

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIV—No. 14

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

"GENTLE Jesus, meek and mild": this picture of "The Master," of the "Lowly Nazarene," of "The Carpenter of Nazareth" has sunk deeply into our consciousness and recurs instinctively when one thinks of the "Jesus of the Gospels." This attitude of mind is the result of early training and environment; in many cases, including that of the present writer, it is due to direct religious instruction

in the susceptible days of childhood, when so many of our more permanent impressions are formed. How far, in reality, does such a picture coincide with the actual representation of Christ in our "New Testament"? Actually, the "New Testament," as we have it to-day, gives us quite a number of "Christs," besides the conventional "Jesus of the Gospels" who is, in actual fact, the "Jesus" of only two of them, of *Matthew* and *Luke*.

Apart from these two, there are many "Christs" in the New Testament, even as we have it to-day. In the, perhaps, more—certainly not less—authentic "apocryphal" gospels, which were later rejected by fully developed Catholic orthodoxy, again, we have, to judge from the surviving *Gospel of Peter*, entirely different portraits of the alleged Founder of Christianity.

"Gentle Jesus"

As we have stated above, it is in our First and Third Gospels that one finds the conventional portrait of the Christian "Jesus Christ": born of a virgin, the preacher of "good news," the god-man of later Christian theology. But our *Matthew* and our *Luke* are later compositions; as the brilliant author of *Supernatural Religion* demonstrated conclusively long ago, our Gospels are not original compositions but, contrarily, are late "edited" ones, and represent the climate of an already developed Christian theological orthodoxy of about the middle of the second century in date, a date and social horizon already far removed from the Palestinian milieu amid which Christianity first arose. Actually, even *Matthew* and *Luke*, who alone give us the Virgin Birth legends, do not give us the only Gospel "Jesus."

The "Christ" of "Mark"

In *Mark*, regarded by most scholars as the oldest of our extant Gospels, Jesus Christ is not born at all; like the fabled Greek goddess, Athena, he appears on the historical stage fully-grown. He starts his mission as a fully-grown man who works miracles from the very start. There is no infancy, no stable at Bethlehem, no Virgin Mother. This, incidentally, appears to be the original Christian tradition, later rejected by the Church in favour of the Virgin Birth stories, the product of the Pagan, non-Jewish environment of the second century. In the "lost" Gospel of the "heretic," Marcion, fragments of which are preserved in the "refutations" of later orthodox writers, it is baldly stated that Jesus "appeared in

Capernaum in the fourteenth year of Tiberius" (that is, A.D. 28).

The "Christ" of "John"

As we will see in a moment, in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, also a very early document, Jesus is also represented as "without father or mother," without human ancestry, as "the Man from Heaven."

In *John*, our "Fourth Gospel," we pass into an entirely different climate from that of our first three "Synoptic" ones. Here, again, the Virgin Birth is absent. More important, so, also, is the human Jesus, who is portrayed as a god,

pure and simple. With regard to the former, Dr. Barnes suggested, and the present writer concurs, that "John" knew the story of the Virgin Birth and deliberately rejected it. He goes out of his way to call Jesus "the son of Joseph." To "John," Jesus was a man, the son of Joseph, into whom, after his baptism by John "the Baptist," the Logos, or Spirit of God, entered. Henceforth there was only a god walking about Palestine in human form, talking a mystical jargon entirely dissimilar to that of the other Gospels. A speciality of the "Christ" of the Fourth Gospel is that he goes about duplicating the miracles of the Pagan gods. For example, in an Aegean island the Greek god, Dionysius, yearly turned water into wine; the Emperor Vespasian (69-79 A.D.) healed the blind with his spittle; his son, the Emperor Domitian (81-96) insisted on being addressed in his lifetime—normally, Roman Emperors were only deified *after* death—as "my Lord and my God." All these Pagan miracles and sayings are done or said by John's "Christ," the Logos in human form. This Gospel, also, is a late document; this is proved beyond doubt by the bitterly hostile attitude that it takes towards the Jews: a hostility which does not seem to have developed until *after* the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) or even before the second century rebellion of the Messiah, Bar-Cochba (131-134 A.D.), who persecuted the Christians and to whom our Gospel appears to refer.

The "Christ" of "Paul"

The greater part of our New Testament is made up of the writings of "Paul." Whoever the author, or authors, may have been, it seems clear that they knew nothing of "The Jesus of (all) the Gospels," and "Paul's" ideal "Christ Jesus" is not presented as an historical human being. He is "the Man from Heaven," the "Second God" of contemporary Greek philosophy. He is usually spoken of as the same person as his Father, the two nouns, "God" and "Christ Jesus," governing a single verb! As we observed recently in this column, this is strong language to use about a first-century Jew! In one passage, a very famous one, in *Philippians* Christ is represented as a kind of junior god who will eventually "hand back the dominion to God the Father." This sounds like pure polytheism. There are, in any case, very few traces of

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The "Christs" of the New Testament

By F. A. RIDLEY

"our" Jesus in the "Pauline" epistles, and these seem to be pretty obviously additions, by a later hand, after the orthodox doctrine had been formulated. It is, for example, evident that Marcion, who was the "editor" of the first "New Testament" and, in particular, of the "Pauline" epistles, knew nothing about "our" Jesus, who was born of a virgin in Bethlehem. Neither, we may surmise, did any of the actual founders of Christianity.

The "Christ" of "Hebrews"

In the document in our canonical Scriptures rather vaguely described as *The Epistle to the Hebrews* we have a description of "Christ" entirely different to any other in our New Testament. Here Jesus is a Jewish priest, born of the tribe of Judah, and the anti-type of the mythical Old Testament character, the priest-king, Melchisedek, who had no human ancestry. This, as we have remarked above, appears to rule out both the Virgin Birth and the Gospel stories of the infancy of Jesus. Jesus Christ, if in human form, is, actually, a supernatural being, the "Man from Heaven," who, however, according to *Hebrews*, lived in "Judah" and not, as in the Gospels, in Galilee. This description is of particular interest, since *Hebrews* is certainly one of the oldest of the Christian writings. This is indicated both by its purely Hebrew background and by, still more, its references to the priestly services in the Temple at Jerusalem as still in force. This "dates" the book as, at latest before August, A.D. 70, when the Roman army burned down the Temple, and the Temple services ceased from that date to our own.

The "Christ" of the Apocalypse

Last—but the reverse of least!—comes the "Christ" of the Apocalypse "Revelations," who differs completely from any other "Jesus" in our New Testament and, in particular, from the "Jesus" of all our Gospels: here, not a trace remains of "gentle Jesus, meek and mild"! Due to its Oriental obscurity to Western readers, and to its astrological symbolism, "Revelations" is a difficult book in appearance. In reality, however, its purpose and character are painfully clear! It is "a hymn of hate" against the great secular empire of Rome, "The Scarlet Woman" who stood between the Jews and their national aspirations. This apocalyptic vision of hate and destruction culminates in the tremendous charge of the celestial cavalry, led by the tattooed Messiah on a white horse. (We do not often find Christian pacifists appealing to this passage!) This is a warrior Christ, the militant avenger of Israel: not a vestige of "the lowly Nazarene"! As Mr. Archibald Robertson has happily suggested, here we have a kind of synthesis of all the rebels, including would-be Messiahs, who had dashed themselves to pieces against the mighty Roman war-machine. *The Apocalypse*, also, is an ancient document, probably dating from about the time of the fall of Jerusalem A.D. 70.

You Pay Your Money!

Such are the "Christs" of our New Testament. In the words of the familiar proverb, "You pay your money and you take your choice"!

Defence of Heredity

By C. G. L. DU CANN

IN truth, it is as unnecessary to defend heredity as to defend life, for it is equally immortal. But we live in days when current cant takes the place of thinking for oneself; and one of the current political herd-shibboleths is to pretend that all human beings of all ages, sexes and heredities are equal and that Nature's distinctions are meaningless and of no importance.

You have one illustration in the current politicians' jargon of "Equal pay for equal work"—which, translated into sense, means that men and women do equal work (which, from functional reasons, they do not at all times) and therefore "ought" to receive equal payment. There is, of course, an equal amount of untruth as of truth in that proposition—as in very many other unthinkingly-uttered propositions.

A moment's clear thinking shows what nonsense it is to suggest that heredity in human beings is not of the very first importance in life. Human heredity is as vital as plant-heredity or animal-heredity.

It is far more important for a man, woman or child to have good ancestry than anything else whatever—except lots of money.

Yet pride of birth is frowned on by fools. The Monarchy and the House of Lords ought not to rest on the hereditary principle, according to political doctrinaires. Ought they to rest, like our grotesque, effete House of Commons, on the principle of counting heads once in five years or so (most of the heads being empty) in favour of Labour-Tweedledum and Conservative-Tweedledee. But most of the heads in question do not count at all and are fit for nothing but being counted. Political knaves counting political fools is a bad basis for choosing rulers.

Ask any hybridist, whether horticultural or agricultural, whether heredity does not matter supremely in rose-trees, fruit-trees, wheat and the rest. Ask any breeder of cats, dogs, pigeons or race-horses if ancestry is not everything.

There is no scientific authority for supposing that human-breeding does not proceed on the same Mendelian lines as other animal and plant breeding.

Observation of such social and family phenomena as the Hapsburg lip; the continuance of ability and lasting quality in such families as the Spanish Alvas and the English Cecils, Churchills, Asquiths, Huxleys and others, shows clearly that heredity counts.

Further, every social worker knows that mental defectives breed mental defectives. Yet the Victorian Radicals stoutly believed and stridently proclaimed that the fact that a man is the son of his father entitled him to no privilege or special consideration. They tried to break with the immemorial tradition of humanity—and failed, because heredity rests on scientific truth. We know a great deal more of the scientific inheritance of qualities than they, though, theirs being the day of Darwin, they should have known better than they did.

One of the present utterly impossible "immediate practical objects" of the National Secular Society even to-day is "the abolition of all hereditary and racial distinctions," since these are "fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood." No doubt they do. Yet a million secular or other societies cannot abolish the utterly unjust and unbrotherly distinction between the born genius and the born fool; or between a black and a white skin; or even between a mulatto and a quadroon. Nature is unjust and unbrotherly in hereditary gifts and disabilities beyond words, and certainly beyond human remedy.

The Society's language here is a Victorian "hangover," the language of political chicanery, not scientific truth. Like most politico-economic shorthand, it is false and misleading humbug. It should be revised to say what is really meant: the abolition of artificial social, political and economic privileges bestowed upon the unmeritorious.

(Continued on page 107)

Dialectical Materialism — Is It Adequate?

By S. M. DVOILATZKY

DIALECTICAL materialism takes it for granted that what is described as the political, judicial and cultural super-structure of society is dependent on and, in the final analysis, determined by, its economic foundations. Further, dialectical materialism regards the ideological outlook of any class or caste in society as being causally related to the class structure and its corresponding economic expressions—slave economy, feudalism, capitalism. Of course, Marxists always add the qualifying phrase—in the final analysis. And it is this qualifying phrase which has prevented any serious advanced criticism or development of the theory of dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialists emphasise the dialectical aspect of history—and point out how the social relations lag behind the changes in the mode of production. It is, therefore, quite absurd to criticise dialectical materialism in the manner we are accustomed to, from the idealist and religious schools of thought, by seizing hold of necessarily one-sided, short-handed terse statements often casually thrown out by Marxists that “economics determines politics”—and throwing them back at their authors. Obviously, politics and ideological considerations react upon the economic infra-structure in the same general fashion that economic considerations in the inception give rise to the previous considerations—this is the perfectly valid retort of dialectical materialists to the vulgar idealist critique.

Clearly, therefore, the idealist interpretation of history has little to offer to those who are anxious to develop the

DEFENCE OF HEREDITY—(continued from page 106)

Nature's choice, as in the Temporal Peers of the Realm, may be pretty bad at times. But the limited choice between only two or so automatically-voting party hacks, by fools and dupes as shown in the Commons, is worse, perhaps. It leads to the bizarre so-called “debate” in which persuasion and conversion are out of the question, and the talk is only done to fool the fools outside, while behind the scenes the Cabinet and the bureaucracy, under the pressure of “pressure groups,” governs.

While human beings have one nose (instead of two), two eyes (instead of three), one clacking tongue (instead of none), they are foolish to pretend the laws of genetics do not rule. Every physical and mental characteristic we have is conditioned by heredity.

Because most of us are base-born and not eugenically born, we like to pretend that good birth does not matter. But the child of syphilitic, tubercular or hæmophilic parents proves otherwise. Birth—which governs health of body and ability and character of mind—matters desperately. Besides that right beginning, hardly anything matters except environment and will-power.

Unfortunately, in politics and sociology, and even elsewhere, the laws of human heredity are little known. Human beings at the present day, couple like animals blindly and promiscuously and are required only to be (outwardly) monogamous by public opinion and the State.

Eugenics is, of course, not in England a subject of serious concern like football pools, crossword puzzles, the daily newspaper, and an annual holiday. It is regarded as a subject for cranks and faddists. But it ought to be of the highest concern to the whole human race, which at present consists mostly of unsound minds in unhealthy bodies. Fortunately Nature does not allow herself to be thwarted in pursuit of hereditary aims, and she inexorably kills us off, generation by generation, in the most unjust and unbrotherly fashion when we do not even realise how we have transgressed her unyielding laws.

theory of dialectical materialism. The question, however, remains—along what lines can dialectical materialism be sensibly criticised? The main weakness of the theory seems to centre around its conception of the relationships between the factors—each interdependent and causally linked—which go to make up the picture of history it so vividly analyses. Do the economic factors causally determine and control the “superstructural” factors—yes, even in the “final analysis”? Or do the economic and material factors function as a sort of context in which the ideological factors develop and progress? If the latter view is a more accurate description of historical development, then it is absurd to talk of the ideas of any given age being determined—immediately, directly, in the long run, or in the final analysis—by its material and economic context. The context only partly determines conditions, the development of the ideal factors.

The best analogy that can be given to the difference between dialectical materialism and this new “historical contextualism” is one afforded by a rapidly moving series of films superimposed one upon the other. A film can be separated out into its theme and the actors on the one hand, and the general background—historical, geographical, social, economic, etc.—on the other. The background is the setting, in the same way as the stage is the setting, upon which and against which the theme or play is unfolded. No one suggests that the background determines the theme or play. The background circumscribes, partly conditions, and circumscribes the actions of the players—but does not “determine” their progress.

In other words, the dialectical materialist assembles all his trump cards—his economic background, his statistics about the distribution of property, the number of strikes per month, etc., etc.—and then proceeds to draw his “necessary” political analysis and its consequent “necessary” political strategy. The great and lasting contribution of dialectical materialism to the theory of historical development lies in the incontestable fact that, for the first time, the setting, the stage for a realistic approach to history was organised. The weakness and inadequacy of the theory remains, however. It has not found a satisfactory theory to explain how the different factors that make up the web and weft of history are related—if they are not causally related in their entirety. Again, no attempt has been made to work out if and how the ideological super-structure develops on its own account. The general error of dialectical materialists is thus shared with the other schools of materialism. It is this: the assumption that the exact, or seemingly exact, and precise physical laws which govern this world of ours—with their intricate mesh of cause and effect, and reversed causal relations—have their counterpart in the field of sociology, politics and culture. There are similarities, no doubt. But even in physics we hear of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. And it is, therefore, not unreasonable to suppose that the “laws” which are supposed to govern history, in the same way as laws governing a chemical reaction—are just the roughest and simplest approximations to the truth of the matter. It is the gap between the reality and the approximation to reality which has not been bridged by dialectical materialism. Can it be bridged?

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

ROBERT TAYLOR. The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844). By H. Cutner. A detailed account of a remarkable Free-thinker and his work. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.

This Believing World

We are not sure if the *News Chronicle* is still the great "dissenting" Christian journal which once characterised the old *Daily News*, but its readers must have had the shock of their lives when a Mr. Keith Chivers recently suggested it was time to "alter" the Bible. *Alter* God's Precious Word! Could even the most Atheistic blasphemer come forward with a more awful suggestion? Is not Mr. Chivers aware what is going to happen to his immortal soul if he dares to lay his sacriligious hands on the Holy Book?

For versions may come and versions may go but the Authorised Version will last for ever. Dozens of new translations have been made in the past 100 years, but where are they? Who reads them? The millions of Bibles distributed all over the world by the various Bible Societies we are blessed with are all based on the A.V., and they have carried comfort and hope to savage tribes everywhere; and they can, of course, understand the Gospel of John far better than our Pagan English who, according to the Archbishop of York, bring sorrow to the heart of God Almighty because they simply will not read the Bible.

Then look at the Apocrypha—both of the Old and the New Testaments. They have a wealth of divine Messages in them for the erring, the weak, and for sinful man generally, and these books are excluded—yes, excluded!—from the Protestant and Hebrew Bibles. It isn't good enough, and Mr. Chivers pleads for their re-inclusion—as indeed they ought to be, for there is not a scrap of difference, where truth is concerned, between the "canonical" and the "uncanonical" writings of Holy Writ. All, all, come from the Lord. But above all, one must never read a Bible in modern English. All its holiness drops right out. Read the Bible only in the Authorised Version—it is that of the Rev. B. Graham, and look how he is saving souls—and you will be saved yourself. Hallelujah!

Our Bishops are certainly getting obsessed with the "battle" between Science and Religion. The latest example is the Bishop of Peterborough who considers it "one of the greatest tragedies of our time." People have actually believed, he moaned, that "scientific advances had made God, moral and spiritual salvation unnecessary, and beside the point." Of course this is quite untrue, for Man is a "spiritual" being made in the "image" of God—and how could God make Man in his own image if he didn't exist? This brilliant piece of thinking on the part of a live Bishop ought to show how foolish it is to say that Science and Religion can't mix.

Incidentally, at the meeting during which the Bishop was uttering such unanswerable gems of argument, another reverend gentleman asked him "to state that the life of Christ was historic fact." And, to the delight of all Christians, Jews, and reverent Rationalists, Dr. Leeson triumphantly said that "supposing he himself were not a Christian he would still believe 100 per cent. that Christ lived." That ought to bury the Myth Theory for ever and ever, and then some.

A touching commentary on the failure of the Berlin Conference came from a Dover Knight of Columba in a letter to the *Dover Express*. He said that the only way to ensure how the world could be saved was to see the film on the "Miracle of Fatima" which showed the lovely faith of three simple children; and if anyone doubted its

historical truth, he gave them the titles of three pamphlets which proved that the "miracle" actually took place. How could three "simple" children tell a lie? Especially as they were such devout Roman Catholics? Have Roman Catholics ever lied? May all perish in Purgatory who make such libellous assertions!

In the usual Sunday evening very religious "Epilogue" provided by our TV to bring erring sinners back to Jesus at all costs, a doctor was introduced recently who "proved" the existence of God with a vengeance. Dr. Aldis pointed out that the only way you could prove the existence of radio waves which were all around us was by putting up a radio receiver—and the resulting broadcast you heard was proof of the radio waves. In the same way, you could not prove the existence of God by just arguing about him. What you had given to you through his mercy and goodness was his Precious Word enshrined in—the Bible!

Just as you had to have a radio receiver to get your wireless broadcasts, so you had to have the Bible to hear the authentic revelation of God Almighty in Jesus Christ. If this doesn't prove the existence of God Almighty (revealed through his only Son Jesus Christ) to you then you are hopeless. Dr. Aldis did not trouble to point out that, while it is true you cannot see wireless waves, you can go to a transmitting station and see them sent out: and that you cannot go to the transmitting station and watch God Almighty (revealed through his only Son Jesus Christ) sending out the Bibles in which his message is enshrined. Why should the doctor bother? The mugs who could swallow what he broadcast, if they swallow the Bible, would swallow any nonsense he sent out.

The Luxembourg Congress

Mlle Pardon, for many years the indefatigable secretary of "The World Union of Freethinkers," writes us that the preparations for the International Freethought Congress in Luxembourg in September are now virtually completed. An impressive array of delegates, "Committees of Honour," and speakers, many nationalities, will be present. The British "Committee of Honour" consists of the following gentlemen: Lord Chorley, Lord Boyd-Orr, Vice-Admiral Sir S. Dudley, Prof. Sir E. L. Kennaway, Prof. A. J. Ayer, Prof. Barbara Wooton. Bertrand Russell is the "President of Honour," but we understand that his advanced years, eighty-two this summer, will prevent his personal attendance at Luxembourg. Amongst the numerous lecturers who will read papers on this memorable occasion are two representatives from Great Britain, Mr. Archibald Robertson, of the "Rationalist Press Association," who will speak on the present anti-Rationalist offensive of religious philosophy, and Mr. F. A. Ridley, National Secular Society, who will speak on the "Catholic Counter-Reformation of the Twentieth Century." The main subjects to be discussed at the Conference will deal with the current relations of the Churches with contemporary, social, artistic and cultural problems. It is hoped that a numerous British contingent will be present in September, at what promises to be a notable discussion of the international problem of Freethought in the modern world against the picturesque background of this mediaeval city.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.
paper 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By G. W. Foots. Price, cloth 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

To Correspondents

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.

Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

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

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.

Bradford N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: Mr. HAROLD DAY and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Tuesday, April 6, 7 p.m.: General Discussion.

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, April 2, 7-15 p.m.: Dr. Z. JORDAN, "Polish Frontiers."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, April 4, 6-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "The Resurrection—History or Legend?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, April 4, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "The New Note in Biography."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, April 4, 7-15 p.m.: GORDON SCHAEFFER: a Lecture.

PRINCESS

By A. R. WILLIAMS

FLINGING open the door Agnes Turnell danced into the living room, her face aglow and her eyes shining as she exclaimed "Oh, mummy! Think what!"

"Tell me and I'll think it" responded Mrs. Turnell, catching her little daughter's waving hands and holding them as the child looked bright-eyed up into her face and cried ecstatically "A princess is coming to our school."

"Another fairy tale, Aggie?" inquired the woman with a teasing inflection in her tones.

"No, mummy. A real live princess is coming to see our school. It's next Thursday. She'll be in Melchester for a whole day, and the Mayor'll meet her and show her the town. She's going to plant a tree and do all sorts of other things beside. Miss Brown told us."

All through tea time the child's excited talk was of princesses, with innumerable questions to her mother as to how they looked, what they wore, ate, drank and said, and did they have daddies and mummies like ordinary little girls? Receiving an affirmative answer to the last, she appeared sceptical and went thoughtful.

The incoming of Mr. Tufnell with the local evening newspaper confirmed the outburst of wonderful news his daughter had to tell him. In the paper was an official statement from the Town Hall that a young royal princess would visit the borough on the following Thursday. She

would open the thousandth house on the new Valley Housing Estate and plant a tree in its main avenue after being shown other outstanding features of the town.

What concerned and delighted Agnes was that the princess was to inspect the Valley Estate Junior School. For Melchester Education Committee were proud of that school, regarding it as the last word in modernness of building, equipment and teaching methods.

The entry of Agnes' older sister brought reiteration of the matter all over again.

"And what d'you think a princess really looks like?" asked Marianne.

Agnes considered, head on one side, then replied in the oblique method of childhood, "We saw a fairy princess in the pantomime last Christmas. She was tall, with long fair hair crowned, and a star on her forehead and another on the end of her magic wand. She wore a long white dress all shining silk with a gold waistband and silver shoes. She was lovely."

Nothing the other three people said caused any diminution of Aggie's enthusiasm or changed her vision of what a princess should be. Later she produced her paintbox and limned it. To the princess's crown she paid most attention, drawing freely upon the reds and blues and greens and yellows to decorate it with jewels.

When sixteen-year-old Polly saw her up to bed the younger girl asked as she snuggled down in comfort, "Do princesses sleep in beds like this?"

"I expect they do."

"Better; bigger and higher and softer. D'you remember the story of the princess who was a stranger? To try her the queen put one pea under twenty feather beds, and the princess sleeping on top felt it. That's how princesses sleep."

"In fairy tales," laughed Marianne, kissing her little sister good-night.

The intervening days brought no cessation of Agnes's keen anticipation of the princess's visit. It was sharpened by her teacher giving a series of lessons on princesses in history, details of which were repeated at home. Furthermore, was dressing of princess dolls and cutting out of princess pictures for pasting into scrapbooks. Also the children hunted out all the story books they could find to read every tale in which a princess figured.

The great day arrived. The weather was English autumn at its best. Escorted by the Mayor in robes and chain the young princess went through her programme. Finally, she was led into Valley Estate Junior School. Having seen her from among the crowd, Mrs. Tufnell returned home to prepare tea.

Slowly the door opened and Agnes came in quietly and stood, serious of face and troubled of eyes.

Somewhat surprised at this, Mrs. Tufnell asked, "Well, Aggie. And what did you think of the princess?"

"Oh, mummy!"

"Yes, dear?"

"She's only a girl like our Polly, and not half so nice and pretty."

When Lord Melbourne was asked by a Dissenter why he showed such "disgusting partiality" for the Established Church, his lordship replied, "I show partiality to the Established Church because it is established. Get your sect established and I'll show partiality to that too!"

Everyone must seek his own happiness in the way that seems good to himself, provided he infringe not the freedom of others.
—KANT.

A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 82)

1891. Bradlaugh (b. 1833) dies as the House of Commons expunges the resolutions forbidding him to take his seat. He is buried at Brookwood in the presence of thousands of his admirers. Robertson becomes editor of the *National Reformer*, to which Mrs. Besant makes her last contribution. Charles Watts returns to England and re-joins the N.S.S. Holyoake is now the historian of the Co-operative movement, to which his contribution has been outstanding. Foote examines the Salvation Army and its "General" Booth, replies to Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* and debates with G. B. Shaw on the eight hours question. "Mimnermus" is now writing for *The Freethinker*.

1892. After some friction with Foote over the disposal of the Bradlaugh Memorial Fund, Robertson withdraws from the N.S.S. executive. Though there has been some disintegration by secessions after Bradlaugh's death, there are over 1,000 new N.S.S. members in the year, and the annual conference at Newcastle is excellently attended. Foote attacks Roman Catholicism and the resurrection myth. Holyoake writes his autobiography. Dr. Moncure Conway, of the newly formed Ethical Society in London, writes his life of Paine. Robert Forder publishes a re-phrased edition of *Every Woman's Book* (Place and Carlile, 1826) on contraception.

1893. Mrs. Besant makes her last appearance on the secular platform and writes her autobiography. The conference supporting Foote, J. M. Robertson resigns from the N.S.S., whose Immediate Practical Objects are published. The *National Reformer* ceases, having failed to survive for long the death of Bradlaugh. The N.S.S. support a bill which would legalise freethought bequests, but it is blocked.

1894. The N.S.S. joins in the agitation for the abolition of the hereditary House of Lords. J. W. Gott, a merchant of Bradford, starts the *Truth Seeker*, monthly. Foote publishes his essays, *Flowers of Freethought*. Watts pursues the doctrinal attack on God and an after life, and Hypatia Bradlaugh's life of her father appears.

1895. This is Holyoake's last year as an N.S.S. Vice-President, and C. Watts again holds that position. The literary output of the year is again mainly that of Foote and Watts.

1896. Foote and Watts visit America and are enthusiastically welcomed by freethinkers in New York: during their activities they speak to an audience of 2,000 in Chicago. Four London Ethical Societies amalgamate as the Ethical Union. Failsforth secularists produce their own hymn book.

1897. Harriet Law dies, aged 65. The N.S.S. issue a manifesto on secular education. Hypatia Bradlaugh starts and edits the *Reformer*. C. Cohen, who has been an editor of Gott's paper, begins contributing regularly to *The Freethinker*. Foote tackles the new "higher criticism," aimed at purifying Christian doctrine. Father Anthony, a young priest of 30, has come out of the monastery and pronounced himself a Rationalist: as Joseph McCabe he embarks on a glorious career in the cause of secularism and reform, writing an account of his *Twelve Years in a Monastery*.

1898. McCabe is employed by Leicester Secular Society as their lecturer and organiser. Foote's right-hand man, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, dies at 48. The Secular Society Ltd., is formed by Foote to safeguard freethought bequests.

Geo. Bedborough is prosecuted for circulating sex literature and pleads guilty.

1899. The Freethought Publishing Co. Ltd. is formed by Foote, with R. Forder a director. At 17 Johnson's Court the Rationalist Press Association is founded; the *Literary Guide* of Watts, now twopence, is identified with it. F. J. Gould succeeds McCabe as secretary of the Leicester S.S. and writes its history. In America, Robert Ingersoll dies; his works are widely used by British secularism. Moss defends Malthusianism in debate and the Rationalist E. Clodd examines the roots of religion in *Animism*.

1900. C. Watts is investigating the claims of Spiritualism, and J. M. Robertson writes his scholarly *Christianity and Mythology*. T. F. Palmer begins writing in *The Freethinker*.

1902. The pressure for secular education is being well maintained, in line with the French move in this direction. Watts resigns from the Vice-Presidency after some friction with Foote, who is supported by the E.C. Foote opposes Holyoake on agnosticism and continues to attack religion as a bar to progress, a theme now treated by Robertson in his *History of Christianity*. Gould starts the Leicester *Reasoner*, which, however, is short-lived.

1903. Foote starts a less militant monthly, *Pioneer*. The Rev. J. T. Lloyd, aged 54, is converted to secularism and joins the movement. Percy Ward starts a British Secular League, with Holyoake president and J. W. Gott treasurer; its headquarters are at Bradford and it is in the Holyoake tradition. Foote again raises a voice for republicanism. From the Rationalist side W. S. Godfrey's *Theism found Wanting* appears.

1904. Two more journals die—*Pioneer* and Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner's *Reformer*. Lloyd is now writing for the movement, and from outside the movement Blatchford's *God and my Neighbour* has a large sale.

1905. The British Secular League, its headquarters now at Liverpool, ceases to operate. After irregular appearances, *Truth Seeker* dies.

1906. Death this year takes away G. J. Holyoake (b. 1817), Charles Watts (b. 1836), W. S. Ross (b. 1844), and Joseph Symes. The output of Rationalist literature is supplying valuable ammunition for secularists, and now includes *The Churches and Modern Thought* by Vivian Phelps (Philip Vivian). Spiritualism enjoys increasing popularity and is becoming an important point of the doctrinal attack.

1907. Dr. M. Conway dies. A Rationalist Trust is formed by the Leicester secularists. Foote and Cohen are on the E.C. of the new Secular Education League.

1908. The Freethought Publishing Co. is dissolved and the Pioneer Press is founded and personally owned by Foote.

1909. The expected lies about Bradlaugh's deathbed have been circulated, despite adequate precautions taken at the time, and his daughter exposes them.

1911. J. W. Gott is imprisoned for blasphemy. Many secularists give support to the case for the suffragettes.

1912. Cohen, who is now virtually editing *The Freethinker*, writes his *Determinism or Free Will*.

1913. Foote debates with an unpleasant opponent, Dr. Warschauer, who tries to restore his battered prestige by writing an account of the debate, aimed at showing how he completely defeated Foote, a victory which is anything but apparent in the debate itself. Prof. J. B. Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought* appears.

WHOA, WILFRED!

WILFRED PICKLES is one of those fortunate individuals whom the wireless has made, but he must now be careful lest the same medium of publicity bring him low. His breezy manner and his vocabulary of the man-in-the-street have made him popular as a warm-hearted, understanding sort of chap. Recently, however, he has shown obvious signs that he is losing his grip on situations he encounters in his programme, "Have a Go."

The lesson he has to learn is that, however devout a Roman Catholic he may be, the ordinary run of men and women have ideas hundreds of years in advance of those that this sect promulgates. The modern world soon gets tired of anyone who drags religion on the scene whenever possible, and that is what Wilfred is doing at the present. It is painful listening to hear him laboriously fishing for testimonials to religion from those he interviews, and when one of them happens to be a priest or church worker the approval he lavishes on the person concerned is out of all proportion to the requirements of the occasion.

A question he frequently asks, which to my irreverent way of thinking reveals a streak of religious vindictiveness, is, "Have you anything that you particularly dislike and would like to make a punishable offence?" One day I hope somebody will reply that it is better to think about curing evils than punishing wrongdoers, but I do not think that Wilfred has had this experience yet. He seemed rather taken aback, however, when at the Nottingham Institute for the Blind he received the answer, "Yes, Wilfred, I should like it to be a punishable offence for parents not to give their children a Christian upbringing."

Unable to endorse the blind man's intolerance as he usually does the religious leanings of those he interviews, Mr. Pickles quickly passed on to the next question.

"What lesson have you learned in life that you think will help others?" he asked. "The importance of reading the Bible," came the reply. "And you feel that that can be of help to you?" "Yes, Wilfred, but not reading it in the ordinary way. My wife just opens the Bible at random, and whenever she does so there is always a lesson for us right there." This, too, appeared to leave the usually quick-witted Wilfred high and dry. Maybe it is not in accordance with Roman Catholic ways of seeking guidance, or maybe Wilfred knows his Bible well enough to realise the "embarrassing moments" that would ensue if a large number of listeners tried it!

Seriously, I advise Mr. Pickles to drop his religious bias if he wishes the public generally to accept him as the warm-hearted broadcaster bringing "the people to the people" as he claims to do.

P. V. M.

A PILGRIMAGE TO MONTSEGUR

By JEAN COTEREAU (FRANCE)

MONTSEGUR should be engraved deeply in the scroll of history at a point towards the end of the Albigensian War. After a long resistance the Aquitanian lands came to the end of their tether; and the conquering Northerners with the Inquisition in their train swept over the south-west of France. In a last effort the Cathar knights gathered in the fortress of Montsegur, hitherto impregnable, in the high valley of the Ariege, erected on a shoulder of the St. Bartholomew peak. Driven from every other refuge the Perfecti, the few who had survived till then, came to Montsegur. Under the more or less secret protection of the Count of Foix, commanded by Pierre Roger de Mirepoix, Montsegur in the early days of the XIII century was the goal of the Albigenses and the target of the Catholics. For long the strength of the fortress by nature,

the formidable walls which surrounded it and the indomitable courage of its defenders and the difficult country which lay about it preserved it from its enemies. A day came when a troop from the castle took vengeance at Avignonnet on a band of inquisitors particularly detested. This spurred the Catholics to action, and the seneschal of Carcassonne, Hugh d'Arcis laid siege to Montsegur in March, 1243. For a whole year the siege went on with no obvious success. Then a villager showed the besiegers a path which enabled them to take the Cathars by surprise. The besieged having assured the escape of four leading Perfecti, with, it is said, the "treasure of the Albigenses surrendered, their leaders were their bishop Bertrand Marty and the knight Raymond de Pereille. The knights were spared—to finish their days in the dungeons of the Inquisition at Carcassonne. The Perfecti, men and women, among whom bishop Marty and Esclarmonde de Pereille, whose demeanour was notably heroic, were condemned to suffer the fate reserved for hardened heretics. The chronicler Guillaume de Puylaurens relates "All having refused conversion, as was offered them, they were shut in a wooden enclosure which was set fire to and they were burned, passing into the fire of Tartarus."

Whatever one may think to-day of a religion as pessimistic as Catharism, Montsegur remains none the less a place of high symbolic importance. It was the scene of one of the worst crimes committed by intolerance. There two hundred and five Cathars affirmed the imprescriptible right of Freedom of Thought. For that reason the writer of these words had long dreamed of visiting Montsegur; a dream accomplished on August 16 last year.

From Foix the road rises tortuous, bad and picturesque to come to a sort of dead end, the village of Montsegur. Half a mile before that a ridge leads to a col between two mountains; the left hand peak is the Pog of Montsegur. A goat track winds through a forest of dwarf oaks, carpeted with wild pinks and bell flowers. All that remains of the great castle (now being restored) is the outer wall, a rough pentagon, and it is hard to believe that three thousand people lived within it for any length of time. The tunnel by which Amial Aicard and his three companions escaped with the "treasure" is not to be espied in fact, it is difficult to credit that such a thing could have been made in this rocky ground. On the way of my visit after a night of storm the clouds cast their swift shadows over the broken walls. A search for the "field of burning" promised at first to be in vain, but an old countryman who by chance passed by pointed it out—a little square lawn sloping down to the woods. It belonged to our guide and on the map is, marked "champ des cré mats." It is not yet forgotten after seven centuries, but one could wish that some permanent memorial were erected in that place to the memory of Albigensian martyrs and to recall to all who come there the intolerance of religion.

English by C.B.B.

Correspondence

FREETHOUGHT TO-DAY

SIR,—In recent years *The Freethinker* has begun to shake off the dust of the 19th century and deal with the intellectual problems of to-day. This inner change has found outward expression in the brave new format.

Why call a halt to this policy? Let us have more articles on politics, literature, art, science, approached from a freethought angle, and less obsolete anti-religion, which no one worries about anyway. *The Freethinker*, which prior to the new editorship, hardly circularised in Beckenham, and now is quite widely read, will thus multiply its readership.—Yours, etc.,

BILL ROSCOE.

IMMORTALITY

SIR,—Mr. Douglas V. Morgan in his *Short Reply to Mr. Taylor* asks for reasons for refuting the concept of Immortality.

Mr. G. H. Taylor has written a short book entitled "Can

Materialism Explain Mind?"—published by The Sunbeam Press, Bradford.

If Mr. Morgan will read the sections on *Immortality* and *Nature of Death*, pages 77 to 83, he may perhaps discover what he is asking for. After that he might consult "The Illusion of Immortality" by Corliss Lamont.—Yours, etc.,

A. W. COLEMAN.

THE PURPOSE OF FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—I think the best answer to the artificiality of the division into which Mr. Brown wishes to divide Freethought propaganda can be shown by reference to the sad condition of education. At the present moment the vast majority of the highly educated people who have passed through the Universities and entered the Law, the Civil Service, the Clergy and other occupations profess to a belief in all the myths and absurdities set forth in the Bible. The teachers go on imparting all this nonsense to the children generation after generation. This factor largely negatives the effectiveness of the attack by the Freethought organisations on the religious outlook, so one has the re-ecrudescence of Roman Catholicism and the re-appearance of the revivalist every decade or so.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

CHRISTMAS

SIR,—Once again, I disagree with Mr. Cutner's assertion that it is compatible with consistent Atheism to indulge in all the silly Christmas customs (many of which have been boosted for reasons of easy profit raising in *The Trade*).

As an occasion for merrymaking, it is true, it goes back to the dawn of Mankind in the primeval forests when our barbaric forebears had reason to rejoice in the expectation that darkness and frost will sooner or later come to an end; today we have electricity and are not, in the main, exposed to the rigours of dark winter nights (though I admit, that when it comes to that, a primitive camp fire offers more warmth than that provided by our traditional fireplaces). However, the customs connected with the waxing Light were, in the first place, not mere rejoicing but magic so as to assist the struggling sungod (similar light rites were performed in Ancient Egypt every morning anew to secure the rise of the Sun). Does Mr. C. still believe in the necessity of this Light Magic?

I can be glad and joyful when I know for certain that something has happened to improve my future and better my life; this assurance is provided neither by Christmas nor the change of the Calendar, so I do not see why I should harm myself with undue drinking of spirits and staying up until the small hours of New Year. This date is nothing but a traditional Time Meridian; people in India, Tibet or Pakistan celebrate their New Year at different times, so what.

And even if I could rejoice at the certainty of a propitious happening, I wonder whether I would, for that matter, wear foolscaps and make a fool of myself. And I refuse to be ordered when to wish well—as if this could make any difference in what will befall every one of us. The belief in the magic force of wishing well or ill is primitive magic, perpetuated in our fairy tales where the little princess has her whole life foredoomed (or otherwise) through the spell of some fairy. I have told all my friends that the whole year long I am wishing them well, therefore there is no need for me to send them Christmas cards with cheap pictures, insipid verses and sermon-like claims of goodwill.

I am sure Mr. C. will call me a Puritan because I simply refuse to run with the herd and ape their habits which seem silly to me. But there we are.—Yours, etc.

P. G. ROY.

[We greatly regret Mr. Roy's letter was mislaid.—EDITOR.]

ESPERANTO

SIR,—I thoroughly agree with the sentiments expressed in your article of December 18 that while officialdom seems always to be in favour of Esperanto it seldom does much about it.

However, the first International Esperanto Congress was only held in 1905, and now the movement has a fine record in a time which, in the life of a language, is extremely short. Two World Wars have impeded the progress that might have been made but have quite failed to stop the gathering momentum.

Patience, Esperantists, it is only a matter of time before official recognition and encouragement!—Yours, etc.,

EDGAR REEKS.

MATERIALISM

SIR,—Mr. J. G. Burdon has criticised what he calls my "misunderstanding of Materialism" at considerable length and with, no doubt, considerable thought. I would like to return the compliment by replying that he seems to have some misunderstanding concerning my case for the opposition.

When I speak of a "purposeful and directive evolution" or of "higher consciousness" I do not imply the existence of any personal deity, but rather of some impersonal intelligent force of a non-physical nature. If it is difficult to envisage an intelligent force, that surely is due to our present limited knowledge and understanding of the non-physical universe of which the material universe is but an expression—and a relatively unimportant one at that! It is my contention that the cosmic forces are not the blind, chaotic, stumbling-in-the-dark gropings of Nature, but that they are purposeful and progressive forces responsible for the creation of life and for the evolution of living things towards a higher consciousness. Nature's method of trial and error is by no means blind and chaotic—it shows every evidence of purpose to improve by experiment. If experiment is blind, then all scientific research is blind and purposeless. The extinction of the mammoth and the survival of Man illustrates this urge towards a higher consciousness and also emphasises the superiority of Mind over Matter very clearly.

As for Mr. Burdon's accusation that I play upon unsolved problems in order to embarrass the Materialist, why should the Materialist be embarrassed if he knows all the answers? If he does not know all the answers, then why does he refuse to admit the possibility of non-physical forces? Because he has no direct knowledge of them or of anything his five physical senses cannot produce for his inspection, he refuses to admit their possibility. He is embarrassed by my questions because he will not believe in extra-sensory perception which does explain all the problems I cited and which Materialism has failed to explain—because it cannot do so. The Materialist believes only what he sees, despite the fact that science has proved conclusively that all our physical perceptions are illusory—including Matter itself!—Yours, etc.,

W. H. WOOD.

WANTED—A VOLTAIRE!

SIR,—*The Freethinker* comes as a treat to a non-conformist deep in the "Bible Zone," where I am. A flash of sanity amid all the delusions and monkey-shines of hayseed religion, indeed. Only trouble is I think we help the holy ones by "treating 'em serious," thus giving them delusions of dignity. Ridicule is more effective against unreasoning conservatism, surely. Especially so in religion, which cannot possibly be sincere in the face of present-day knowledge. Mere mulishness cannot justly claim respect. And unscrupulous power politics, even when played by the church, are certainly not sacrosanct. I see nothing in to-day's professed religion to call for consideration. Give 'em back punch for punch, but with good-humoured satire, is a good line for *The Freethinker*, huh? We use this, but not enough. Come on, you Voltaires—shoot!—Yours, etc.,

J. F. KIRKHAM (Canada).

HOW RIGHT WAS MALTHUS?

SIR,—As regards population and food production he was, and is, perfectly right. His theological methods to limit population were, and remain, just superstitious humbug. The facts are these:—

1. Humans can double, at least, their numbers every generation and go on doing so in perpetuity. Without contraception they will continue to do so—in perpetuity.

2. Neither science nor any political or economic system can, or ever will, increase world food production every generation and go on doing so every generation in perpetuity. No scientist claims such an impossibility. The hen can never be made to produce 60 eggs a day and go on doing so, for instance.

3. It is therefore imperative that humans limit their populations to world food supply. If this is not done, man will forever remain a barbarian, turning out "work-slaves" and cannon fodder in perpetuity. This necessary limitation can only be humanely achieved by birth control for all people.

4. When a learned scientist comes out with this: "In regard to food and other necessities of life, there is no limit to production if properly organised," one's faith in reason is almost destroyed. Tell any farmer that there is no limit to his production if properly organised, and see what he says! Perhaps we shall be told by these unwise and learned "scientists" that in the last resource we shall be able to send some men to another planet and grow all the necessities for the universe!—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

For Your Bookshelf

Bound Complete

THE FREETHINKER, 1953

Volume 73

Green Cloth, Gold Lettered. Price 24s., postage 1s. 2d.