

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A White Christ?

SOME little time back, in another column of this journal we had occasion to allude to a controversy on the subject of religious art which was raging in Madrid. The point at issue in this controversy was a question of colour: was Jesus Christ a white man or, more precisely, is it permissible to represent the God-man as having had another colour during His earthly existence as "The Word (or Logos) made flesh"? This problem, one which stems from both theology and art, has only become acute in Catholic circles during recent years, for reasons which we shall shortly discuss.

In a recent art-exhibition in Madrid, the home, since Velasques painted his famous "Assumption of the Virgin," of so much religious art, the problem, we might almost call it the burning question of the colour of Christ and His mother, came up sharply for discussion and for an authoritative definition by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church has, of course, never stated definitely that Christ was a white man but, in practice, it has always assumed that such was the case. This, of course, has never had anything to do with theology—or even with geography, since Palestine is not part of Europe. The invariable assumption that Christ and the Virgin Mary were actually white, is merely the result of the historical accident by which Christianity, whilst it actually began in Asia, met with success in Europe. All the major Christian nations and empires in its long history have consisted of white men. This fact applies both to the Roman Catholic Church and to the Protestant Churches as, equally, to the "Orthodox" Eastern Churches. (The only partial exception, prior to recent times, was the Coptic Church of Abyssinia—a not very important exception.) As all Freethinking critics of religion know: "Man made—and continues to make—God in his own image." It is, consequently, hardly matter for astonishment when we find that the religion of the white races, as Christianity may accurately be described, has universally not so much proclaimed as taken it for granted that its God, whilst on earth, could only be regarded as a white man—in every sense of the word!

As far as the present writer is aware, the Catholic Church at least, has never officially defined Christ's colour. Some, at least, of the Protestant Churches came very near to doing so, the Calvinistic Church of South Africa appears to imply what He was, in and by its dogmatic decision that all coloured races are racially degenerate compared with the white races. Whilst, of course, the Nazi brand of Christianity seems to have explicitly asserted that Christ was a pure-blooded "Nordic." (See Alfred Rosenberg—*The Myth of the 20th Century—1930.*) Even the "Universal" ("Catholic") Church has, however, at times come very near to proclaiming the dogma of theological "racism," for example, at a time when Spain was the indisputable leader of the Catholic Church and world in

her "age of gold" (*sigli del oro*) in the 16th century, Spanish theologians of high repute gravely discussed whether Negroes or American "Indians" had souls at all, and, as often as not, answered their own query in the negative!

It must, however, be remembered that the Catholic Church was never really "Catholic"—that is, "universal" in the geographical sense prior to the discovery of America and to even later discoveries in still more modern times. When St. Ignatius of Antioch (second century) first described the Christian Church of his day as "Catholic," he could not have meant that this then petty organisation was world-wide—even in the limited sense that classical geography attached to that designation. In later times, when the medieval Church did actually rule Europe, it still knew nothing of the New World—of which the infallible Church was then as ignorant as the infallible Scriptures—whilst as for the Antipodes, it was almost a dogma of medieval Christianity that they did not exist at all! Down to modern times, the assertion that the Church was "universal" merely meant that it was the one true Church for all races and conditions of men; not that it was actually universal in its diffusion.

In modern and, very particularly in recent times, a very different state of things has come into being. To-day, for the first time in her long history, Rome is actually aiming at a really world-wide empire. In Western Europe, the historic cradle of her power, the Catholic Church is now more powerful than at any time since the Reformation, with the rival "Church" of Moscow as her only serious ideological rival. In the Americas, where Columbus probably—as we have argued elsewhere—saved the Church of Rome by his opportune discovery—Rome has known, if we may reverse the historic words of George Canning, how "to call in the New World to redress the balance of the Old," and is, to-day, incomparably the most powerful ideological force in the Americas. Whilst in the Australian Antipodes—the existence of which she formerly denied!—Catholicism is as powerful in the political field as in her "spiritual" domain.

The above are all strongholds of the white races. But the Vatican, nowadays, does not limit her ambitions to these—contrarily, Rome now, for the first time in nineteen centuries, is aiming, literally, at actual universal power: at long last, the "Universal" Church proposes to live up to its name! The last few years have seen the creation of Chinese Cardinals, Japanese, Indian and African Bishops. It is now the declared policy of Rome that no Church in a non-European land can be regarded as in a satisfactory state unless and until it has a native-born clergy capable of talking to their people in their native language.

The natural fruits of this policy were revealed in the recent exhibition of religious art in Madrid. We learn that Spanish Catholicism, the most conservative, perhaps, in the Catholic world, was astonished and shocked at seeing Christ and the Virgin depicted as Indian Deities, Buddhist Mahatmas, and Negro divinities clad in appro-

priate "native" costumes. It would, no doubt, have shocked the Catholic artists of the Middle Ages but it proves, at least, that Rome can and does move with the times: Newman's "Development of Dogma," is accompanied and paralleled by a similar "Development" in religious art.

But is it only in religious art? For there are more fundamental questions behind their artistic symbols. Was Christ a white man? Or can He and His mother be legitimately represented as coloured? This question may seem superficial and trivial, but it is, in actuality, one of the most important practical questions in current history. Thus we are at a decisive turning-point in history. For the supremacy of the white races appears to be coming to an end in the present era of "The Awakening of Asia"—and Africa. If the Catholic Church wishes to be *in* this world, it must be *of* it: it can never hope to "sell" an exclusively white God to coloured peoples newly emancipated from the alien yoke of white Imperialism. Behind the artistic problem of symbolic representation, lies a political problem of the first magnitude: can Catholicism, for the first time in nineteen centuries, become a really Universal Church and a really world-wide power?

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE RISE OF THE PROTESTANT CULTS

PROFESSOR of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard, Dr. Crane Brinton in his *Ideas of Men: The Story of Western Thought* (Cape, 1951; 36s.) surveys human thought from Pagan Greece to our own times. This volume extends to 568 pp., and is avowedly impersonal in outlook. The science and philosophy of ancient cultures are impartially surveyed but, perhaps, his treatment of the rise and establishment of Christianity suggests his desire to avoid offence to the ordinary religious reader, while when dealing with the downfall of Imperial Rome and the succeeding Dark and Middle Ages, he somewhat tends to lessen the evils while extolling the benefits existing in the centuries which bridged ancient Rome with the Renaissance. Indeed, his appreciation of the alleged benefactions bestowed by the Roman Church in preserving classical literature and the agricultural improvements conducted by the monastic orders, might induce the reader to infer that the monks preserved much more ancient literature than they disfigured and destroyed, while never employing serf labour in their cultivation of the soil. Nor are Arabian influences in science, agriculture, and the care of classical manuscripts and translations, stressed. Still, our author admits that the statements made in one section of his undoubtedly able work are sometimes hard to reconcile with views expressed in others. None the less, Brinton's volume is a most scholarly performance and furnishes much food for thought.

The elaborate chapter which reviews the birth and progress of Protestantism is both interesting and instructive. Our historian appears outside all the churches and appraises them from an ethical standpoint alone. As he remarks: "We moderns hardly need reminding that Luther, Calvin and Zwingli headed movements that differed greatly in aims and organisation from medieval attempts to reform existing religious practices. For one thing, they succeeded in establishing churches where Wycliffe and Hus failed. Or from another point of view, they were not, like the mendicant friars, tamed and absorbed into the Catholic Church."

The modern idea of progress was unknown to the Protestant Reformers whose ideal was a return to the true Christian attitude of the early Fathers, and the teachings of Jesus, that had been falsified by the Romanist priesthood. Indirectly, however, Protestantism by releasing religious minds from orthodox Catholicism led to more and more sectarianism and, ultimately, to complete rationalism. Economic, geographical and other secular influences such as the growth of nationalism, played their part in emancipating men's minds. Far more importance was attached to this life, which ceased to remain a mere preparation for a future state. Max Weber's conclusions, as paraphrased by our author, are substantially sound, when he avers that: "Luther's idea that each man had a vocation from God helped to form businessmen's ethics. But Calvin was the real source of these ethics and it was in Calvinistic countries that the capital which financed the later Industrial Revolution was saved in these countries." Calvin proclaimed the dignity of labour and Man's commercial success was evidence of divine approval. Yet, as Dr. Tawney demonstrates in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, trading transactions on a very extensive scale date back to pre-Reformation times in Italy and elsewhere. Also, that the economic factor alone is insufficient to explain the Reformation as shown by the Calvinism of industrial Holland and the Romanism of the area which is now Belgium. As Professor Brinton observes, this difference "is an interesting one for the economic determinist to grapple with, since these small contiguous regions have both been trading and industrial centres for centuries, have both had, in short, very similar economies."

Toleration was virtually unknown to the Reformers who like their Catholic antagonists, persecuted even unto death, as in the case of Servetus, until their intolerance was lessened and ultimately overcome by the growth of rationalism. Nor were they favourable to science. Luther denounced the Copernican astronomy in scathing terms, while even the more modernist Francis Bacon, a philosopher in so many ways enlightened, scornfully rejected the heliocentric theory.

Although banking, industry and commerce generally were firmly established in Catholic countries, the teachings of Calvinism apparently modified their character and aided their development. John Calvin's God was a remorseless fiend who determined, before His creation of the world and Adam's preordained transgression, the identity of the human beings to whom He would grant happiness in Heaven or inflict everlasting torture in a burning Hell. Still both Luther and Calvin averred that, even in this earthly existence, all men had their divinely appointed tasks. As Prof. Brinton testifies: "Calvinism not only preached the dignity of labour; it insisted on labour, since the devil lies in wait for idle hands and since work is a part of man's debt to an overpowering God. Success in business was a sign of God's favour. Interest, of course, was quite legitimate. So your Calvinist works hard and produces income. Thus the Calvinist becomes a capitalist, and a rich man—and he will go to heaven too. More than that, he has the pleasing assurance that the heavily indebted nobleman who lorded it over him the other day, will not only die poor, but since he is not a Calvinist, will go to hell."

Yet, the economic factor was only one element—however important—in Protestant success. The Rhineland, France, the Catholic Netherlands, and industrial and commercial Italy continued Catholic. The growth of the nationalist spirit, however, was a contributory cause of

Protestant ascendancy in Northern Europe. Henry VIII's seizure of church property, largely obtained by death-bed repentances, was also carried out by Protestant princes on the Continent who likewise assumed the headship of their respective churches. Luther himself proclaimed the nationalist principle. In one of his pamphlets he declares that: "Rome is the greatest thief and robber that has ever appeared on earth, or ever will. . . . Poor Germans that we are—we have been deceived. *We are born to be masters*, and we have been compelled to bow the head beneath the yoke of our tyrants. . . . It is time the glorious Teutonic people should cease to be the puppet of the Roman pontiff."

Thus, in the sixteenth century, Protestantism triumphed in several North European communities over a weakened and discredited Roman Catholic Church. But it was destined to segregate more and more into discordant sects, while the Vatican recovered many of her southern possessions. Yet, after the Thirty Years' War of religion, toleration steadily advanced, thanks largely to the Era of Rationalistic Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, accelerated by the scientific discoveries which revolutionised the intellectual outlook of the century that followed.

T. F. PALMER.

REVIEW

YEAR after year, since 1884, has appeared the now well-known *Rationalist Annual* (Watts & Co., 2s. 6d.), always with a feast of good things for the ever-inquiring mind of Rationalists all the world over.

The 1952 number is well up to the standard of most of its predecessors, and the various articles by such well-known writers as Lord Chorley, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, Gerald Bullett, Robin Skynner, A. D. Howell Smith, Archibald Robertson, Royston Pyke, R. S. W. Pollard, and D. H. H. Martin provide much material for serious thought to say nothing of their educative value.

The first article, by Mr. Martin, discusses Propaganda and the "Art of Mass Persuasion," though personally I have not found it easy to grasp his point of view. The tremendous success of Christianity in the past and of Socialism and Communism just now, is proof that "mass persuasion" has never been too difficult to propagate. Mr. Martin points out that

"broadcast religious programmes are often offensive to Freethinkers because they feel that insufficient radio time is devoted to proclaiming their own point of view. For them, such programmes are 'bad' propaganda, while, on the contrary, those based on Rationalist 'themes' are good propaganda."

But, put this way, is this really so? Personally, I think Christian propaganda on the wireless is excellent propaganda for Christianity—and not really "offensive" at all. On the other hand, very often I feel when listening to the programmes based "on Rationalist themes," that they are not "good" propaganda but definitely very poor—for us. Mr. Martin appears to think that all will be well if everybody had "a liberal education in the humanities" (whatever this means) especially "in social science." But what if my idea of "social science" differs in every way from Mr. Martin's? Are there not a hundred varieties of "social science?"

Mr. Skynner can always be relied upon to write a thought-provoking article, and this one on "Beliefs and Assumptions" is no exception. On "Reason and the Problem of Punishment," Lord Chorley has a great deal

to say, but the problem of how to deal with criminals and crime is, in my opinion, too vast to be settled in an article. Mr. Bullett's feeling against the foul gin trap used to catch rabbits—and all Rationalists, I hope, share his feelings—has led him to write a fine short story with a moral. As can be expected, Prof. Haldane gives us a scholarly article on "The Origin of Language," besprinkled with eminent authorities and speculation; but whether we are much wiser on the subject is a question readers must decide for themselves.

Mr. Archibald Robertson's contribution on "The Dead Sea Scrolls to Date" gave him an opportunity to bring in his King Charles' Head—for he still valiantly fights his battle for an Historical Jesus. It used to be a fight for a genuine "Jesus of Nazareth" backed up by the prophecies regarding the Second Coming which he at one time (and still does, perhaps) believed came from Jesus himself exactly as described in the Gospels, and therefore proved his veritable existence. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls proves, he thinks, that there might have been another Jesus, an Essene put to death many years before Jesus of Nazareth, and so the "myth of history" has now "a new setting." "Perhaps," he adds, "more than one figure went to make up the legend" (!). Anything, anywhere, and at any time but Jesus of Nazareth must be preserved even if only a *legend*. I still maintain that "Jesus of Nazareth" is a myth.

Mr. Royston Pike's excellent article on Mrs. Humphrey Ward and her *Robert Elsmere* will, I trust, send many readers to that once famous book which does not deserve to be forgotten. Her own reverence for Jesus of Nazareth does not intrude too much. Mr. Pollard is an expert on our silly divorce laws, and all who agree that they are silly, should read his fine and lucid article. From Mr. Howell Smith we finally get a scholarly analysis of the "Song of Songs," that Oriental and erotic love poem which many wonder at being in the Holy Bible. Our English translation does little justice to its eroticism. Altogether, this *Rationalist Annual* should enjoy all the interest and popularity of its forerunners.

H. CUTNER.

SOOTHING SYLLABUS

We offer complete Education,
On Christian lines, as you'll see.
We serve up a smatter of subjects
From A quite as far as to B.
There is sound mathematical guidance,
We start with the great Three-in-One,
And we teach 'em—at "Finding the Lady"—
That Simple Arithmetic's fun.
As for Writing, they copy out Scriptures
(Since the Prophet called Atheists "fools"),
And we follow great Solomon's wisdom,
And flog in grammatical rules,
At Spelling, our method's Pragmatic—
Devised by the great Mr. Squeers;
If they want to know how to spell "winder,"
They're sent out to clean off the smears.
In reading, well, what beats the Bible?
They can mark all the bits they enjoy.
They'll discuss 'em in holes and and in corners
I know—for I once was a boy.
For manners and Morals and Ethics
There is oft an odd minute to spare,
And the clergyman drops in quite often
To see Holy Church takes its share.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

ACID DROPS

"The Age of Miracles" is past. This fact, at least, seems to be clearly demonstrated by the recent adventure of Captain Carlsen and his ship, "The Flying Enterprise." For what a splendid opportunity was then lost by the Lord for working a miracle with really world-wide publicity! Had the voice of Heaven calmed the storm and saved "The Flying Enterprise," that would have afforded a testimonial to the truth of religion far more effective than any number of "Christian Evidence" meetings. We fear that the Lord has let His followers down badly.

Our old friend, "The Argument from Design," is apt to take on queer forms nowadays. Not long ago a speaker in a religious broadcast on the B.B.C. gave an accurate account of the way in which ants behave: when the queen ant dies, the worker ants lose all sense of direction and the whole community just goes to pieces. One would have thought that, if this meant anything it proved the utter lack of any "purpose" in the universe, at least as far as ants are concerned. Not at all! The speaker concluded by expressing the fervent belief that even an ant-heap "proves" the glory and power of God. Just how, is not quite clear!

Another example of the futile way in which the B.B.C. stages its "Brains Trusts" (sic) was recently illustrated in a discussion of "space travel" by "The Younger Generation." One of the guests who participated in this discussion was Mr. Arthur C. Clarke, President of the Inter-Planetary Society, and—believe it or believe it not!—the book selected for discussion was the "space-travel" novel, *The Sands of Mars*, by Mr. Arthur C. Clarke. Naturally, a "discussion" of a book, the author of which was actually present, inevitably degenerated into a mere "mutual admiration" society which, to judge from its frequent recurrence on the programmes of the B.B.C., is that body's idea of a satisfactory "Brains Trust."

We quote, without comment, from our contemporary, the *News Chronicle* (January 7, 1952):—

"For an all-Australian Esperanto conference," cables my Sydney correspondent, 'a notice has been erected directing delegates to the assembly room on the eighth floor of a building in that city. So that everyone will understand,' he adds, 'the notice is in English.'"

Like one of its alleged founders, St. Paul, the Roman Catholic Church is "all things to all men." It has just demonstrated this fact by ordaining two married former Protestant clergymen in Germany. To calm the fears of its members, the Church has just issued a long explanation of this novel relaxation of the hitherto universal law of celibacy. One would have thought, however, that it would only have been necessary to have pointed out that St. Peter, "the first Pope," according to the New Testament, was a married man.

Most "freak" religions come from America—though the "daddy" of most of them is "true" Christianity. A well known spiritualist, Mr. H. Leaf, who has just come from the U.S.A., tells us in *Two Worlds* that a determined effort by a young evangelist is being made to capture Hollywood for Christ. Hollywood, in fact, is the "test" city and if only it will accept Jesus, and Communism and Capitalism settle their differences, then everything will be ready for "the second coming." In fact "millions of Americans" are waiting for the return of "our Lord."

All this twaddle is being broadcast—though Mr. Leaf himself does not appear to have been impressed. But after all, are not some of his own beliefs just as fantastic and nonsensical?

Why poke fun at any pathetic belief in the "second coming" of Christ when every spiritualist, including Mr. Leaf, actually believes in the "second coming" of an Aunt Martha or an Uncle George? Our Spiritualist Churches are packed with people dying to learn some fatuous message from a dear departed who certainly could not give this message unless he "came again." Second comings are, in fact, as common as gooseberry bushes, and if there ever was a Jesus some medium is bound to "contact" him one day. Our only hope is that any new "message" will not be as silly as the old.

The Church of England is running short of recruits: too few Christian soldiers are marching on to war. Dr. Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, is holding a conference at Hove to discuss this problem in shortages. We respectfully suggest to his lordship that the problem is economic rather than theological—more cash, more curates!

How will Communism finally be killed is a question recently answered by the Rev. L. J. Collins, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. "Christians should have personal relations with Communists," he declared, but this antidote to the poison of Communism would have more weight if he gave us a list of the number of God-forsaken Communists he had himself bowled over, and brought to the heavenly Grace of Jesus Christ. But no doubt the courageous Canon would prefer other people to undertake the bowling over, he himself being free to bawl inspirational sermons for them.

With the picture of the Virgin Mary on posters, and the words "Happy Christmas," £3,000 poured into an office to pay their printing cost and other expenses. The idea came from Roman Catholics—but, however poverty-broken people may be, somehow they can always find money for religion. In the past, it was for churches and missionaries—nowadays, it is for "good will," that is, so long as it is a religious good will. If this is contested we would like to ask: would there have been any good will without the picture of Mary?

A gentleman called Smalley wrote to *The Recorder* the other day and asked a question which has been asked a million times ever since the utter failure of Christianity has had to be acknowledged by Christians. "What," he asks in effect, "is the use of being a Christian without Christ?" Ah, there's the rub. To call oneself a Christian and utterly to reject Christ is just criminal—but according to Mr. Smalley that is what Christians are doing. "Christ himself," he tells us—and he ought to know—"did not think much of many of the Clergy," a sentiment which ought to wipe "many of our own Clergy" off the map.

The real truth is that, in the light of modern knowledge, the clergy had to humanise Christ. They had to apologise for Christ's belief in Devils and Angels, and they had to throw overboard that beautiful Christ-like teaching which insists that one must hate one's parents to be a Perfect Disciple of Christ. Mr. Smalley wants to bring back the Devils and the Angels—and of course Heaven and Hell—and the "hate" teaching of his Glorious Master. We do not think he will succeed.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Could any reader supply the Editor with a copy of *The Freethinker* for January 14, 1940? We would be greatly obliged.

F. C. PARSONS.—We note your comment on Dr. Tabori's article—and agree with it, but we had to close the discussion some time or other.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

The programme of the N.S.S. Annual Dinner is complete. A good menu, varied entertainment from a group of artistes led by Miss Eileen Cusack, short speeches from F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Mrs. Janet Chance, Professor H. Levy, L. Ebury and P. Victor Morris, and the company of enthusiastic Freethinkers from far and wide, comprise the attractions of the evening of January 26. Whether there will be any tickets still available for this event at the Charing Cross Hotel by the time this final notice appears is problematical. The Secretary of the N.S.S. will do his best to supply them (16s. each) if he possibly can.

The new year has witnessed a vigorous N.S.S. propaganda campaign. Upon Sunday, January 13, the West London Branch opened the second half of their winter session at The Laurie Arms, Edgware Road, London, W. On this occasion, the Branch was fortunate enough to secure the services of the veteran Rationalist historian and publicist, Joseph McCabe. Despite his 84 years, Mr. McCabe retains all his intellectual lucidity which he demonstrated to a record attendance in a masterly lecture on "The Pope and Population." As was only to be expected, a record attendance was registered. In the course of his remarks, the distinguished lecturer reviewed the whole background of the now notorious Encyclical of Pope Pius the Twelfth. The chair was taken by Mr. F. A. Hornibrook who commented on the learned lecturer's half-century of service to the cause of Freethought and expressed the hope that he would long continue to combat superstition and clerical intrigue, and so say all of us!

The Executive Committee of "The World Union of Freethinkers," announces that an International Freethought Congress will meet in Brussels from August 22 to 25. The "President of Honour" will be the eminent Cambridge mathematician and philosopher, Bertrand Russell. Whilst M. Edward Herriot and other eminent Freethinkers are actively collaborating, an elaborate series of discussions have been arranged which embrace a wide variety of subjects. In the course of a detailed survey of current world affairs from the angle of Freethought, comment is made on the relations of religion with the current English political parties, and a particular point is made of Catholic penetration into the British political scene. The heavy loss sustained by the N.S.S. and by British Freethought by the death of Mr. R. H. Rosetti is sympathetically reported. The report is signed by the Secretary, Mlle. H. Pardon.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations to the above Fund, which was opened in May, 1951, have been acknowledged in *The Freethinker* since the week ended Saturday, November 10, 1951. Prior to that date donations were acknowledged individually by receipt. It has now been decided to publish these prior donations to make the list complete and up to date:—

Mrs. E. C. Traske, 2s. 6d.; R. H. Rosetti, 10s. 6d.; N. Dixon, £1 3s.; E.C.R., 5s.; L. Bird, 5s.; Wm. MacKee, 10s.; T. Roberts, 10s.; Dorothy W. Coleman, £2; A. W. Coleman, £2; Edw. Henderson, £2; H. Fiddion, £1; A. E. Stringer, £5; A. C. Rosetti, £1 1s.; J. J. Cantrill 10s.; Mrs. B., 10s.; A. Hancock, 10s.; T. G. Kirkby, 5s.; John Hardy, £1 10s.; S. Clowes, 14s.; A. H. Devereux, 10s. 6d.; J. McIlwain, £1; I. Mettram, £3 3s.; R. Daniell, 5s.; W. Robson, 5s.; G. Ross, £1 5s.; P. Trower, 5s. 10d.; A. McNair, 2s. 6d.; F. C. Parsons, £1; H. Beck, 5s.; F. Newell, 2s. 10d.; L. D. Le Marre, £1 1s.; M.B., £1; G. Hooker, 5s.; Ellen Powell, £1; Mr. and Mrs. Aust, £2 2s.; Mrs. Stupart, £1; Mrs. A. Sheil, £1; W. G. Birch, £1; A. Beale, 10s.; F. S. B. Lawes, £2 2s.; Miss Ray, 10s.; Mr. L. Hangar, 1s.; M. Feldman, 3s. 4d.; S. Metcalf, 10s.; W. Kent, £2 2s.; A. O'Keefe, £2 2s.; William MacKee, £1; W. Heal, £10; Michael J. Barnes, 5s. 6d.; Quinton Book Fund, 2s.; Quinton Book Fund, 5s.; C. McCall, £1 1s.; E. Chickley, 10s.; A. G. Bedane, 14s.; E. Hughes, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. S. Miller, £5; T. A. Rostron, 10s.; H. W. Goldsmith, 10s.; J. W. Arkell, £1; A. L. Jones, £2; A. Howard, 10s.; C. McRobert, £2; T. H. Darlington, £2 2s.; E. A. McDonald, 10s.; Bark, Nottingham, 5s.; Ellis Lyon, £1 6s.; W. Griffiths, £2; Mrs. D. Bohr, £1; W. G. Wilkinson, £1; E. C. Round, 5s.; Berry, Stockport, 5s.; R. Hayman, £5; F. Jones, £5; Robert Spiers, £1; Anon., £1; Smith, 2s. 6d.; A. D. Corrick, £5; N. Cassel, 10s.; A. H. Stone, £1 10s.; J. G. Burdon, £1; J. Close, 5s.; E. Rose, £2; Geo. Ross, 10s.; Mrs. E. M. Sandys, £1 1s.; J. McCartney, £1; R. Stewart, 10s.; E. Drabble, 5s. 10d.; M. Leendertz, 15s.; W. Marchant, £1; W. Smellie, 5s. 10d.; Peter Foster, £10; C. E. Ratcliffe, 5s.; W. T. Hawkes, 6s.; Winifred Smith, £10; A. Beal, 10s.; V. H. Smith, 2s. 6d.; Exors. of J. G. Neate, £25; F. P. Corrigan, £1; V. B. Adam, £1 1s.; J. Humphrey, £1; E. W. Shaw, £15; National Secular Society, £50; H. Beck, 5s.; Mrs. A. Vallance, £1; Dr. W. F. Schmidt, £2 10s. 11d.; A. Hassell, 10s.; J.P., £1; R. Cronin, 10s.

	£	s.	d.
Total of above	227	0	1
Less expenses		5	1
	226	15	0
Total for week ended Saturday, November 10, 1951	61	8	5
Total as per <i>The Freethinker</i> of November 18, 1951	£288	3	5

(Donations for week ended January 19, 1952 will be included in next week's list).

SCIENCE FRONT

U.S. ATOMIC Energy Commission chief, Gordon Dean, recently told a Congress Committee: "We are working towards a situation where we will have atomic weapons in almost as complete a variety as we do conventional ones, and situations where we can use them in the same way. This would include . . . big ones for big situations and little ones—and this is important—for little situations." This statement is as significant in what he did *not* say, as in what he did! Recent U.S. atomic experiments have led to reports that radioactive poisoning was less than had been anticipated.

Statements like this are being deliberately made to cause the underestimation of the dangers of radioactive weapons. The majority of the non-technical public are not aware of the fact that, apart from atomic bombs, there exists a quite different atomic weapon, the nature of which has never been fully made known to the general public!

These are basic facts: atomic energy is generated by the fission of the nuclei of heavy elements such as Uranium 235. The products of nuclear fission are radioactive isotopes of medium atomic weight, iodine, barium, lithium, etc., all emitting beta and gamma rays, thus making the bomb or atomic "pile" a powerful source of

radiation. In the bomb most of this radioactive matter is dispersed in the upper atmosphere and only a very small portion remains at ground level to cause some contamination. In the "pile" however, these fission products have to be removed regularly as "waste" and buried in very deep pits away from population centres.

There is nothing to prevent their military use in war to make enemy cities uninhabitable, by delivering radioactive dust by plane, rocket, or guided missile. This dust would cover an area of several square miles, and emit an invisible radiation powerful enough to kill within a few weeks everyone remaining in the contaminated zone. Experiments made in the U.S. have indicated that by exploding a very large hydrogen bomb, encased in a thick layer of cobalt, sufficient radioactive cobalt could be produced to *destroy all organic life on earth!* (This statement, not available to the general public has been made by a responsible Austrian physicist of Vienna University.) Some U.S. military "experts" have toyed with the concept of laying down a poison barrier across Eastern Europe from the Arctic to the Black Sea. Although this is not practical owing to the rapid deterioration of radioactive isotopes, the energy potentials of the present atomic "piles" are sufficient to contaminate every large city in Europe, and with long-range weapons, in America also, for long enough to produce complete evacuation.

New links in the chain: During this century some of the most important discoveries relative to the antiquity and origins of Man have been made in Africa, largely due to the work of the late Dr. Broom, Dr. Leakey and others. This has resulted in modern anthropology reversing previously held ideas of Man's Asian origin, in favour of Africa as the cradle of the human race. This is a concept first mooted in the 19th century, without the scientific evidence now available, by, amongst others, the little-honoured Freethinker, Gerald Massey. Just as modern agricultural science has demonstrated that only in the Nile valley were conditions favourable to the self-germination of wild wheat, giving there the ideas of cultivation and the earliest civilisation. So with Man himself to Africa we must look.

These discoveries have helped dispel the myth that Man is descended from the living apes or similar creatures. The great apes are far too specialised for them ever to have been in the direct line of Man's descent. It is rather, in the recently found remains of such comparatively primitive, unspecialised creatures as the East African *Proconsul*, and *Australopithecus promethus* of South Africa that we can expect to find indications of what our ancestors were like. Thus slowly but certainly is being forged another link in the long chain of Evolution.

"Catholic" Medicine: Recently, much has been heard of "Soviet" genetics (to be dealt with in a future article), but are we alive to the dangers of Catholic doctors practising the peculiar brand of Papal medical ethics? Prior to the Pope's recent statement, which Church leaders have so dismally failed to explain away, the Church has issued many directives to its members in the medical professions. The Catholic doctor is subordinate to the priest, merely the guardian of the body. Such is amply proved by this quotation from *Moral Problems in Hospital Practice*, by Father Finney, published under the authority of the Archbishop of St. Louis:—

"If it is morally certain that a pregnant mother and her unborn child will both die, if the pregnancy is allowed to take its course, but at the same time, the attending physician is morally certain that he can

save the mother's life by removing the inviable foetus, is it lawful for him to do so?"

Answer: No, it is not. Such a removal of the foetus would be direct abortion."

So both must die if the physician is a good Catholic. Nurses also must discriminate against non-Catholics in hospitals. According to *Medical Ethics for Nurses*, by Father Charles McFadden:—

"The request of a non-Catholic patient for a minister of his own religion presents some difficulties. The Catholic nurse may not summon the official of any other religion for the express purpose of having him minister to members of his Church. To do so would be a direct encouragement and aid to another in the practice of a religion which she believes to be false."

A comparison of the health statistics, death in child-birth, and infant mortality figures, between Catholic and non-Catholic countries of the same cultural levels, will show whether these fantastic ideas are carried out or no.

J. MARTIN ALEXANDER.

STUFF AND NONSENSE

THE latest method of the bishops to retrieve their almost lost cause is to attribute "declining morality" to the public ceasing to go to church. I believe a great part of the church-going that has survived to be due simply to the fact that owing to the many church schools, C. of E. and R.C. in country villages, a number find it very advantageous financially to attend Sunday morning service because it leads to good business. When, financially established, they drop it (except the R.C.s) and almost openly avow themselves freethinkers.

In my native village, in the nineties, a marriage was very seldom celebrated until the girl was "expecting." A mother would notice in her daughter (occasionally as young as 13-15) all the signs of the coming event and question her till the man's name was disclosed, then the young pair were rushed off to be "churched." I recall that the two daughters of the village blacksmith, a deacon at the chapel, had to be married before 16 for this reason.

But the star performer was unquestionably our vicar's youngest daughter. She was a lovely girl, with such grace and charm that every male from 13-50 fell for her. When I was 15 she was my ideal of what a girl should be—I simply adored her. I still have a snapshot of her taken in a group at an open-air tea-party on our lawn at home, and she looks like a film-star, but nicer, more refined, with that stamp of gentility so often lacking in visitors from Hollywood. What of her? At the age of 17 she was found by two elderly deacons, out for a country walk in the woods, in the arms of the handsome drapery assistant at the village emporium where everything from a bag of sweets to a piano was sold. Of course, papa had to be told. She was hurried off to the Continent, where in due course, an infant was placed conveniently in a small cot and deposited in a niche by a convent door. You rang the bell, walked away; the cot was collected and the incident closed.

There were numerous such incidents in the middle-class. Two members of the tennis club would be married in church, go for a month's honeymoon, and return with an infant. The ladies would say: "I do think they should have been married in a registry office instead of having a full floral wedding with bridesmaids." In an adjoining parish I heard the only protest of the cloth I can remember when, at tea time, a young curate said to me: "A young couple came to me and asked me to marry them—the girl

was obviously pregnant. I said, 'you ask for God's blessing on an act that has already been consummated. How can I administer the sacrament? I refuse to marry you. If you want to be married in the parish church you must go and ask the vicar.'

What of the married peasantry? Their homes were usually double-dwellers, often two young couples living in each half—a party-wall between. They were "tied cottages" and tenants had to leave if they lost their job. A curious convention was that if the husband in one half and neighbour's wife happened to be walking home at night, often a couple of miles, say, from the village shop on a Saturday night, when the shop kept open till 10 p.m., one walked eight or nine feet ahead of the other, chatting all the while, as it was improper for them to walk side by side. As a youthful Sherlock Holmes, I was intrigued by this custom and was determined to get to the bottom of it. My father owned three farms and I was soon questioning the farm hands after telling them one or two smoking-room stories to gain confidence. The answer was amazing. All this walking business eight feet apart was pure camouflage to hide the fact that the men in these double-dwellers were changing wives whenever it suited them. Harry and Bill would come home from the local and Henry would say "I could do with a change of wife to-night, Bill. What about you?" Bill would answer "A change would suit me too, Harry" and when they got home the wives would readily agree. But there were two conventions: (1) The husbands must remain in their own homes, as farmer might send any time in the night to say "the cow is calving," or "the old mare has got in the quizzly bog and we want help to lug her out"; (2) the women insisted that no change must be made in the home—no chairs and tables moved, and no tea cups left unwashed in the sink." Such was the delightful morality of the villagers in the nineties.

What of the parsons themselves? Here is one story typical of their outlook and behaviour. When the Old Age Pensions were first granted a single person received 10s. per week at age 70; a married couple received 15s. between them. There lived in our village a blind hawker named Joe in a miserable two-roomed shack, the bedroom with a huge bed that almost filled the room, and a kitchen-cum-scellery-cum living room in rear. An old girl, Sarah, looked after Joe, dressed and undressed him, cooked for him, fed him and cared for him. They were unmarried. Naturally they got the single persons' pensions, as both were nearer 80 than 70. This couple even worked and never asked a penny from the relieving officer, who drove about the countryside in a fast dog-cart. In fact, Joe and Sarah were model citizens—and we youngsters loved them and took them turkey and plum pudding on Christmas Day and cans of pea soup all winter. The vicar saw Sarah in the village Post Office drawing the pensions and noticed she received a golden sovereign. He asked to see the pensions books and did so. Thereupon he went all round the village, calling on the ladies about 11 a.m., when a glass of sherry and a biscuit were provided, unfolding his tale of woe: "In this country a married couple, who have been duly married in God's Church, receive only 15s per week, but a couple living in sin—Joe and Sarah—receive 20s." He then produced a petition to the First Lord of the Treasury asking for the Act to be altered to abolish such an unheard-of scandal. The only signatories were himself, his wife and their two servants (who had to sign). As we say to-day "can you beat it?" My Lord Bishops, please read this.

R. G. ABBOTT.

CORRESPONDENCE

MCCABE'S PECULIAR ATHEISM

SIR,—In your issue of December 16 a contributor says: "McCabe expressly departs from the usual British and Continental usage of defining the Atheist as 'one who denies or disbelieves the existence of God.'" On the contrary, in the work of mine to which he refers, your reader expressly adopts the above definition, which is taken from the Oxford Dictionary. It is hardly necessary to say that I certainly do not fail to distinguish between a personal and an impersonal God, but when he proceeds to say that my position is "self-stultifying and isolated," he surprises me. Mr. Bradlaugh (*Life* I, 87) was, on moral grounds, prepared to deny that there was such a being as the God of Christianity or Islam—about which I said nothing—but he otherwise held that the word "Atheist" simply means "without belief," and that it is as absurd to deny as to affirm that there is a God. Mr. Foote said the same. Surely they have a few followers.—Yours, etc.,

JOSEPH MCCABE.

COPERNICUS

SIR,—I am sorry to have to contradict a lady, but I am not "wrong" in stating that the long-delayed publication of Copernicus's work was due to his fear of persecution. Both Draper (*Conflict between Religion and Science*), and White (*Warfare of Science and Theology*) state that he did fear it. There is a long account in White, well documented, which proves this to be the case. The evidence points to the conclusion that Copernicus did not write the preface, though Ruby Tabois categorically states that he did. He did write a following dedicatory letter to the Pope.

It is strange that Mrs. Tabois should think this preface supports her argument. White calls it "The grovelling preface of Oslander." It pretends that the book of Copernicus propounds an hypothesis, and makes no claim to announcing a truth. It declares that it is lawful for an astronomer to indulge his imagination, and that was what Copernicus had done. When the hypothesis was put forward as the truth the Church struck immediately.

To state that Copernicus delayed the publication of his book because he feared ridicule is an insult to his memory.

I cannot in a letter give copious notes re Da Cusa and Copernicus, supposedly teaching the heliocentric theory in Rome at an earlier date. All this is dealt with in White's *Warfare*, to which I would refer the inquiring student.—Yours, etc.,

LEN EBURY.

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: J. M. ALEXANDER and W. G. FRASER.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, January 27: Miss HELENE WALKER, M.B.E., J.P. (Birmingham), "Political Freedom in Relation to Women."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: JOSEPH GREENALD, "William Morris, Poet and Revolutionary."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 29, 7 p.m.: Mr. and Mrs. F. NORMAN, "The Race Problem in the West Indies."

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. KEITH S. BOVEY, "Why War?"

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. BARNETT JANNER (M.P. for N.W. Leicester), "A Day in Parliament."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate, Manchester 3).—Saturday, January 26, 3 p.m.: Mr. I. W. HUGHES, LL.B., (Extra-Mural Staff Tutor), "Crime and Society."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Menace of Rome."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. J. W. CECIL KEENE (Leeds), "The Case for Social Credit."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, January 27, 11 a.m.: JOSEPH MCCABE, "Science and Theology To-day."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: ANDREW MACLAREN, "Basic Economics."

IMMORTALITY

A Dialogue

Father Gulbrunus: Wretch, you would do well to take a good look at this water you are leaving behind. Where you are going will not be very cool, I assure you.

Cassandri: As I leave the river of death behind, I have other feelings besides rancour, which I see you express so well. If we did not settle the matter of religion on earth, I suppose that we can carry on the battle in these infernal regions. On earth or in Heaven or Hell or anywhere else your insolence is unseemly. The gentle Christian religion, which has produced so many good people, should have taught you better. (*To the guard who has met them at the boat which bore them across the river*): Lead on, guard! What faces us could be no worse than what we leave behind. Eternity of pleasure or eternity of punishment, it's all one to me; for I believe none of it.

Father Gulbrunus (*half to himself*): The rascal still speaks with a flippant tongue. Even death has not softened the malignant sarcasms my poor brethren priests dreaded so much.

Cassandri: Talk to yourself, good priest. It's a hard destiny which decreed that I should cross this last river with a Christian, and worse still, with a Jesuit priest.

They approach a grim, dark building in the twilight of the afterworld and enter escorted by the guard. They are taken before the Devil who sits as judge in a courtroom.

The Devil: Good morning, gentlemen. I have been expecting you. The clerk will please swear in Paolo Cassandri.

Cassandri: Before we waste words over this matter, let me say that I will not swear with that pack of lies called the Bible in my hand; nor will I swear with a "So help me God!", which is a meaningless formula which does not add dignity to the procedures of law. I am or was a freethinker; and I have my rights.

The Devil: As you will, then. Do you promise to tell the truth?

Cassandri: I do.

Father Gulbrunus: The Devil judges the dead! I thought that God did the judging of men and that we should sleep until the last trump should wake us to the resurrection and the last judgment. This is confusing.

The Devil: This is His day off; and I am taking care of things for Him to-day—(*Aside*): as I have been these many thousands of years beginning with creation. (*To Cassandri and Gulbrunus*): This is a preliminary hearing like some of the hearings held in a magistrate's court. At the end of the world you will be judged again by Him Who made you, or so it is written. (*To Cassandri*): But, then, to business. My judgments are summary and to the point as I shall shortly illustrate. It is alleged that you are an avowed atheist and have lived in opposition to all known religions and to cant in all its forms; that you passed your days reading the philosophers, such as Hobbes, Voltaire, Hume, Schopenhauer, etc., and pursuing the study of the arts and sciences; and that you performed frequent works of charity for the unfortunate without expecting a future reward for your compassion. Is that right?

Cassandri: That is right.

The Devil: You may make your permanent residence in Hell beginning after the conclusion of this trial. I have pronounced a generous and Christian judgment with which all the compassionate followers of the Lord will agree.

Cassandri: Praise the Lord!

Father Gulbrunus (*Aside*): A curse take the sarcastic rogue! Even when consigned to Hell, he disparages the dear Lord.

The Devil: Will the clerk please swear in Father Gulbrunus.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR.

(*To be continued*)

THEATRE

"Master Crook." By Bruce Walker. Comedy Theatre.

THE problem of juvenile delinquency has become increasingly acute of recent years, and so far no adequate solution has been found. If it has, its effect is hardly noticeable.

Here is a play dealing with the situation of a youth of sixteen or seventeen whose father died in the war. He deceives his mother who looks on him as her little darling, and she has no control over him. He is, in fact, and out-and-out rotter, leader of a gang of boys of his own age who cosh women in dark streets and snatch their handbags. Eventually he is caught and put on probation, during which period he plays the double game of Good Boy to the probation officer and Secret Gang Leader to his worthless pals.

Then his mother, who by now has had the veil lifted from her eyes and knows she cannot control him, marries a strong-willed Irishman who gives the boy his first thrashing. But the law has been at work and the boy is captured in the act of avoiding his irate stepfather.

The play is remarkable for the forthright manner in which the author plunges into the subject. It is a capably built play, neat and very clear, and the actors—who are all well cast—serve it excellently. The most outstanding performance comes from James Kenney as the delinquent boy. The success of the production rests on his shoulders, and despite his twenty-one years he convinces us of the shifty and mentally unstable youth. Moiya Kelly is the fifteen-year-old whom he seduces. Ian Whittaker is his half-witted pal. Meadows White is delightful as a probation officer, and Edward Byrne's performance as the Irishman is almost without blemish. Beryl Measor is reserved and subtle as the boy's mother.

The author does make some attempt to suggest reforms by improving conditions and amenities for youths; better hostels, more encouragement for sports, etc. But it is a feeble effort compared with the strength of the play. We cannot right these defects in our society by clipping the leaves off a bad tree; we must get down to the roots. Alfred Adler has told us that society can be divided into two categories, the delinquents and the socially adjusted, and that the form the mental make-up of the individual is to take is settled in the very young child by its reactions to its environment. A trained psychologist can pick out the potentially delinquent child from the others, and if such people were placed in schools it would help to remedy the problem.

But such a subject, which is within the realm of science, is beyond the scope of the legitimate theatre. Bruce Walker has realised this and has consequently left the psychological approach to those it concerns.

Let us ever be aware of the shortcomings in our midst, that we may seek steps to rectify them. And for this awareness go to see *Master Crook* which is one of the most vital post-war plays to reach the West End.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.