS

SIR.—Mr. Cutner sticks to it that it was "impossible" for Trypho's remark to refer to anyone but Jesus. For a Jew, arguing with Justin, to oppose Justin's view that Jesus was the Messiah by stating his own view about the Jewish Messiah was not impossible, but very natural; and that is what Trypho does in the "Dialogue."

Mr. Cutner notes that some translators use the word "Christ" instead of "Messiah." The Greek word is "Christos"; and as this is the stock translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah," it may fairly be rendered by either.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. Ebury.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Thursday, 7 p.m., Messrs. Wood and Page; Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. E. C. Saphin and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11 a.m., Mr. S. K. Ratcliffe—"Belief and Conduct."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Key Bookshop, 115, Dale End, Birmingham): 3 p.m., Rev. Charles (Birmingham)—"Education and Religion in U.S.S.R."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place or Corporation Park): Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. J. V. Shortt—a Lecture.

Blyth (Fountain): Monday, July 26, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. Brighton—a Lecture.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End): Saturday, July 24, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. Brighton—a Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): Sunday, 7 p.m. Debate: "Is There a Life After Death?"—Messrs. F. Smithies and Gordon Livingstone, M.A.

Fatfield: Tuesday, July 27, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. Brighton—a Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields): Sunday, 3 p.m.—Mr. W. A. Atkinson—a Lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Bigg Market): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. Brighton.

North Shields (Little Bedford Street): Wednesday, July 28, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. Brighton—a Lecture.

WAS THERE A CRUCIFIXION?

MR. CUTNER is to be congratulated on his recent articles on the God-Man Jesus. When I ceased to be a Sunday school teacher some 30 years ago I gave up the Christian religion because it was not true. The spread of education has made more people familiar with the fact that the gods are legendary figures and that the Christian variety runs true to pattern.

Whether gods are the embodiment of natural forces or the attributes of humanity, their development and decay are only too obvious. They are born of ignorance and die because of man's knowledge.

The older Jewish god who is the hero of the Old Testament is an instance of this. He was eclipsed in an age when the Mediterranean was full of competitors from the surrounding countries. His passing, however, provided the background for the Christian religion which took over all the old scenery. If, however, the god of the Old Testament was a myth, how much more is this true of the legend of the "Son" which was grafted on to the old mythology?

If we can have "Mothers" of God and "Sons" of God, why not nephews and nieces and also cousins of the Deity? As far as I can see, there is no reason whatsoever, and had all these relations been necessary for the successful running of the religion, they would have been considered quite as "sacred" as the other relationships.

Now as the Jewish God was a myth (and surely no reasonable person would argue otherwise), then the same is true of the Son. Both stand or fall together. The fact that the "Son" takes the name of Jesus Christ, and that the older religion makes a new start in Anno Domini, does not mean that it is true. The figure of the "Man of Sorrows" is just as legendary as that of his father. What has happened is that the people interested in religion have supplied a second instalment, but have transferred the God-head to a "man" who has been given supernatural attributes (indeed, He is one of the Trinity), and people who are keen enough to recognise the older Jewish God as legendary have been taken in by the advertising of the "Son" by the powers that be.

The whole story that commences with the New Testament is so silly that it could only have persisted by people being forced to acquiesce with its exponents. It is drilled into children from birth, and all the best people have professed it, whatever may have been their private belief.

The Old Testament has been faked in that references to the Son have been interpolated. Exactly who was responsible for the New Testament we shall never know, but then we do not know the author of "Jack and the Beanstalk" or "Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp," and yet these stories are acted to-day as some of our most popular pantomimes!

I think it most likely that the Christian attitude to the Jew has been dictated not, as we have been led to believe, by the legend that the Jews were responsible for the Crucifixion, but that the Jews refused to accept Christ as the Son of their God and refused to countenance the swindle. This can well be understood when the Jews found the Christians wielding immense religious and political power and using the Jewish God as the background for the supernatural character of the new God—Jesus Christ.

Once the legend of the new God had been started, the history of this religious movement would be written by the people interested in its propagation and its opponents dealt with ruthlessly. History is a proof of this being the procedure.

The attempt to replace the supernatural Son of God by the human (and yet supernatural) Jesus Christ, "The man of many sorrows," is too late. He has been given all the credit for wisecracks which have been the commonplace of humanity since

society was formed. Other philosophies are superior, and mankind will be the richer by the passing of this the latest of all the "God" legends. Those little sketches of a Man talking to his disciples, living with fishermen, talking in the temple, etc., are simply philosophic sayings put into a dramatic setting and "written-up" to this end.

The Father was an Anthropomorphic creation of the human mind. The Son was a later edition, with the improvement that he "walked the earth and talked to men." His Mother, Disciples, Apostles and other personnel were created by the Christians as the legend developed to make the appeal more up to date and homely.

When it is pointed out that there was no "Fall" of Man, and therefore no necessity for the "Sacrifice," it will be recognised that the whole story of both the Old and New Testaments is an absurdity, and the "Sermon on the Mount" and the person of the Christ have been dramatised because of the political nature of Religion in doping generations of people with the idea of "Pie in the Sky."

T. D. SMITH.

LET US PRAY

(Suggested by an article in the "Manchester Guardian")

LET us pray!

THIS WEEK

For ourselves, whom God has called for his work, that we may steadfastly continue to devote ourselves to the formulation of more ideas for bringing in money for the Church.

For the people, that they may continue believing, for God help the Church if they don't.

NEXT WEEK

For the poor, that they may continue to grin and bear their poverty like Christians.

For the rich, that they may be more philanthropic in their attitude towards the Church.

That Christianity may continue to dominate the minds of men in spite of Atheists and Freethinkers.

THE WEEK AFTER

For the diminution of the evil influence of science, which persists in questioning God's holy word which was in the beginning and is good.

For the stimulation of greater emotion among our people that they may become more pliable material for the moulding of our great Christian brotherhood.

EVERY OTHER WEEK

For the churches without lightning conductors.

For the kindly Christian newspaper proprietors and editors that they may continue long in their faithfulness.

For the greater power of that magnificent institution—the days of which may they be long in the air—that stalwart of timidity, that propounder of the great half-truth—the B.B.C.

And let us pray continually for all believers who, during this war, assist us with the increasing propagation of the holy gospel. . . . Oh! but we are praying for the war!

S. B. WHITFIELD.

New Pamphlet

By
C. G. L. DU CANN

Will You Rise from the Dead?

An Enquiry into the Evidence for Resurrection

Price 6d.

Postage 1d.