

30 m

Sunday, January 6, 1952

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXII—No. 1

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.]

Price Fourpence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Christian "Holy War"

SOME time ago we reviewed in another column of this journal a study of the mediaeval dualistic heresy entitled *The Mediaeval Manichee*, by Mr. Stephen Runciman. Mr. Runciman is a specialist in mediaeval history, in particular, of that of the Byzantine Empire and of the Balkans, upon which subjects he has already written several scholarly volumes. Mr. Runciman has now embarked upon what is, to date, his most ambitious literary venture, a history of the Crusades in three volumes, the first of which, published early last year (1951), we have only just had the opportunity of reading.

This subject, the two-century assault upon Palestine and the Middle East by Christian Europe under the inspiration and direction of the Roman Catholic Church, is of particular interest to students of religious history since it represented the high watermark of the political and social influence ever attained by the Catholic Church and, indeed, by organised Christianity over Europe and over Western civilisation. The Crusades, in fact, really inaugurated "Christian civilisation," that is, a civilisation of a theocratic nature controlled and directed by the all-pervasive influence of the Catholic Church throughout an "Age of Faith" in which "all roads led to Rome."

That ecclesiastical culture which constituted the essence of the Middle Ages, properly so called, in which mediaeval Europe resembled modern Tibet, really dates from the Crusades which continued intermittently in the East for just over 200 years (1096-1300), and which were prolonged in Europe for another two centuries in Spain and in Northern Europe.

In modern historiography the term "Crusade" has usually been interpreted in an unduly narrow sense to mean only the successive expeditions to Palestine in order to recover or to preserve the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre of Christ from falling into the hands of the Muslim "infidels." Our historian also seems to adopt what appears to us to be this unduly narrow view. His first, already published volume deals with the origin of the Crusades and with the First Crusade—1096-99—which actually conquered Jerusalem. His preface indicates that his later volumes will deal, apparently exclusively, with the subsequent evolution and eventual downfall of the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem.

Actually it would not be difficult to prove, had we the available space, that, at least from the point of view of the subsequent military and political evolution of European history, the most important Crusades, the most permanent and the most durable in their effects, were those waged, not in Palestine but in Europe by the Catholic Church, the Crusades which exterminated the Albigenses in the 13th century, and which in the 13th and 14th centuries reconquered Spain from the Moors and Prussia from the Pagan worshippers of Odin and Thor, and thus created the map of modern Europe. These last-

named Crusades produced much more permanent results than any actually achieved by the sensational futility of the successive Eastern Crusades to recover and to hold Palestine, "The Holy Land."

However, be that as it may, Mr. Runciman, following what seems now to be the accepted custom amongst professional historians, deals solely with the invasions of the Muslim East by the armies of Catholic Europe known collectively as "The Crusades." It is there that we must now follow him.

The real originator of the Crusades, though death prevented him from actually taking part in them, was Pope Gregory VII (1073-87), the hero of "Canossa" and probably the most remarkable personality in the whole long Papal dynasty. Under the dynamic leadership of Gregory a new Papal Imperialism asserted itself at the end of the "Dark Ages" and Rome set herself to unite and to dominate Europe or "Christendom." It was Gregory who humiliated the German Empire at Canossa (1077), who sent Norman William against schismatic England to conquer at Hastings and to change the course of English history. It was Gregory also who proposed to turn against the Mohammedan world its own institution of the "Jihad" ("Holy War" or Crusade, in order to recover the Christian supremacy in the East and, therewith, the Holy places of the Christian religion, which had been lost in the seventh century to the followers of the Korans.

Gregory himself died before he could actually launch the Christian "drang nach osten" ("pressure to the East"). This task was successfully and sensationally accomplished by his successor and disciple, the French Pope, Urban II, at the Council of Clermont (1096). Urban proclaimed the Holy War to recover Christ's sepulchre from the infidels, amid scenes of delirious enthusiasm and cries of "Deus Vult" ("It is the Will of Heaven"). Our historian vividly describes this scene which roused one of those waves of mass-hysteria that have successively swept over Europe.

However, the Crusaders did not find their march on Jerusalem a mere military promenade. From from this being the case, only some 12,000 Crusaders finally entered the Holy City on July 15, 1099, when they perpetrated one of those indiscriminate massacres which seem to accompany invariably wars of ideology in which men's passions, as well as their interests, are called into play. The Jews were burnt alive in their synagogue and the civilian population, regardless of age or sex, were massacred wholesale by "God's Knights." Relatively few of the original Crusaders were "in" at the death. The great majority perished, en route, of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion, or else in battle. The first undisciplined bands who followed the famous revivalist, "Peter the Hermit" and the picturesquely-named, "Walter the Penniless," were exterminated wholesale by the inhabitants of Eastern Europe outraged by their atrocities, long before they got near the Holy Land. Even the professional

soldiers, the feudal princes and knights who went by sea, narrowly escaped annihilation on several occasions. Indeed, in a sense, the Crusade can be actually described as "an Act of God," since the odds were heavily against it and it is difficult to explain its success on purely military grounds!

Both the historic background and the actual course of the First Crusade are lucidly described by our historian in the course of his first volume: we shall await its promised two successors with interest and impatience. We found the most interesting part of the learned author's narrative in his enlightening exposition of the effect of the Crusade on Eastern politics. Mr. Runciman, as remarked above, is a specialist on the Byzantine Empire, which he holds to be an institution persistently belittled and denigrated by most English historians since (and including) Gibbon. The relations of the Eastern Empire with the Crusaders is here drawn with a masterly hand and, when faced with the feudal barbarians of the West, the Byzantine Emperor, Alexis Comnenus, appears a civilised man amongst barbarians, a man of outstanding ability, whose daughter, Anna Commena, eventually became the best contemporary historian of the Crusade, one of whose successors was destined temporarily to extinguish the heretical Byzantine Empire (1204).

Mr. Runciman's theme is one of absorbing interest to all students of both religious and secular history. His scholarly narrative should be in every public library. It only remains for us warmly to commend it to all readers of *The Freethinker*.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(Stephen Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press; 21s.)

CROSSMAN AND OUR CHANGING WORLD

MR. R. H. S. CROSSMAN, M.P., has written a thought-provoking pamphlet* on the prospects of liberty in the light of present tendencies. He attacks what he calls the delusion of economic materialism; in effect he subjects Marxism to the spotlight, in particular with regard to the Marxian doctrine that the economic factor is "finally decisive."

Economics, based as they are on deductive reasoning, he says, are useless in solving current problems. We should recognise that economics cannot be taken in isolation, that support and confirmation must come from other aspects of social science.

Mr. Crossman analyses this "delusion of economic materialism" under three heads, namely: (i) The delusion that Man is, politically speaking, merely an economic animal; (ii) the delusion in the theory of inherent contradictions; and (iii) the delusion that progress must be inevitable.

The idea that all you have to do is to treat the community as a concentration of individual minds and that if you distribute goods equitably among them you have achieved a society of free and equal beings is the fallacy comprised in the first part.

The Marxist theory that capitalism is bound to collapse and socialism to rise out of its ashes, by reason of the "inherent contradictions" in the former, is the fallacy of the second part; in the words of our author it is a piece of "pure superstition," based on an apocalyptic conviction that we, the common people, are destined to be its heritors. While Mr. Crossman does not, of course, believe in

"permanency in history," he sees no "inherent contradiction" in the present (capitalistic) form of society, nor any "indissoluble dilemmas." What we have got now, he describes as Welfare Capitalism planned on Heath Robinson lines.

Of the third form of delusion, what Mr. Crossman calls the Wells' theory that any improvement in your technique is reflected by an improvement in your social behaviour has long been exploded, he says. But, he goes on, the Laski theory of the inevitability of revolution is just as silly; the idea that after a short period of savage dictatorship we shall emerge into "a state of semi-religious anarchy called classless society" is just as unrealistic as the Wells' theory that bigger and better goods means bigger and better morals.

Marx could believe in the apocalyptic revolution because, like the Wellses and the Laskis but with more excuse than they, he did not visualise the development of the State into an engine of immense power in itself. All three based their conclusions on the delusion that if you look after economic rights, politics can be left to look after themselves, whereas experience has taught us that "you can have all the property relations right and yet be under a totalitarian tyranny." Once you control the instruments of coercion, communications and thought (through the ubiquitous Press and radio), you have power greater than any capitalist ever had. For we must assume, he warns, that we shall inevitably gravitate towards totalitarianism, unless we take constant and energetic steps to prevent it. The nineteenth century, during which it seemed as though economics were of more importance than politics, was an abnormal epoch; for countless centuries before, the State had held sway over economics and it is evidently swinging back to the normality of that state of affairs.

The second half of Mr. Crossman's pamphlet is devoted to his suggestions of how to meet the menace he describes. Property ownership no longer equates power, he asserts. Just as the shareholder has actually no control over the Company in which he has invested, so when industry is nationalised equally are the people without control; in both cases the situation rests in the hands of the managers. The aim of the progressives, therefore, is not more nationalised and centralised State enterprise but how to delegate power and responsibility. Mr. Crossman admits that the average person doesn't want to assume authority, but the issue of democracy, he exclaims somewhat obscurely, is whether you can distribute power and thereby prevent society coming under the control of the managerial class. Decentralise, or we shall find ourselves under the domination of "a managerial elite who (no blame to them!) will become corrupted by its segregation, into a sense of superiority."

In short, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and Mr. Crossman is but one more knight ready to break a lance in the cause of freethinking. It is especially opportune at times such as these that the Editor is arranging a series of articles on Science and Freethought. There was, surely, never in all history such a threat to freethinking as is to-day embodied in totalitarian society?

P. C. KING.

BELFRY SHANTY

"We'll give 'em the bells
Till it's like seven hells,
It may teach the pair, Marriage, what's in it;
But not one extra jingle,
Be it double or single—
They only pay so much a minute!"

A.E.C.

* "Socialist values in a changing civilisation." Fabian Tract No. 286.

THE EMPEROR AND THE GODS

THE Emperor Constantine entered the halls of Olympus and demanded an audience with Zeus, Father of the Gods.

"I am here," said the Emperor, "To demand that the Gods of Olympus render me greater assistance in affairs of state. This mighty Empire over which I have been called to rule is the upholder of law and order and the guardian of freedom and justice. As usual its borders are beset with enemies, its subject races on the verge of revolt and its slaves restless and discontented. Yet you, the Gods of Greece and Rome do nothing to assist the state in its righteous task of defending civilisation from destruction by heathen barbarians or subversive revolutionaries."

Zeus yawned and raised himself on his elbow. "Come, come," he replied. "Save all that claptrap for your political propagandists. Heaven and earth are full of lovely things far more interesting than affairs of state. Perceive this vase, what perfect craftsmanship, its beauty is worth more than all the taxes you so energetically wring from some poverty stricken province. Listen to the music of this flute, it is more pleasant than the shouts of an hysterical mob worshipping you one day and lynching you the next. I might add that the beauty of the flute player is not unworthy of consideration."

And Zeus ran his fingers through her curling hair. The Emperor turned and strode from the halls of Olympus in disgust. "Where," he asked, "is there a God to help me rule my Empire?"

And there appeared before him a God shining with the virility of youth. "I am the one you seek," he cried. "I Mithra the bull slayer, the God of warriors and strong men. Your soldiers know me and the merchants at the ports. They who worship me are men of blood and iron, hard and disciplined, such as were the men who built your Empire."

"This is the God for me," the Emperor said, "A God whom my subjects will fear and respect."

"One moment, before you make your choice," interrupted a quiet voice. "Let me introduce myself; I am Jesus of Galilee."

Turning, they beheld a strange God dressed in white with an urbane yet commanding countenance.

"Where's Galilee?" asked the Emperor doubtfully.

"An outlandish corner of Syria," explained Mithra, "full of wizards and soothsayers."

"Most of my followers," continued Jesus, ignoring his rival, "are of a lowly station in life. I teach them humility, patience and fortitude, promising that they will be compensated for the miseries of this world by a happy and glorious life after death."

"A religion for women and slaves," sneered Mithra.

"And why not?" inquired Jesus. "The bulk of the population of the Empire are women and slaves, and they are a very important part of it; though it would never do to let them realise it."

"It is soldiers who built the Empire and soldiers who will maintain it!" And Mithra struck a dramatic attitude before the Emperor.

"Soldiers will always fight," returned Jesus with a deprecatory gesture of the hand, "I do not deny their uses, but it is the arts of peace, of law and order, that hold the unity of the Empire. Now I make my appeal to the common man, to the emotions of the mob, I buoy up the spirit of the underdog with splendid hopes. Hopes which, of course, are not to be fulfilled in this world. I show him a new heaven and a new earth, so that he will rest content with the one he has. I teach him that his troubles are due to his sins, so that he is the less disposed to lay the blame at the door of those set in authority over him. I

insist on the finality of divine wisdom and instruct him to regard with suspicion any suggestion of change or reform. The obedience due to my godhead is easily translated into obedience to the state and its head. Those who follow me, both citizen and slave, are law abiding people."

"Pap for babes," snorted Mithra. "And nothing original."

"I know it is nothing new," retorted Jesus. "But I claim to do it better than most. As for your sword brandishing broad-shouldered programme, it is even older than mine and never got anybody anywhere." Turning to the Emperor. "Try a religion that is a stimulant to hope and a sedative to despair, without having recourse to materialistic necessities."

"Ah, here is the God for me," said the Emperor. "The state has a host of swords at its command, what is wanted is a religion with brains. Can you keep a man's mind occupied with things of the spirit, so that he has less time to think of what is going on around him?"

"I can," Jesus nodded.

"One thing more. Will you introduce a little sex into your religion, somewhere, somehow?"

"I am reluctant to give much scope to the women," said Jesus, reflecting. "But it could be arranged."

"On that condition we join forces," proclaimed the Emperor.

And the two departed, leaving Mithra to beat the air with his sword.

L. HANGER.

THE NEXT ACT

In the whole squalid drama of mankind,
Where fools myopic lead the stupid blind
Destructionward, one still can feel elation
That in the very fact of man's damnation
Hope dwells. Above man's universal grave
The grass will grow, the wounded Earth will heal,
The happy thrush will in the pear-tree trill,
And trees, in purer air, their branches wave.
For song and dance can never pass away,
Nor man's extinction love and beauty slay.
The gods, a moment grave, again will smile
And speedily forget a creature vile.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED

"There were two crucial moments in the development of Communism. One, when it was first establishing itself as a social doctrine and a revolutionary movement in Europe. The other, when it was being tried out for the first time as a practical experiment in Russia. On both these occasions Mary appeared to the world.

"At Lourdes she appeared at that very moment when Karl Marx was bending over his desk writing the articles and books which were eventually to become the Bible of Communism. At Fatima she again appeared when Trotsky was returning to Russia to organise the revolution.

"On both these occasions God sent His mother to warn the world, and on both these occasions the warning and the message were the same . . . penance and the Rosary."

—Rev. Fr. Dehan, preaching at Knock Shrine, Eire.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY. By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

PETER ANNET, 1693—1769. By Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

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

ACID DROPS

A broadcast account of the "Family Bible" the other week was, we are pleased to record, not afraid to point out that there were people—Agnostics, Materialists, etc.—who looked upon the Bible as a tissue of fables. Still, did that matter? Not a bit. The Bible is still the hope of mankind, their solace in sorrow and pain. What a scream there would be if an aggressive Freethinker were allowed to put his point of view on the "Family Bible" so that a few million listeners could at last hear the real truth!

We in England, however, are not the only country which boosts up the Bible. We note that it gets even more publicity in the U.S.A. than here. For example, Dr. Hager, pastor of the Bethany Reformed Church, was well reported when he said the Bible was America's greatest asset—far greater than its "great wealth and natural mineral resources." Instead of Marshall Aid, the U.S.A. should have tried sending to Europe tons of Bibles, and then have awaited the inevitable Divine results. However, Dr. Hager's querulous complaint was that Americans did not read the Bible—a complaint he could have made about Europe generally. Even among genuine Christians, is the Bible really read? We doubt it.

On the borderline of Catholic Eire and Protestant Ulster a drowning man was once washed ashore in a dying condition. As the district was a Catholic one, a priest was summoned to give Absolution to the dying man. Sacramental Absolution can, of course, only be validly given to baptised Christians. So the priest bent over the man and said: "Make some sign, my son, that you are a Christian." With a last convulsive effort the dying man opened his mouth and gasped, "Damn the Pope!"

It appears that Christianity, rather than Socialism, is destined to benefit from the recovery of Sir Stafford Cripps. For we learn that this eminent politician intends to devote his restored energies to a crusade on behalf of "Christian Action," a movement for permeating political life with Christian principles. It is always an unpleasant sight to see an able man making a fool of himself. We would remind Sir Stafford of the words of one of his most eminent Christian predecessors in the government of this country, Oliver Cromwell, "Bethink ye that ye may be mistaken."

In a series of interesting broadcasts on "News from Asia," the "Home Service" of the B.B.C. has let the cat out of the bag regarding the socially reactionary role played by religion in South-East Asia. After all, the Far East is a long way from Broadcasting House! It emerges clearly from the discussions in these broadcasts that the religions of South-East Asia, both Buddhism and Islam, are bound up with an agrarian society which is now passing away. In Asia, no less than in Europe, the Industrial Revolution is revolutionising the conditions of human existence, and is sweeping away the static view of life which forms the social basis of religion. In Asia, where all the gods were born, they are now headed for extinction. Perhaps, one fine day, the B.B.C. will note the same process west, as well as east of Suez.

It is well known how, during the end of the Crusades, mass-hysteria swept over Europe. This mass frenzy took some very curious forms. Upon one occasion, we read, a band of crusaders marched off behind a goose—to the goose-step, we presume! Indeed, the Christians still seem to prefer to follow that bird, as the late Professor Laski

remarked in another connection, Christianity appears to specialise in "propaganda for proper geese"!

It is difficult to believe that any hard-headed Fleet Street journalist believes the Christmas story recorded in the Gospels, but there is no accounting for the vagaries of the human mind. Our contemporary, the *Daily Express*, surpassed itself in a thorough-going Fundamentalism of the most primitive type when, in a leader, it gave us the story of the birth of Jesus "the precious Son whom God gave for the redemption of mankind," and the story "of another child born in Israel about the same time as Jesus"—Judas. Jesus was, of course, "the embodiment of all that is finest in the human heart" while Judas was "all that is vile and despicable." This silly mythology was broadcasted to four millions of the *Express* readers, and it shows how little, in some quarters, has the Freethought message impressed itself.

There never was a Jesus of Nazareth as described in the Gospels; while as for the story of Judas it can easily be shown as hopeless drivel, melodrama of the most infantile type, but quite on a par with the Wise Men, the Star of Bethlehem, the Singing Angels, the Gold and Frankincense and Myrrh, the Stable and the Crib with which our pious fiction writers have filled out their theft of the story of the other Pagan and Divine Saviours. Christmas has now become a commercialised ramp in which the "Holy" Child has disappeared under the weight of good eating, shop goods, and purely secular greeting cards.

A great defender of Spiritualism is Lord Dowding, the famous air commander for London during the war, and it is particularly intriguing to learn that he considers Christianity "incompatible with modern reasoning." He feels the same about science because science, as such, has no use for his own particular brand of spooks. All these, of course, existed, and Lord Dowding's name now is taking the place of Sir A. Conan Doyle and adding lustre to spook-hunting and belief. On the other hand, some well-known Unitarians are now taking an active interest in Spiritualism and, as good Unitarians, they are finding consolation in St. Paul's words—"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." We feel just the same, brother Paul!

The real enemy not only to Christians but to Spiritualists is Materialism, according to a fervent believer in spooks, Sir John Anderson. It is now "only a shadow." A very hefty shadow, all the same! Materialism has been "exploded" dozens of times, but somehow or other is keenly alive even if the "great mass of the people are hungering for the Truth of the Spirit." As a matter of fact the great mass of the people are hungering for bigger wages and a better standard of living, and if they got these they would be ready to swallow even Spookism. It is not very easy to understand scientific Materialism.

One of the most intellectual members of the present Royal Family was Caroline of Anspach, the wife of King George the Second (1727-1760). Queen Caroline was interested in philosophy and, one day, the great German thinker, Leibniz, was explaining his philosophy to her. "Dr. Leibniz," said Her Majesty, "You have now explained to us your philosophy of 'the infinitely great.' you need not trouble to explain to us its corollary, 'the infinitely little.'" The behaviour of our courtiers has already familiarised us with it."

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

On the first Sunday of the New Year, January 6, the West London Branch will open the second half of its winter session also with a members' meeting, again at "The Laurie Arms," Edgware Road, London, W. On January 13 the branch will have the good fortune to have a lecture by the famous Rationalist historian and publicist, Joseph MacCabe. The veteran author and lecturer is speaking on the absorbing and topical theme of "The Pope and Population." Whilst the West Ham Branch, in which the late Mr. R. H. Rosetti started his secularist career, announces that it will be holding meetings every fourth Thursday in the month at that well-known East London centre for advanced movements, the "Community Centre," St. Mary's Road, Wanstead, two minutes' walk from Wanstead Central Station. The West Ham Branch will also devote its January meeting on Thursday, January 24, to a members' meeting.

Under the dynamic impetus of its evergreen secretary, Mr. Charles H. Smith, the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. opened the second half of its winter session with a lecture by Mr. F. A. Hornibrook on "Unpopular Opinions." Mr. Hornibrook needs no introduction wherever Secularists assemble, whether at Birmingham or anywhere else, and can always be relied upon to be militant, forthright, and progressive in his approach to contemporary problems. One of the questions asked was how best to deal with the reactionary movements of the present day. To which the lecturer replied: "By doubling the circulation of *The Freethinker*." All present stood in silence in memory of the late Mr. R. H. Rosetti. A lively and instructive evening was enjoyed by the Freethinkers of the Midland's metropolis. Next Sunday, January 6, the Bradford Branch, under the inspiration of Messrs. Day and Baldie, opens out with a lecture by Anthony H. Cadbury, M.A., on "The Quaker Message of Light." The following Sunday, January 13, the speaker will be Mr. F. A. Ridley (London) on the subject: "English Religion in 1952."

One of the books which used to be found in the smoke room of many commercial hotels was the Holy Bible and—lest the good example should be forgotten—someone recently sent a copy to the Victoria Hotel, Nottingham, and duly advertised the fact in the local papers. One of the N.S.S. branch members, Mrs. Beesley, promptly sent the hotel a copy of our *Bible Handbook*—but we do not know at the moment whether this "good deed" resulted in it being displayed as prominently as the Lord's Precious Word. It was an excellent gesture all the same for which we heartily thank the quick-witted donor.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for the two weeks ended Saturday, December 29, 1951: An Old Age Pensioner (Renfrew), 2s. 3d.; Glasgow Secular Society, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Ebury, 5s.; A. H. Stone, 13s. 8d.; Sydney Newton, £3 3s.; Birmingham Branch, £10; Robert H. Playle, £3; Thos. A. Quinn, 19s.; C. A. Sweetman, 6s.; T. A. Skeate, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; Miss L. Pye, £1 16s.; Harold Williams, 6s.; Richard Daniell, 5s.; A. E. Stringer, £5; A. Stephenson, £1; J. Bilk, 10s.; C. E. Ratcliffe, 3s.; W. J. Bennett, £1.

Total for fortnight, £30 9s. 11d.

Total received to date: £406 9s. 4d.

Donors are requested to make cheques and postal orders payable to "The Pioneer Press."

ON UNITARIANISM

IT has been said that Unitarianism is a sort of feather-bed for Christians, though both religions vigorously deny the gentle imputation. But what exactly is Unitarianism?

This question is not very easy to answer. I have known Americans who were Agnostics who called themselves Unitarians, and I have also known Unitarians quite indistinguishable from Christians—not Trinitarian Christians, it is true, but still Christians. Like our own very reverent Rationalists, Unitarians love to refer to "Jesus of Nazareth," rather than to "Jesus our Lord and Saviour"; but, as far as adoration goes, they can even beat Christians. The central thesis of Unitarianism is the belief in one God—Monotheism—which it shares with Judaism and Theism, but it then parts company with these different religions. It is not easy to pin a Unitarian down, for he has no "creed"; but as far as I can understand the many interpretations of Unitarianism I have read, its followers must lead a "Christian" life, and the trouble again begins when I ask what is a "Christian" life?

Unitarians oppose the Trinity, but here again I am puzzled. Am I to understand that a "Holy Trinity" is impossible with God? After all, if one swallows a God, the greatest of all absurdities, surely one can swallow a Trinity? To say that "three makes one," or "one makes three," or even that there is a "Trinity in Unity" is not more absurd than the belief in God Almighty.

Years ago a famous Unitarian divine, now undeservedly forgotten, the Rev. Dr. Beard, was obliged to admit that "it is not easy to expound in general terms and with exactitude, the doctrine of the Unitarians," and I can well believe it after reading *Unitarian Christianity and the Twentieth Century*, by S. H. Mellone, M.A. (Lindsey Press, 1951), a pamphlet kindly sent me by a provincial friend. It is very wordy and full of assertions which can easily be challenged and, as far as I can understand it, would have been just as relevant in the second century as the twentieth. For example, Mr. Mellone insists that "the doctrine of Christ's person is logically independent of Trinitarianism," and he adds, "the introduction of the third personal centre of consciousness introduces boundless confusion into Christology." It always did so, for even Athanasius himself (who was really responsible for the introduction of the Trinity into Christianity) failed to make it clear. It would, however, be interesting to learn what Trinitarians have to say about the Holy Ghost being described as "the third personal centre of consciousness"? Such a description looks to a blatant materialist like myself as unmitigated twaddle.

One point I have never been able to understand when discussing the other Monotheisms—Judaism, Theism, or Mohammedanism. Why is it almost universally held that a belief in *one* God represents a higher state of civilisation than the belief in *many* Gods? Why is it considered a distinct advance of intellectual superiority to proclaim Monotheism rather than Polytheism? Our Islamic friends seize upon this one point as if, in declaring that Allah was

the one God and Mohammed his prophet, they had something to offer the civilised world so stupendously mighty that nothing short of complete surrender to the idea could be called progress. Reading some of our Unitarian literature, I find the same odd notion (without Mohammed) prevails. "All Unitarians," declares Dr. Beard, "solemnly profess, and earnestly maintain, a belief in one only God, that august Being . . ." Unitarians, who appear to hold various views on other subjects, stoutly support each other in this—just like Jews and Mohammedans. But why should such a view be considered nobler than a belief in crowds of Gods has always been a mystery to me. If the fundamental idea of a God at all is nonsense, one or many doesn't matter in the least.

When Unitarians, however, come to Jesus their diverse views seem to me to be occasions for laughter. I have personally met Unitarians who called themselves Christians and who certainly believed that he was as near being the Son of God, as any liberal Christian. They find in him, as Beard says, "a great human soul and a Divine power, the two combining to form the holiest, most lofty, most wise, and most benign being that ever trod the earth . . ." And with such a belief one can readily understand why modern Unitarians, ever anxious to proclaim the true Christian Faith—though of a Unitarian brand—are by no means disposed to throw overboard even the Trinity.

As Mr. Mellone points out, "A Trinitarianism of the modern type may be actually stated as a definition of Unitarian theism." I am quite sure that he is right. As soon as one swallows the greatest absurdity, the smaller ones go down even with greater ease. Once you have your Unitarian Trinitarianism as Mr. Mellone piously insists, you "get a conception of Deity which may be called Trinitarian but is not tripersonal." This piece of beautiful logic, I am sure, would have been understood not only by Athanasius but by Augustine and Aquinas. It beats me, but then I am not a believer. To get the full religious flavour of Mr. Mellone's "doctrine," one should get his pamphlet and work it out for oneself. For me, when a writer says that "one of the great historic failures of Christian theology" is its blindness "to the immeasurable religious value and profound philosophical significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit," I feel like asking with Cyrano de Bergerac: "What the devil did he want in that (Unitarian) galley?"

Mr. Mellone, like millions of Unitarians, is quite convinced that "the life of Jesus of Nazareth is the supreme example of the suffering of others," but he refuses to answer the question, "Is Jesus indispensable to the highest religious life" because "we do not know what the highest religious life is." But why should we have any desire at all for a religious life? I don't want it, and there are billions of people who have lived very well without it, and who can be called decent, honest folk quite equal to the average Unitarian.

For Mr. Mellone Unitarian Christianity is "scriptural, rational, and conducive to the true glory of God and well-being of man." I often think that if there be a God, this fulsome adulation must make him sick. He must ask himself what he has done to deserve it, even from a Unitarian, for nobody surely is more aware than God himself that he has done nothing at all. Still it pleases our religious brothers and no doubt they feel better for it.

After reading Mr. Mellone's pamphlet I can only express profound surprise that any freethinker could possibly leave his freethought for the hopeless conglomeration of religion therein advocated.

H. CUTNER.

A LONDON TRIBUTE

IT was with profound regret and a sense of shock that I heard of the tragically sudden death of Mr. R. H. Rosetti, President of the National Secular Society. I recalled—during the ceremony of his cremation at Mortlake Crematorium—the first occasion on which Mr. Rosetti lectured at my special invitation. It was to the Political Education Group of the Bellingham Ward of South Lewisham Labour Party. He chose as his subject, "The Principles of Atheism." Strangely enough, the lecture was held in the school hall of Bellingham Green Congregational Church, much to the subsequent annoyance of the then incumbent, a fact which Mr. Rosetti did not fail to forecast in the course of his lecture. It is a remarkable fact and a tribute to his ability as a lecturer, that, although quite two-thirds of his audience were fundamentalist Christians of a primitive type, not one of them could find an excuse for resorting to personal abuse. I particularly remember his reply to the question: "How could we be married if there were no clergymen to perform the ceremony?" which was perhaps, needless to say, addressed to him by a lady. It was: "Madam, I have myself been married for a great many years to a most charming and honourable lady. The ceremony was performed by a properly and legally qualified gentleman called a registrar; you are not suggesting, are you, Madam, that because this legally qualified gentleman had no clerical qualifications, not only I, but a very modest and honourable lady, have lived together in sin?"

The answer, I recall, appeared to be entirely to the satisfaction of the lady who asked him the question, who remained singularly silent for the rest of the evening.

It was, I may say, largely due to Mr. Rosetti's quiet, courteous and logical handling of a very difficult audience at this meeting, that brought about the founding of the Lewisham Branch of the National Secular Society.

R. H. Rosetti was indeed a typical example of an individual Freethinker of the finest type. Tolerant towards those who did not wholly understand the Freethought position, or opposed him in the religious field, he was kindly and courteous to all who approached him either in his official capacity of President of the National Secular Society or in his private capacity for advice. Critical where criticism was necessary, and above all, even as the President of the Society, not above giving a lecture to a very modest Branch of the Society or other small group of truth seekers, he gave all the enthusiasm with which he would lecture to a large meeting of several hundred persons. The Freethought movement and humanity in general owes much to R. H. Rosetti and his kind, and I can say with real feeling, *Timor mortis perturbat me*, when death does indeed take away for ever those men and women who can never be replaced.

E. W. SHAW

(President, South London and Lewisham Branch,
National Secular Society.)

A GREAT IMPERSONATION

IF any proof were needed of the continued popularity of Charles Dickens, the great success of Mr. Emlyn Williams' marvellous reconstruction of the way Charles Dickens delivered his famous Readings is surely proof indeed. Our grandfathers were lucky to have had the chance of hearing the Master himself, and many of us have heard since. Famous elocutionists like Frank Speight, Charles Clarke, John Duxbury, and others also, give wonderful readings. But it was a great idea on the part of Mr. Williams to let us see how Dickens acted scenes from his famous books

—and it should never be forgotten that Dickens was a very great actor himself.

The famous novels abound in dramatic writing and scenes, and only a fine actor steeped in them, and a Dickens enthusiast, would be able to extract their power so profoundly to move us. Reading Dickens to oneself, or even in the family circle, is not quite enough to bring out the marvellous writing and wonderful grasp of character which made Dickens perhaps the greatest of all novelists—excepting nobody. The finely-trained voice and astonishing grasp of character which have always been characteristics of Mr. Williams' acting have never been seen to greater advantage—he must have studied every representation of Dickens as a Reader so well to reproduce the Master's slightest actions, all part of the way Dickens held his audience spell bound.

Bob Sawyer's immortal party has always been a favourite, and Mr. Williams filled the stage vividly representing the famous people there. The story of Mr. Chops from *Christmas Stories* is a masterpiece of subtle humour as that of poor little Paul Dombey is of pathos. And to show how he could give us something considered not typical Dickens, and yet extract all its dramatic qualities, we are given the ghostly "Signal Man" from *Mugby Junction*. But Mr. Williams' range is a wide one, and the marvel is that he can remember and reproduce so vividly pages and pages of prose, surely one of the most difficult feats of all memory tests.

All Dickens lovers should flock to see him and renew acquaintance with works of genius which have (except in a few cases) been universally acclaimed. For my own part, I wish to pay my humble tribute to Mr. Emlyn Williams for the great treat his own genius has given us.

H. C.

CORRESPONDENCE

SHOULD DOCTORS TELL THEIR RELIGION?

SIR,—Dr. Norman Haire has propounded a real poser for Secularists! Shall we ask our doctors if they are Roman Catholics and, if they admit the impeachment, should we withdraw our custom? Personally, I prefer to keep my sciatica and polemics separate, and in my contact with many doctors the question of religion has never arisen. I consider Dr. Haire is wrong in his diagnosis of the situation arising through the foolish edict of the Pope, and I do not accept the assumption that "Roman Catholics, of course, must submit to his (the Pope's) pronouncements." I very much doubt whether they do in regard to contraception. I am in favour of the Pope making as many edicts and encyclicals as he can manage, for thus we secure public discussion of Roman Catholicism.

The Pope's edict on birth control is invalid for the reason that the questions involved thereon are entirely moral, and have no connection with religion. Fortunately, parsons and priests have no jurisdiction over child-conception and child-birth, and normal human beings are as qualified to express an opinion on the subject as the Pope, the General of the Salvation Army, the Chief Rabbi, or the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dr. Haire appears to think that even a R.C. doctor would bow down to the Pope's edict, but this is not necessarily so. *The Freethinker* mentioned recently the case of the withdrawal of a National Health Bill from the Southern Irish Parliament. The Bishops of the R.C. Church told the Prime Minister not to proceed because the terms of the Bill would be contrary to the R.C. religion, and the P.M. weakly gave in. The Minister of Health, however, who is a R.C. doctor, resigned his office in protest, and thus showed his disapproval of the dogmatism of the R.C. Bishops.

With regard to the particular point which has aroused so much interest, viz., whose life should be saved in a birth crisis, that of the mother or the baby, here again the question comes within the realm of morals, and the Pope should mind his own business. His idea that the infant should be considered first is a mistaken judgment. The mother should have the first attention because normally she is of most value to the community and the family. In these matters we should trust the doctor to do the best he can under the circumstances.

Weighing up the matter seriously, although there are humorous possibilities, it would be a mistake for patients to inquire into their doctors' religion. Pushed to its logical conclusion, Dr. Haire's proposal would lead to confusion and exacerbation, which it is desirable should be absent from the consulting room. A Methodist would require a Methodist doctor, a Baptist, Episcopalian and Jew should seek a physician or surgeon of their religious persuasion, and so on. Stated in this way, the proposal is seen to be absurd. As for Secularists, there is an old saying that where three doctors are in company, two would be Atheists!—Yours, etc.,

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

THE FLAT EARTH AND THE BIBLE

SIR,—I was not mistaken in thinking that Mr. H. Cutner would nibble at my bait about "Flat Earth." First, I would point out that he has not been able to find the phrase in the Bible. He has attempted to compensate for this in a number of ways. He has, for example, misquoted the first verse of the Bible for the word "Heavens" (plural) he has made singular. It should read: "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth," the word Heavens referring to all the universe. Professor Rendel Short has shown how remarkably in harmony this first chapter of Genesis is with the known facts of geology, especially in the Hebrew from which our authorised version is translated: the order in which life appears on earth under God's hand is the same. Mr. Cutner quotes St. Peter: "The earth standing out of the water and in the water." If Mr. Cutner had referred to the margin he would have seen that the word in the original translated "standing" means "existing." We have to remember that the translation which was made when much less science was known sometimes colours what is remarkably accurate in the original language. Also when the Bible quotes the speeches of people in its stories it would be unnatural to put into their mouths scientific language not used in their day. When, however, God speaks to Job and others we notice an immediate difference.

I see Mr. Cutner is also keen upon the documentary theory which cannot now be substantiated in the face of factual discovery by archeology. These discoveries have proved the accuracy of the Bible even concerning miracles at one time thought impossible.—Yours, etc.,

E. K. VICTOR PEARCE.

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: F. A. RIDLEY and W. G. FRASER.

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

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: ANTHONY H. CADBURY, M.A., "The Quaker Message of Light."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). Tuesday, January 8, 7 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "The American Way of Life."

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. HIGGINS, "The Case for Socialism."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK, "The Culture of the Abdomen," illustrated.

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate).—Saturday, January 12, 3 p.m.: Mr. C. D. LEGGE, B.A., "American Foreign Policy."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. W. PAUL (Derby), "Dollar Imperialism."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, January 6, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Hopes and Fear for 1952."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1)—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Annual General Meeting.

South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (London and Brighton Hotel, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E.).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. E. W. SHAW, "The Future of the National Secular Society" (for members of N.S.S. only).

THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

IF, as Mr. C. Wicksteed Armstrong states in his *Road to Happiness*,* there is overwhelming evidence on every hand that our lives were designed by God to be very happy, there would be no need for us to think of entering on the tortuous and rambling road which he has mapped out for us to follow. If, as he says in his Foreword (p. x), a complete philosophy, which apparently he considers his own to be, must agree with every branch of science, why does he introduce the outmoded, unscientific, and long exploded argument from design? He says: "If a single flower can prove the loving-kindness of the Creator, who can reasonably doubt it in the face of the evidence which science itself is continually revealing? Everything needed to make life happy has been provided. The Earth produces food and water, while temperature, atmospheric pressure, photosynthesis, light and sound-waves, and a hundred other conditions which we simply take for granted, are all nicely adjusted to our needs" (pp. 6 and 7). I had always been under the impression that it was the other way about and that Man as he exists to-day was a *result* of these conditions. But we live and learn. Now we know why rivers run past the big towns!

If God intended us to be very happy why are we not happy? Mr. Wicksteed Armstrong tells us that disease, war, poverty, and intolerance are probably the chief sources of human suffering: that all are directly or indirectly attributable to human stupidity or human devilry, and result from the exercise by Man of his free will. Disease, he tells us, is mostly due to misuse of the body for which either we or our forebears, or both, are responsible. Where is the loving-kindness of a God who allows the sins of the fathers to be visited upon the children? And what about earthquakes and other destructive phenomena? These are accounted for by the assertion that God's intelligence is, like our own, subject to limitations! The birth of monstrosities—the mongolian idiot, Siamese twins, and so forth, are rather due to miscalculation than to a deliberate act of God. Such occurrences, we are told, are almost as nothing at all in the unthinkable immensity of the Space-Time Continuum.

The substitution of the "Space-Time Continuum" for the more obvious "Universe" is evidently intended to give the impression that the author is deeply versed in the latest developments of scientific thought. If this be so, all we can say is that he shows very little evidence of it in his work. All that we can gather from this is that he has a nodding acquaintance with the dubious philosophy of Sir James Jeans, who talks of the Space-Time Continuum as the thought of God, and the crack-brained theories regarding "time" of J. W. Dunne. In the latter connection he tells us that "among the latest illusions to be shown up by modern science is that of flowing time, for we now know that time, the passage of which seems so real to us, is simply a dimension, like length, breadth, and height, and we call that dimension *duration*." Time is a dimension and movement an illusion. "We must learn to think of *past* and *future* as directions, similar to *east* and *west*, and *up* and *down*. It is certain that time does not flow—of that there can be no doubt whatever—past and future must be equally existent. It is only the present which does not exist" (pp. 168 and 171). Future events exist just as surely as past events, while the present is merely a dividing line between what to us is known and what is still unknown.

* Watts & Co. 17s. 6d.

It may come as a bit of a surprise to Mr. Wicksteed Armstrong to learn that there is not a single scientific fact, no matter how modern it may be, that lends the slightest support to the theory he holds in common with J. W. Dunne regarding "time." The choice of the passage from Einstein's and Infeld's work, *The Evolution of Physics*, to illustrate his views, is a clear indication that he has not grasped its import. In fact, I have already made use of the passage in question to combat the views which Wicksteed Armstrong is now trying to prove. Einstein and Infeld merely tell us that the world of events can be described dynamically, by a picture changing in time and thrown on the background of three-dimensional space; or it may be described by a static picture thrown on the background of a four-dimensional time-space continuum. From the point of view of classical physics the two pictures are equivalent. But from the point of view of the Relativity theory the static picture is the more convenient. A similar device was adopted by the French mathematician, Lagrange (1736-1813), when he added "t", to signify time, as a fourth co-ordinate to the three spatial co-ordinates of Descartes.

C. Wicksteed Armstrong, in considering the implications of his theory of time says that it may seem at first sight that Evolution loses its meaning if the future exists as well as the past, since development cannot occur where all is ready-made. "But," he says, "such a feeling is eminently anthropomorphic." To ascribe to the Deity the working out of a plan step by step, just as Man might conceive and work, is to think of Him with those very limitations which result from our inability to grasp the full meaning of four-dimensional reality. We might be considered eminently anthropomorphic if we asked Mr. Wicksteed Armstrong to reconcile some of his own statements with his theory of static time. For instance, he tells us that "the trend of evolution would seem to include the gradual raising of one function after another above the threshold of consciousness." How can anything be gradual in static time? "God gave Man freedom to choose between right and wrong." Where is the freedom when the choice is already made? After being told that movement is an illusion we are told some pages further on that, since Past and Present are directions, there is nothing irrational in the supposition that a backward movement in time is possible.

Many such discrepancies as the above could be pointed out but enough has, I think, already been said to convince anyone seeking the road to happiness that he would be ill-advised to accept Mr. Wicksteed Armstrong as his guide. The road to happiness is much simpler than anything dreamt of in his philosophy and there is no need to go wandering along an imaginary fourth-dimension to find it.

FRANK KENYON.

One of the questions that agitated the Fathers of the Church was the vexed question: do women possess souls, and, if they do, can they be saved despite the enormous damage done by the frailty of Eve in that small matter of the serpent in the Garden of Eden? One of the most original contributions to this discussion was advanced by that eminent pillar of the Church and of theological science, St. Jerome. In the Apocalypse occurs the text: "There was silence in Heaven for the space of half an hour." From which the holy doctor drew the notable deduction that there are no women in Heaven!