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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Secular "Festival"

THE 1951 "Festival of Britain" has now come to an end. The towering Skylon and the dazzling lights on the South Bank of the Thames are now doomed to disappear. The South Bank itself, after a moment of ephemeral and (literally) dazzling glory, will now resume its normally squalid appearance. Whatever the ultimate verdict may be upon the wisdom, or unwisdom of having so grandiose an exhibition in a time of growing economic discontent and soaring armaments, at least, it is indisputable that the Festival added to both the gaiety and the instruction of nations, besides adding to the colour and variety of the night sky. Londoners and, no doubt, many others from all parts of the world, will long carry the gay scenes in their memories. Nor were those who, including the present writer, watched in person the final scenes on the South Bank, unmindful that the impressive scene concluded an historic occasion. Now in the once crowded pavilions, if not "the owl and the lizard," at least their more prosaic counterparts, the demolition squads and the furniture vans, resume their sway. The South Bank returns to the anonymity which has been its lot since Shakespearian times. "Sic transit gloria mundi."

The Festival of Britain—1951 style—was not only a memorial to British progress in the past: equally it represented progress in the present and towards the future. From the standpoint of Secularism and Freethought, the Festival represented an undeniable victory. Our pious ancestors would have been undoubtedly horrified at the insignificant part played by religion and religious belief in this still supposedly Christian age and land. Presumably, or so we imagine, the part played by Christianity amongst our pious Victorian ancestors in the Exhibition of 1851 was substantially more considerable. In 1951, it was conspicuous by its almost complete absence. Even in the closing scenes on the South Bank upon September 30 last; scenes marked by considerable emotional fervour; there was actually little evidence of any special religious enthusiasm. The final hymn-singing, so much boosted in the Press the following day, was actually insignificant in volume in comparison with the enormous crowds assembled on the final night. Whilst His Grace of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher, perhaps sensing the prevailing atmosphere, wisely kept theology out of his final discourse, most of which could have been delivered by a public man of any religion or none, the name of His Majesty the King being mentioned, we think, more often than that of either God or Christ. Whilst we do not recall any reference to the Holy Trinity or any quotation from the Holy Bible at all!

As far as the actual Exhibition itself was concerned, it must be pronounced unhesitatingly as an unequivocal manifestation of and triumph for Secularism. This was demonstrated most clearly and unambiguously in the scientific exhibits in the great "Dome of Discovery" which most visitors seemed to regard as the show-piece of the whole Exhibition. Not only were religion and its symbolic

manifestations conspicuous by their complete absence but evolution and the entire modern conception of the Universe were profusely illustrated and the general scientific conceptions behind it were simply taken for granted. A vivid tableau of the evolution of man, from the earliest ape-men, from primeval pithecanthropus to modern homo sapiens (self-styled!), formed what appeared from the crowds round it, to be one of the most popular exhibits in the collection on the South Bank. The physical evolution from ape to man was forcibly demonstrated in the historic progression of ape, via ape-man, to man. Not a word about "special creation" or Genesis; not a relic of the ark or of the walls of Jericho! Darwin, Huxley, and their scientific contemporaries would, we imagine, have been highly delighted at the posthumous progress of their ideas. But we do not think that the "fundamentalist" Victorian theologians of the Bishop Wilberforce-Dean Burgon school of "angels versus apes" would have at all relished a visit to the south bank of the Thames could they have revisited this terrestrial globe in the Year of Grace 1951!

Nor was this the whole story. Apart from the fact that science had the entire field—and the entire Exhibition—to itself as far as the actual exhibits were concerned, the whole atmosphere of the South Bank was alien to and remote from any religious conception of the Universe. Everywhere the deterministic principle, the "open sesame" of, and to, modern science was in evidence. Like causes produce like results; progress proceeds by trial and error; our complex modern culture is the creation, exclusively, of mankind; of his "blood, sweat, occasional inspirations, and frequent perspiration!" Here, recounted in the pavilions upon the South Bank, was revealed in outline the whole Secular story of science; of occasional individual genius—and how rich the now denigrated Victorian Age was in men of science whose names are now household words—and of that collective human experience which is mankind's surest guarantee of sustained progress. Of Divine intervention, not a sign; of miracles, not a trace; of relics, not a vestige in this exclusively scientific Exhibition.

Between May and October, 1951, some eight and a-half millions of people from all parts of the world received an invaluable object lesson in evolutionary science. No normally intelligent person, we venture to assert, could see the factual evidence for evolution piled up in such profusion in the "Dome of Discovery" and come away with an unshaken belief in the old legends regarding the creation, or in the old Biblical chronology. The educational value of such an experience must have been very considerable and, we are of the opinion, the rationalist Press in this country might, perhaps, have stressed this aspect of the South Bank more than it actually appears to have done.

If the supernatural was banished by science from the "Dome of Discovery," precious little room also was left for the Divine intervention of Providence even in the history of our land. At the conclusion of the Festival, the crowds might sing, "Land of Hope and Glory," with its pious

refrain; but in the actual pavilion that depicted the chequered history of these islands, "our island story" was interpreted upon purely natural lines of historical causation, as the result of impacts in these islands and upon its inhabitants, of successive racial immigrations and cultural expansion. From neolithic times to our own, Britain has been a "melting-pot" of races and cultures: Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, French, etc. English History, as vividly portrayed upon the South Bank, had as little to do with the miraculous as English Science in its attitude to the Universe. St. George and the Dragon follow Genesis into oblivion.

The South Bank Exhibition was, we repeat, a demonstration of applied Secularism. Had the Secularists of 1851 been able to foresee 1951 they would have had every cause for satisfaction. Let us hope that, by 2051, England will have made a still further advance and will by then have shed the ever less plausible pretence that this is still a Christian land.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE CRISIS OF OUR TIMES—AN INTERPRETATION

WHEN, with the arrival of Napoleon, the ghost of the Universal Christian Empire vanished ingloriously from the historical stage in 1806, no one took very much notice. Nevertheless it is a convenient date to mark man's final disillusionment with the idea that religious principles and exhortations, translated into terms of politics, could rid the human race of the scourge of war, and bring about an era of peace. This era, in pre-Christian times projected into a hypothetical past or future by philosophers, had seemed to be a reality in the Age of the Antonines. The precarious social structure established by the Stoic humanists exploded into a thousand fragments in the class struggles of the third century. On this scrap heap of the ancient world was built the first Christian State, the bureaucratic Empire of Constantine. Soon however, it became clear, in the wars between the various heresies, that men could exterminate each other in the name of Christianity as ruthlessly as ever before. In the Middle Ages a revived European culture, seeking economic expansion, engaged in a series of predatory wars, the so-called "Crusades," under the blood red banner of the Cross. This was followed by an epoch of civil wars within European civilisation itself, again in the name of the victim of Calvary, the Wars of Religion. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), concluded from sheer exhaustion, resulted in an agreement to differ (*cuius religio, eius regio*), and the slackening of the hold of the bishops and presbyters over the lives of men. Such briefly is the lamentable record of the religion of Peace, a record of failure to assuage human passions and prevent war.

Whilst the Holy Roman Empire was experiencing its last decrepitude the early utopian Socialists were already elaborating their theories. Since the beginning of the 19th century Socialism has replaced Christianity as a creed, spreading far more swiftly than its predecessor, and promising likewise an era of general peace. While Christianity had doubts about whether this would be inaugurated by a Second Coming—the *Dies Irae* of the medieval poet—in this world, or in a world beyond the grave, Socialism has had no doubts. It has derided the world beyond this world of the priests, and promised a purely secular realisation of its aspirations, many of which it has taken over from the earlier religion. It has ascribed war to the competitive nature of capitalist economy, declaring that

once the expropriators have been expropriated, and the insane grab for markets, inspired by their limitless greed, replaced by a planned organisation of economic resources on a basis of mass ownership, there will ensue an era of harmony and ever increasing plenty.

To-day the Socialist dream seems far from realisation. As in the early centuries rival factions of the Church killed each other in arguments about the triune nature of the Godhead, so now Communist countries are quarrelling over varying interpretations of the Marxian dogma. In the Middle Ages the Pope at Rome condemned each successive heresiarch as Anti-Christ. Now the "Pope" at Moscow condemns an East European Socialist leader who has mixed the ingredients of the Marxian dogma to concoct his own recipe, as the Socialist equivalent of Anti-Christ—a Fascist.

All this seems to indicate that the causes of human conflict lie more deeply embedded in our culture than has previously been supposed. Although different forms of social and economic organisation obviously have their effect on the relative aggressiveness of a community or nation—and here the Marxists have discovered part of the answer—nevertheless it appears that to be organised into a united aggressive group elicits a satisfying instinctual response in human nature. Alone of the great revolutionary Marxist leaders of this century, Leon Trotsky, who had much in him of the tradition of the "Uomo Universale" of the Italian Renaissance, seems to have been aware of the discoveries of modern psychology. In 1932 he wrote in a passing tribute to Sigmund Freud:—

"Our conscious thought is only a small part of the work of the dark psychic forces. Human thought descending to the bottom of its own psychic sources, must shed light on the most mysterious driving forces of the soul and subject them to reason and will."

Although, therefore, aware of the doctrines of Freud, Trotsky never seems to have attempted to modify his political theories in their light, nor to have been aware of their significance in the literally internecine struggles amongst the leaders of the Russian Revolution, or in his own personal conflict with Stalin. An age which can see as an imminent possibility what appeared to the Marxian revolutionary of a generation ago as unthinkable and illogical, war—not merely between Capitalist and Socialist powers—but between nations professing different versions of Socialism, cannot however afford to disregard the application of the discoveries of psycho-analysis in the domain of politics, international relations, and human affairs in general.

It is perhaps one of the paradoxes of our time that the nation where there is still a great accumulation of wealth in the hands of the owning class, and therefore where the practice of individual analysis is most widespread—the U.S.A.—is also the most expansionist on the post-war scene, and, as a corollary, most paranoiac in its irrational fear of attack. Nevertheless the Soviet Union also cannot by any means be exempted from criticism. In her attitude to Jugo-Slavia, in her caricature of the aggressive intentions of "Western Imperialism," she displays similar mechanisms. Despite the mystical rhapsodisings of the political thinkers on the nature of the State, the State is, and will always remain, simply a conglomeration of individuals. Thus the understanding of basic Freudian concepts, such as infantile death-wishes and the Oedipal triangle, have validity in inter-State relations, where they simply become enlarged and projected on to a wider canvas. The spectacle of Sir Gladwyn Jebb, in a news-reel of the councils of the United Nations at the beginning

of the Korean war, with a humorous leer on his face, cocking a Russian-made gun at the Soviet delegate, formed a graphic illustration of the level on which high power politics are conducted.

A. P. PERRIN, B.A.

(To be concluded)

ICELAND AND HER WONDERS

I HAVE had the good fortune of visiting this island during the summer months. In all, I had 17 days during which I could discover for myself the many strange and beautiful aspects of this "Viking Isle." Iceland has many attractions for the visitor—and an irresistible attraction for the geologist and mythologist. I happen to be one of the people who fall into the last two categories. The description I give of Iceland will naturally tend to give due prominence to these aspects of her fascinating qualities.

The people of Iceland are, in the main, descendants of Norwegians, Danes, Scotsmen and Irishmen. Their language has the closest affinity to Norwegian, and some resemblance to Danish. The literature of this island is a truly ancient and great one. The Icelandic writers of to-day who have been brought up in the last phases of the struggle for national independence, inherited a real wealth of classical literature and mythology from which they have drawn freely. Although the population of Iceland is only about 145,000, it can boast of at least one internationally known novelist, and one novelist whose works have been translated into the Scandinavian languages. I am referring, of course, to Halldor Kiljan Laxness and Kristmann Guthmunsson. For those who are interested in Iceland's novelists, there is but one disappointment—only Laxness's two major works have been translated, "Independent People" and "Salka Valka."

It is significant that Icelanders have found little use for religion. I doubt whether there is an island which is freer of religious prejudice than Iceland. The state religion is Lutheran, but no one seems to take it at all seriously. Only the small Roman Catholic minority shows signs of life. The churches one comes across in the countryside are very quaint, whether many people take them very seriously is a matter about which I have no information. There is, however, a strong undercurrent of spiritualism in the country. I was told many a weird tale of premonitions, telepathy and other supernatural phenomena.

The island is about as large as Ireland. The interior consists either of glaciers or high plateaus. There are hardly any forests in Iceland, though at the time of Ingolfar Amason, the first settler (870), the island was covered with forests in the coastal areas. Iceland's geology is of interest not only to the vulcanologist but also the glaciologist. Iceland is part of an enormous volcanic province known as the Thulean province, which extended as far west as Greenland and as far south as the Hebrides. Iceland is thus a remnant of a great volcanic province which was built up during the early Eocene as the result of successive outpourings of basalt over millions of years. Even to-day, active volcanoes are still liable to erupt, the most recent being the eruption of Mount Hekla in 1947.

The hot springs, mud pools and sulphurous streams for which Iceland is so famous, are all evidence of the last stages of volcanic activity. The superimposition of the ice during the Pleistocene gave Iceland its unique geological character. The fjords and moraines testify to the extensive morphological and coastal changes wrought by the moving ice. Truly, Iceland has been called the "land of fire and ice."

It may come as a surprise to the reader to be informed about the general climate of the island. Iceland is not noted for extremes of temperature. During this summer, for instance, when I visited Iceland, the temperature on the average was higher than in England. Even in winter the mean temperature for the coldest month is at least one degree higher than that of New York. The atmosphere is fresh and remarkably clear. It is possible to see fantastic distances with the naked eye.

The islanders' main occupation is farming and fishing. Of recent years there has been an alarming drift away from the farms to the towns. However, according to the latest reports, this drift has now become reversed.

In conclusion I would like to point out that visiting Iceland or exploring Iceland is not an easy matter. It is both expensive and difficult in every respect. For those about to embark on the "Hekla" or the "Godafoss," I suggest that they make the most careful inquiries about the situation in Iceland. The price of food is so high, and the hotels so expensive that I had to live in an improvised tent to save going bankrupt in the first few days. The intrepid readers of *The Freethinker* will, I am sure, not be put off by these considerations—of this I am firmly persuaded!

E. S. HILLMAN.

REVIEW

THE late Dr. S. Gurney Champion and Mrs. Dorothy Short have between them produced a concise and reliable introduction to eleven of the great religions of the world.* The idea for such a book was Dr. Champion's, who felt that it might have a special value to-day when totalitarianism causes man to look for alternative solutions to his problems. It might also, he thought, provide "refreshment for a distracted generation." The sudden death of Dr. Champion in 1949 has caused much of the work to devolve upon Mrs. Short: she has brought her late colleague's work to completion in an admirable fashion.

Each of the eleven religions is introduced by an extremely impartial survey which provides a minimum of background and sets the extracts into perspective. The selections from the scriptures are reasonably generous. In a book of 336 pages, it is impossible to do justice to the sacred writings of so many faiths. Within the limits of space, the arrangement and selection of material is excellent.

There is a brief glossary on page 334, which provides a slightly jarring note. Everything has been sacrificed to brevity, with the result that some of the explanations are misleading. It is, for example, hardly accurate to define Atheism as "the belief that there is no God," and other entries are misleading.

The bibliography is selective and occasionally a little puzzling. Dr. Evans Wentz's edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* should surely have been included, and in the general section, there is no mention of Sir James Frazer's classic works.

But these are comparatively minor points and detract only slightly from the value of this book which, strongly bound and well printed, is a book to own and enjoy.

V.E.N.

* "Readings From World Religions." Compiled by Dr. S. G. Champion and Dorothy Short. (Watts.) viii—336 pp. 18s.

WHAT IS RELIGION? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.

ACID DROPS

In his now notorious article, in our contemporary, the *Sunday Chronicle* (7th October, 1951), Mr. Beverley Nichols announced that he went to South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall) in order to find "The soul of an Atheist." The only thing wrong with the above description is that the Ethical Society does not consist of Atheists and, in any case, Atheists, as such, do not possess souls. Otherwise, a perfectly accurate description, as Voltaire would, no doubt, have said!

The B.B.C., that pillar both of "lost causes" and of causes that ought to be lost without any unnecessary delay, announced the other night in shocked tones that Marshal Tito, the Yugoslav dictator, has just stated that (next, presumably, to Stalin), the Roman Catholic Church is the worst enemy of Yugoslavia. Perhaps before long we shall have the Vatican blessing the Russian "crusaders" in their attempts to down the Marshal's heretical regime. After all, both Moscow and Rome are totalitarian regimes which habitually act upon the assumption that "the heretic is worse than the infidel."

A burning question is now convulsing art circles in Madrid. Was Jesus Christ a white man and, if so, how far is it permissible to describe Him as coloured in the art forms of coloured races who have been converted to Catholicism? In a recent missionary exhibition in the Vatican, this burning question was brought to a head by Indian representations of Christ and His mother scantily clad, and dusky in colour, and resembling Hindu Deities. But Jesus was a pure Jew according to the elaborate chronologies preserved in Matthew and Luke. As this knotty point involves problems of theology as well as art, perhaps the Pope might profitably turn his infallible attention to this momentous problem?

As he entered his aeroplane at Teheran en route for New York, the Persian Prime Minister, Dr. Mossadeq, was presented with a copy—appropriately coloured green!—of the Holy Koran. As his excellency turns over the sacred sheets, he will find that when God's holy prophet periodically ascended into the heavens, he did not bother to charter an aeroplane but mounted his celestial steed, Al Borak. And what was good enough for Mohammed is surely good enough for Mossadeq.

A good many newspapers have recently reported a shocking case of religious bigotry in Northern Ireland—a Roman Catholic girl who worked in a pyjama factory in the Claudy Factory (County Londonderry), married a Protestant against the wishes of her R.C. parents. Upon her return from her honeymoon, 160 Catholic girls first asked the management to dismiss her and then, upon their refusal, walked out in protest, no doubt, at the instigation of their priests. The police had to be called in to keep order. And this is the year of grace 1951, not the Middle Ages.

In an article in the "high-brow" Catholic periodical, *The Dublin Review*, an English Jesuit, Father Vincent Turner, has made a sensational discovery: "traditional theistic arguments," he tells the no doubt astonished Catholic reader, "no longer cut any ice. . . . I doubt if we can ever formally disprove an atheist." Had Fr. Turner forwarded his article to *The Freethinker*, we would have sent his article back and asked him not to waste time asserting what has long been obvious. Meanwhile, we

recommend his conclusions to Mr. Beverley Nichols who still seems to think he can refute Atheism.

A chorus of approval has been wafted upwards because television has at last produced on the screen a religious service—even if most of its other programmes are secular. In the *Sunday Times*, a Mr. Wiggin "deplores" the fact that there is "no resident religion" and that hitherto "the television authorities" have not "felt the need of including some observance of Christian worship as an integral part of the Sunday programmes." How earnestly these all-believing religious journalists want to force their own completely out-of-date views on a long suffering public! The proper place for religious services and religious teachings is a church, but these people want it forced on us, willy-nilly, everywhere.

Although Freethinkers find it often difficult to get a letter in the local press and, of course, in our national journals, an out-and-out believer has only to say that every word in the Bible is absolutely true, and editors seem to fall over themselves in their anxiety to get it into their paper. Here, for example, is the *Kentish Mercury* allowing the balderdash that "the Bible, without a single exception, is scientifically correct in all its details" from a Mr. Jordan to appear—and no doubt there is much rejoicing that such a stalwart blow for the inerrancy of the Bible has again been struck. But is there any intelligent person—including the Editor—who believes such arrant nonsense? Do our Archbishops?

The Training of Teachers Sub-Committee recommend that a fee of 10 guineas be paid for an hour's lecture in favour of religious education in Nottingham to seven lecturers "additional to travelling and subsistence expenses," and the recommendation has caused a howl of disapproval from some of the Education Committee, most of whom are, however, in favour of religious education. Well, if they want this kind of superstition rammed down the throats of children they should be prepared to pay for it. After all, the simple, beautiful story of Jesus, which any child can understand, deserves a fee of 100 guineas, let alone a miserly 10. Or does it?

We all know that the primary object of church bell-ringing was to chase away the naughty, wicked spirits who tried to lure devout Christians from going to church. These hearty peals frightened the devilish imps away, and are still necessary. Unfortunately, not all churches and chapels have belfries so, no doubt, the Borough Surveyor of Aldershot will be assured of a place in heaven for using "an amplified gramophone" in the local Methodist church instead, and the lucky townspeople can now hear this canned bell-ringing all over the town not only for their own edification, but also to the baffled discomfiture of the sly devils who thought they could bring the town to hell for not going to church. It was a wonderful idea, Mr. Taylor!

We now know where Hitler is spending eternity—it is, according to a German Spiritualist, Dr. Gerda Walther, in Hell—in the "Fourth Dimension, Time." She contacted the ghost of Roehm (he was murdered by Hitler) and he ought to know. Hitler's only chance of release from the Fourth Dimension (or Hell) is getting religious people to pray for him—a job we hope will be taken on by the Roman Church and Christians generally. Perhaps Hitler prefers Hell to his rescuers.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. S. ASTBURY.—Many thanks for letter. Yes, we had the Rev. Mr. Pearce's reply, as published in the Staffs journal, before us.

V. B. ADAMS.—Re your query—we will communicate with you later. THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 19s. 2d.; half-year, 9s. 7d.; three months, 4s. 11d.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

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

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

Manchester Branch N.S.S. is to be congratulated on its opening indoor meeting. Efficient local advertising attracted a good audience at the Chorlton Town Hall, and Mr. Rosetti's lecture on "What is Civilisation?" was followed by questions from many angles. A good deal of literature changed hands and a number of inquiries as to membership were made. Mr. W. Collins, the Branch President, was in the chair and did what an efficient chairman should do. Before the lecture, the audience stood in silent tribute to the work and memory of the one-time Branch librarian and president, Mr. A. C. Rosetti.

The Bradford Branch N.S.S. opened its indoor session in very promising circumstances. It was standing room only for some of the audience, and with Mr. J. T. Brighton as the speaker, his address on "Mediums and Mistakes" was followed with interest and pleasure. To-day (October 21) Mr. J. Colin Siddons, B.A., will lecture on "Galileo and the Inquisition." The lectures are held in the Mechanics Institute, Town Hall Square, and begin at 6-45 p.m.

The recent victory of the clerical politicians in France over the question of state-aid for church schools, has encouraged the Roman Catholic hierarchy in this country "to turn on the heat" in favour of state-support for Catholic schools during the current General Election. Our friends of the "Secular Education League," 4a, Inverness Place, London, W. 2, have just issued a timely leaflet pointing out, amongst other things, that "successful living depends in part upon getting on with persons of diverse views, and it would therefore appear to be undesirable that education should commence at an early age in a denominational school." The leaflet goes on to demonstrate that, if Catholic school proposals are adopted, all the advantages of the 1944 Act will be lost. The Roman Catholic Church is not merely a religion, it is the most artful and persistent "pressure-group" in the world, and it is never more in its element than when fishing in the troubled waters of political controversy. The "Secular Education League" must be congratulated upon drawing public attention again to the menace of clerical intrigue.

The Freethinker Fund

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To find space for the numerous articles awaiting publication we shall acknowledge all contributions by post instead of printing lists.

is now open

JESUS AS A HATER

CHRISTIANS are, understandably, fond of expatiating on the loving-kindness of Jesus Christ. The spirit of our age, strongly averse from theoretical cruelty and theoretical hatred, encourages this tendency; and "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild" is an attractive figure to many kindly folk especially to women and children. And, of course, there are many incidents and sayings in the Four Gospels which bear out this presentation of the character of Christ.

But this is only partial and one-sided. No Christian will face up to the fact that many other incidents and sayings present Jesus as a harsh, unattractive and impolite person, addicted to vituperation, if not to "hatred, malice and all uncharitableness." The goodness of Jesus Christ may be admitted; but if I were to suggest that he was less than perfect in all his ways and works and words, if I said that he at times exhibited not merely a lack of goodness, but positively indefensible naughtiness, not to say wickedness, every orthodox Christian would regard me as guilty of most outrageous blasphemy.

Yet this is true, and can easily be proved by a simple examination of the Gospel texts. Christians should face up to the fact that the depicted character of Jesus is not one of drawing-room insipidity, and that by civilised modern standards, he fell far short of perfection. Unfortunately Christians, like all other human beings, are desperately inclined to believe what they wish to believe (instead of what is the fact or the truth before their minds). Therefore they find it easy and pleasant to swallow the idealised conventional presentation of Jesus given by the Churches and almost impossible to see Jesus as the Gospels depict him.

Let us, for a change, look at the other side. Take those highly-religious folk, the Pharisees and Sadducees. No doubt like most highly-religious persons they had their faults. Doubtless the fierce indictment of them by Jesus Christ was, in essence, true enough. We may be pretty sure there were self-seekers, hypocrites, and proselytisers amongst them, as Jesus complained. But did neither holy sect contain any good sincere men?

Reading the unsparing and all-inclusive denunciations of Jesus against them, one would conclude not. These bitter diatribes, this unmitigated hostility of Jesus towards them shows him to be what newspapers call an "extremist" in his hatred. His kindest word for them was "hypocrites." He prophesied a "greater damnation" for them than others. They were "fools," "blind guides," "whited sepulchres," "devourers of widows' houses," "serpents," "a generation of vipers," they were "full of ravening and wickedness."

The Scribes were included in these hymns of hate. Nor did the lawyers escape. These last laid burdens on men too grievous to be borne and took away the key of knowledge. Possibly some of them did. But did they all?

For all these faults, Jesus prophesied "woe" unto them. This prognostication is a wish rather than a foretelling and may be described as a curse. Yet what had these four classes done? So far as one can see they had merely entered into controversy with Jesus Christ again and again. Apart from these encounters, there is no other evidence against them. Not one is shown actually taking away a widow's house or committing evil by a specific act. Even admitting the truth of the indictment brought against them by Jesus, what good could be affected by such general and unsparing denunciations as these? You do not reform men by abusing them, even if abuse be deserved.

The unprejudiced reader of the Gospels is forced to the conclusion that Jesus hated these four classes, and that he did not control his hatred or his tongue. The fault in mankind that he seems to have reprobated most was pious hypocrisy—"the homage that Vice pays to Virtue" as La Rochefoucauld finely calls it but Jesus did not think of it with the subtlety of a Rochefoucauld mind. It is curious that Christians and Churchmen have never followed Jesus in this line. Adultery (to which Jesus was tender) has always been the Church's *bête noir* and judging by episcopal speeches it remains so to-day.

Jesus makes a far better showing when he comes up against Judas Iscariot. The kiss of Judas could hardly be surpassed as an exercise in hypocrisy by any scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee or lawyer of them all. Yet the rebuke is mild and perhaps sorrowful on this famous occasion: "Judas, betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?" And the subsequent suicide of the betrayer is not attributed to his victim who indeed urged non-resistance against those who seized him for torture and death.

If however we are to believe the story of the Gadarene swine, Jesus must have hated these unfortunate animals indeed to have condemned "about 2,000" of them to such a miserable fate. And their keepers too? Possibly however, this is an interpolated fairy-tale, a concession to Jewish prejudices against the pig. And if he indeed "cursed" the barren fig-tree to death, this was emotional hysteria leading to an ebullition of hatred against a harmless plant. A figless fig-tree is capable of giving shade, and if barren one season, may produce the next. Certainly the barren fig-tree of Jesus was hardly treated.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Jesus Christ of the Gospels was "a good hater." And what manner of man is one who indulges himself in emotional hatred? Not the highest, I think. One cannot imagine Epictetus or the Emperor Marcus Aurelius whose "meditations" reveal one of the noblest of human souls allowing his equanimity and magnanimity to be disturbed by the spectacle of a herd of pigs or an unproductive fig-tree or even the human failing of a scribe, a lawyer, a Pharisee or Sadducee? Neither of those pagans was so childish as that.

And for ourselves? What has modern psychology and psychiatry to say of emotional ebullitions such as the Jesus of the Gospels exhibited so unrestrainedly? Nothing very complimentary. Would a modern English speaker, who spoke as Jesus did of his opponents, be regarded as showing good taste or good manners? Yet the Churches bid us regard Jesus as depicted in the Gospels as "Perfect God and Perfect Man," Divinity Incarnate, beyond criticism or reproach. Can any unprejudiced mind so regard him?

C. G. L. DU CANN.

REVIEW

"RACE AND PSYCHOLOGY." By Otto Klineberg. (U.N.E.S.C.O. 1s. 6d.)

This useful little pamphlet has collected the most recent data on the subject. It constantly emphasises that all investigations and tests serve to show that there is no difference, let alone superiority, as between the various sections of the human race. Neither are the whites in any respect superior to the blacks or yellows, nor do crossbreeds show "the bad qualities of both parents."

"An inferior environment exerts a cumulative negative influence as the years go by. . . . As the cultural and educational environments become more alike, the observed differences tend to disappear." Regarding crossbreeding, "it is clearly the *attitude towards* the hybrids, not any special hybrid biology which determines their place in the community. . . . The social results of race mixture, whether for good or ill, are to be traced to *social forces*." (My italics.) And so on. By a varied series of psychological tests and careful observation, discussed in the 40 pages of this pamphlet, the conclusion is continually brought home that man is the product of his environment and not the predestined throw-up of the accident of his birth.

One theory put forward declared negroes to be biologically a lower species than whites "owing to the earlier closure of the sutures of the skull in the so-called inferior races." Back to phrenology and bumps on the head, in fact! As Mr. Klineberg remarks, this is one of the many myths that encumber the subject, deriving from emotional and even religious urges, thus making a purely scientific approach to it no easy matter.

Not that the pamphlet would claim that individuals and families are all equally endowed. There is, in fact, overwhelming support for a contrary view, but "this is quite a different thing from saying that races and ethnic groups differ in their psychological inheritance."

The objective tests and widespread inquiries, which this pamphlet collates, will "debunk" a good many cherished fancies. We learn, for instance, that the negro shows no consistent difference from the white in the matter of musical ability, given a similar environment. It has been observed that the Chinese has a lower blood pressure than the Caucasian, and to this was attributed his alleged lackadaisical manner; tests prove that the European's blood sinks to the same pressure in China and that the Chinese in America soon acquires the same level of blood pressure as the rest of its citizens. McDougall advanced the theory that suicidal tendencies were an index of racial differences, and that, for instance, a Nordic, being introvert, tends to self-extinction more than a Mediterranean, who is extrovert. A fuller examination of the data leads us to reject McDougall's hypothesis. Sweden and Denmark have high suicidal rates, whereas equally Nordic Norway and Holland have low. The author tells us that suicide rates vary, *inter alia*, with the religious background, those of Catholics being lower than those of Protestants.

Again the economic factor may be determinant in intellectual development. When Reservations were being made for the indigenous population of U.S.A. the Osage Indians were lucky enough to receive land that later was found to be oil-bearing. Tests were carried out in the children of these more prosperous natives with the result that they obtained the same Intelligence Quotients as whites; "the apparent inferiority of American Indian children had disappeared completely."

I think it would be difficult for any serious student of these facts and figures to continue to believe in racial superiorities and inferiorities. Perhaps not. Perhaps there is something in what the Eskimo said. Giving thanks for the icebound region of his native land, whose "unfruitfulness makes us happy and saves us from molestation," he expressed surprise that Europeans have not learned better manners from the Eskimo and he proposed to send medicine men as missionaries to teach them the advantages of peace. Perhaps, after all, our eternal quarrelsomeness has something biological in it!

P. C. KING.

CORRESPONDENCE

"CLERICAL IMPERTINENCE"

SIR,—This letter is by no means in the manner of a reply to refute Mr. F. A. Hornibrook's views as published in your issue of 7th July under the above heading. All that he recalls of the conditions by which workers suffered in the bad old days are fact beyond dispute. The Christian employer and work executive, with no doubt the general approbation of the Churches of all denominations, were in agreement to sustain this system of exploitation. At the same time there is considerable truth in the statement of opinion, said to have been expressed, by the Bishop of Barking and Dr. Leslie Weatherhead. Labour throughout the world is now finding its strength and in far too many instances appears to be using it in a manner detrimental to the best interests in the field of production,

and the interests of the State and community at large. Over the past six years I have had first-hand experience of what might be referred to as the "humour of Labour" in Assam, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Ceylon. In each of which country the terms used, by the above-quoted reverend gentleman, would not, to quite an extent, be inapplicable. For instance, the tea industry of N.E. India affords employment to close on one million souls, well paid and looked after with regulated hours of work and leisure. Benefits include, free medical service to workers and all dependants both as out and in-patients with food, free maternity nursing with 12 weeks' pay, free schooling for children of workers, free housing, etc., etc., and governed by various ordinances covering accident insurance, contractual rights of the worker, and so on. It is a regrettable fact that the present outlook of this hitherto well-conducted industry is jeopardised by the unreasonable and irresponsible attitude of the majority of the workers. The Bishop's words "to do as little work as possible for as much money as they can get" applies here with an unfortunate degree of accuracy. And I do not refer to share-holders' profits as much as the crippling effect on a great and useful undertaking. Perhaps, again, Mr. Hornibrook has not witnessed the "go-slow" methods of the waterside stevedores at any Australian port. This resembles nothing so much as a cinema picture in slow motion, and for years has had a most detrimental effect on the prosperity of the Commonwealth, but workers don't care. "That's Good Enough" seems to be the motto. "Fair's fair" 'tis said, but short weight and short work are not fair. A similar state of affairs is seemingly prevalent everywhere. I am an Atheist, and upholder of the British way of life, including the right of Bishops with others to air their views, an enemy of Communism, and a reading subscriber of *The Freethinker* for over 25 years. I enclose my card.

—Yours, etc.,
Assam, India.

A. D. C. FORBES.

ACID DROPS AND SUGAR PLUMS

SIR,—Referring to the letter in the issue of the paper dated July 22, 1951, I consider that "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums" are an essential part of *The Freethinker* and serve a very definite purpose. It was the practice many years ago, and probably continues to-day, for readers to send up cuttings from various sources on which these paragraphs could be based. Your correspondent refers to "this lollipop baby language." I do not consider that this remark is warranted, but in any case it is the only language which some Christians understand.

Your "offence" seems to be that you wrote the paragraph in your way, and your correspondent would have written it in another manner.

In the past some very fine work has been embodied in the compilation of "Acid Drops." They really have been "bulls-eyes." Please forgive my lollipop language.

After all, there are many serious articles in the paper, and no doubt you are considerably hampered by lack of space due to the restricted allocation of paper.

I do not like your correspondent's suggestion about "dignity and a high purpose." The weapons of logic, wit, and satire are quite legitimate when dealing with the silly remarks of parsons and other religious individuals, to say nothing of the lies they use when referring to Freethinkers and Atheists, and in a short paragraph under "Acid Drops" can be effectively dealt with.

I consider the new manner of printing the opening words in very black type is very effective.

I have not referred specially to "Sugar Plums" but I do consider that occasionally, we ourselves, are entitled to a pat on the back.—Yours, etc.,

FREDERICK C. WYKES.

DICKENS' CHARACTERS

SIR,—In your issue of September 23 Thomas Owen says he has read *Pickwick Papers* twice and was bored stiff each time. *Twice?* Does, then, Thomas Owen take pleasure in being bored?

Thomas Owen then derides Dickens's characters as snivellers and, with true Calvinistic scorn, as "on the booze," and says that he does not believe they are "true to life."

If Thomas Owen would care to take a leisurely walk from Charing Cross to Camden Town, he would meet every Dickens's character as large as life. And if this peregrination should tire him, he could pause for refreshments on the way, where such "boozers" as Marx and Engels, Keats, Byron, Shelley, not to mention Dickens, and a host of the most eminent Freethinkers, performed one of the most civilised functions of social man.

And if Thomas Heep, indulging his curious pleasure of being bored, should read *David Copperfield*, he would most likely be interested in the character of Uriah Owen.—Yours, etc.,

J. B. O'HARE.

The end crowns all;
And that old common arbitrator, time,
Will one day end it.—*Shakespeare.*

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held October 11, 1951

The President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Griffiths, Ridley, Hornibrook, Morris, Shaw, Ebury, Woodley, Johnson, Barker and Mrs. Venton.

As a mark of the esteem in which the late A. C. Rosetti was held by his colleagues on the Executive, all present stood in silent tribute; afterwards a message of condolence with his widow and relatives was ordered to be transmitted.

The Financial Statement was presented and new members admitted to the Parent Society.

The difficulty of getting two clergymen to act with two N.S.S. speakers in a Brains Trust was reported and that further efforts were being made.

Correspondence between the N.S.S. and the Marriage Law Reform Society on the evidence to be placed before the Royal Commission was noted. The correspondence was still open.

A preliminary notice of a proposed International Freethought Congress in Belgium next August was noted and adjourned for more definite information.

As a help towards meeting the financial difficulties of *The Freethinker* the Executive voted a donation of £100 to the fund being raised for that purpose in the paper.

Mr. R. Johnson, a co-opted member on the Executive, agreed to represent the N.E. Group on the Executive in place of the late A. C. Rosetti, subject to the approval of the Group, until the next Conference.

Mr. J. W. Barker was elected to the Benevolent Fund Committee in the place of the late A. C. Rosetti.

Executive meetings will in future be held on the first Thursday in each month and the Executive will meet again on Thursday, November 1.

The proceedings then closed.

JOHN SEIBERT, Secretary.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m. Speaker: G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, October 13, 6-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Mr. C. E. WOOD and F. A. RIDLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: J. COLIN SIDDONS, B.A., "Galileo and the Inquisition."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 23, 7 p.m.: Mr. D. G. MACKAE (London School of Economics), "Science as a Social Institution."

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. WINGATE, "The New Threat of Christianity."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. ALBERT MELTZER, "Anarchism To-day."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. JACK LINDSAY, "John Bunyan."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 21, 11 a.m.: Mr. A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Idea of Nemesis."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Mr. ALEC CRAIG, "Some Recent Banned Books"

GENUINELY interested persons required to undertake light, clean assembly work in their own homes. Good rates of payment. Dept. P/888, Universal Products, 5, Cornhill, Lincoln.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS

MANY of the readers of *The Freethinker* may not be aware of the declared policy of the B.B.C. in respect of religious broadcasting and the Corporation's avowed intentions of allowing nothing to be broadcast which may tend to disturb or divert the mainstream of the Christian tradition, or to strike at the simple, childlike faith of humble but sincere believers. Even to those who are unaware of such intentions, it will be obvious that Christian traditions and superstitions are treated with the most exaggerated respect by the compilers of broadcasting programmes and they will have noted that programmes on more popular wavelengths are tremendously over-weighted with religious propaganda ranging from high-brow religious chorales and cantatas through the broadcast church services with much varied denominational flavour, the Evensongs, the Litanies, the Plainsongs, the Complines, the more blatant religious apologetics and the multitudinous talks and lectures disguised under various subject titles which are but a cloak for religious bias. In passing I would recommend those who don't know it to listen to the Saturday night "Form for Compline" and try to differentiate between that and a native gathering around the tribal tom-tom.

Some of your readers, possibly most of them, are, like myself, satisfied that such barefaced and presumptuous advocacy of this form of religious apologetics is doing little or nothing to repair the defects in the fabric of organised and orthodox superstition. To the critical and sceptical mind which has long ceased to smother encroaching suspicion, doubt and mistrust of the so-called "eternal verities" and to pray "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief," there is frequent cause for enjoyment of the childish argumentation and Jesuitical "reasonings" of most of the selected Christian apologists.

The writer finds much cause for entertainment in listening to the impassioned sermonising of some of the Church's star bagmen, from the worthy Monsignors of the One, Only and True Apostolic Church, down through the Gospel singer and good old Sandy's weekly swan song in some old-fashioned hymn on Sunday nights at bedtime.

The item, however, which, in the writer's opinion, really "takes the biscuit," is that "hardy evergreen," the 7-50 a.m. set-piece "Lift up your hearts." I would agree, of course, that it needs, perhaps, a particularly and peculiarly sardonic brand of humour to enjoy this programme as a regular thing and that, perhaps, it can only be really appreciated by one who once believed there was something in it and almost fell for it. To those who can endure it, I would recommend regular and systematic listening to this "daily blurb" as a real livener and laxative for the day. It is the writer's practice to leave home regularly at 7-50 a.m. to pick up a convenient bus and with never-failing regularity to switch on the radio for the sake of the time signal and weather forecast. Whilst sitting comfortably in an easy chair over a second cup of coffee and getting the first pipe of the day going well, it is a delight to listen to the unctuous and sanctimonious voice of the selected salesman—or saleswoman—putting across the customary sob stuff. It is particularly noticeable how both the pros. and the amateurs carefully leave alone the debatable fundamentals of religious belief, such as the authority and authenticity of the scriptures, and the veracity of Christian teachings and dogmas and invariably indulge themselves in platitudinous talk which has some ethical and a moral content

with reference to the human virtues and vices. One is often led to wonder if these broadcasters really are convinced that the bulk of listeners are entirely unaware that religions and religious belief are *not necessarily* mixed up with ethics and morals and if they themselves do really believe that Christian believers, and Christian believers alone, are happy, useful and healthy members of society, possessing all the human virtues and none of the human vices and that non-Christian believers are miserable, unhappy, useless citizens with none of the virtues and all of the vices, entirely unworthy to be alive and full of "joie de vivre" at 7-50 a.m. It is particularly noticeable too, how many of the professional advocates appear to be fully cognisant of the sound, sane, logical and irrefutable objections to their arrogant claims and pronouncements and to be aware that some of these dogmas can only be swallowed by the simple-minded and wishful-thinking. One notices that the dissertations given by the non-professional advocates of Godism are invariably marked by a simple sincerity which bespeaks abject and unreasoning faith, rather than critical circumspection, or objective analysis and one is often led to conjecture if the more accomplished and astute professionals are not always wondering how many unbelievers are included in their unseen and unnumbered audience.

Quite incidentally, this writer has often wondered why this particular time has been chosen for such broadcasts. It would seem that the greater proportion of the probable subjects for this type of mob-hypnotism would be found among that section of the populace which is called the manual workers. One imagines that most of mill, factory and shop workers will, at 7-50 a.m., be at the lathe, the machine, or the bench and most of the desk workers on their way to work. Do the members of the Religious Broadcasting Committee imagine that listeners belonging to the business, professional, or leisured sections of the community are 1, more worth saving, or 2, more credulous, or 3, more in need of uplift than the manual workers, or is it their set purpose to aim their propaganda at the harassed and troubled housewife, who, perhaps more than her spouse, knows the difficulty of keeping the head above water?

Lift up your heart, but keep your heads out of the clouds and out of the mire.

"LUKE STRAIGHT."

WHAT CHRISTIANS WERE LIKE—C. 170 A.D.

"It was now that he came across the priests and scribes of the Christians in Palestine, and picked up their queer creed. I can tell you, he pretty soon convinced them of his superiority, prophet, elder, ruler of the synagogue—he was everything at once, expounded their books, commented on them, wrote books himself. They took him for a god, accepted his laws, and declared him their president. The Christians, you know, worship a *man* to this day—the distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account. Peregrine, all this time, was making quite an income, money came pouring in. You see, these misguided creatures start with the general conviction that they are immortal for all time; which explains their contempt for death and voluntary martyrdom impressed on them by their original law-giver that they are all brothers, from the moment that they are converted and deny the gods of Greece, and worship the crucified sage, and live after his laws. All this they take quite on trust, with the result that they despise all worldly goods alike, regarding them merely as common property. Now an adroit, unscrupulous fellow, who has seen the world, has only to get among these simple souls, and his fortune is pretty soon made; he plays with them."—LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA, *The Death of Peregrine* (c. 170).

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION. By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.