

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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SOME little time back this column considered the relations of science and religion, respectively, in the "Victorian" age and in our own. Since then, the explosion in the Pacific Ocean of the "H bomb," with unexpectedly devastating results, to be followed, it seems, by even more spectacular horrors in the near future, crossed the t's and dotted the i's of what we then said. As the question of the current direction of science has now become, literally, the life-and-death question for Humanity, we propose, at the risk even of some repetition, to again consider this question in the light of current events.

The fundamental distinction between our present-day civilisation and that of all earlier ages is that it is a *scientific* civilisation: that it is founded on science. Not, of course, that scientific knowledge was altogether lacking in earlier stages of culture. It is sufficient to consider such monumental creations as the Great Wall of China or the Pyramids, whilst it is common knowledge what astonishing progress was made in scientific generalisations by that marvellous analytical genius of the ancient Greeks. None the less, whilst science existed in the ancient world, no earlier civilisation before our own was *based* on science. Some social historians have, indeed, claimed that, at its highest point, the ancient Græco-Roman culture reached the threshold of the Industrial Revolution; but, if so, they never crossed it. Our own modern civilisation is, actually, the first in human history to be *based* on a continuously evolving technical process. It is, we repeat, the first *scientific* civilisation recorded in human annals.

Science and Progress

As the late Professor J. B. Bury has demonstrated effectively in his masterly work on *The Idea of Progress*, the conception of *progress* is peculiar to the modern age and to its scientific culture. Prior to our own era it was either held—as by the old Pagan philosophers—that the world went round in circles or, as Aristotle expressed it, "All the arts and sciences have been lost and found a great number of times"; or else—as with the Christian Church—that this life is merely a preparation for "The Heavenly Fatherland," for the *real* life to come. The former of these views, that of "recurrence," is philosophical rather than scientific; the latter, Christian one, is frankly anti-scientific. As St. Ambrose (fourth century) assured a scientifically-minded inquirer: "To understand the motions of the earth adds nothing to the knowledge of our salvation," to be followed by the famous dictum: "not by reason has it pleased God to effect our salvation." It was only the modern scientific age that conceived progress as the result of scientific development in *this* world.

"The Century of Stupendous Progress"

What Joseph McCabe has aptly termed *The Century of Stupendous Progress*, the 19th century was an age of astonishing scientific development. As the age of "pro-

gress" *par excellence*, "the century of stupendous progress" believed in "progress"! The belief has even been described as the "secular religion" of the 19th century. In an earlier article on this theme we demonstrated the reason for this: the large majority of the scientific discoveries of the 19th century were socially beneficial and made for social amelioration and for improvements in the human lot. There were, of course, exceptions even then. For example, the Maxim gun, which the African explorer, H. M. Stanley, described as "a splendid means for bringing civilisation and Christianity to the savage races of Africa." Whether "the savage races of Africa"

regarded this expression of "progress" as beneficial may, we imagine, be regarded as doubtful. However, in the main, at least as far as the white races were concerned, the results of the contemporary scientific revolution were, in general, beneficial: so beneficial, in fact, that the words "science" and "progress" appeared as virtually interchangeable (cf. J. W. Draper, *The Conflict of Religion With Science*, and *The History of Freedom of Thought*, by J. B. Bury).

The Age of "Total War"

However, even in the super-optimistic 19th century, shadows were appearing on the horizon. After the Franco-German War of 1870-71 an orgy of militarism set in; the "race for armaments" between the "great powers" of the day got going in earnest. The sociological significance of this process of the increasing militarisation of society was not lost on at least one keen critical observer. In a remarkably prophetic letter written shortly before his death in 1876 the famous Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin, predicted that "the race for armaments," which was just getting going when he wrote, would end by engulfing society, and that the next—the 20th—century would become, in the phraseology of our own day, the age of "total war." We doubt if the scriptures of any recorded religion can show a more accurate prophecy.

Science and Militarism

In the present age, the era of the "H bomb" and of "total war," it cannot, unfortunately, be in any dispute that the above prediction has been, and still is being, largely fulfilled. Only the other day the radio announced that in the world's leading industrial power, the U.S.A., 90 per cent. of the public money now allocated to "scientific research" is allocated for "defence purposes," a transparent euphemism for the preparations for the "total war" of the future. It may, we think, be assumed that a similar proportion of the budgets of other powers is devoted to similar purposes. The culmination of this process was witnessed, the other day, in the atomic explosion in the Pacific, and we are promised "bigger and better" bombs in the near future! How is it possible to deny that, under such circumstances, science has largely

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Science—Progress or Prostitution?

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

lost its beneficial character and has come to stand in the minds of, probably, an ever-increasing proportion of the population, not for the progress of mankind but, rather, for its ultimate destruction?

The Prostitution of Science

The actual fact is that we are living in an age when science has been largely prostituted in, and to the, service of power-politics, of war preparations, of the military science of the day. For just as modern society since the Industrial Revolution has become more and more dependent on science, so, nowadays, the same is true of the institution of war, which is becoming increasingly "scientific" in character. In the age of artillery, the importance of mere brute force has been diminished; whereas in that of the "H bomb" it has practically been eliminated. War is, to-day, mainly an affair of science. Its issue is decided, ultimately, in the laboratory and in the workshop, rather than on the parade ground or the battlefield itself. Or, in brief, whereas the science of the 19th century was, in the main, beneficial, that of the 20th is largely and increasingly prostituted to the purposes of wholesale destruction.

"Corruptio optimi pessima"

The Romans had a proverb which fits the present instance: "Corruptio optimi pessima" ("The corruption

of the best becomes the worst of all"). Science, which once appeared to be the destined saviour of mankind, now appears more and more likely to finish off humanity altogether. For it is indisputable that, in view of recent experiments, mankind stands to-day in greater danger of destruction by a prostituted science than by even the most reactionary religion. "The corruption of the best" has become the worst.

The Task of Rationalism

Science, as is evident from its name, is the synonym for knowledge, for the sum total of human knowledge at any given time. But, we must repeat, science—that is, knowledge—is what society makes of it. The scientist makes the discovery, and his contemporary society decides in what direction, and for what ultimate purpose, it shall be used. To-day, science is increasing mankind's empire over nature at a rate never previously known. But whether that knowledge will be used eventually for the benefit, or for the destruction, of mankind is still undecided. We suggest that the current—perhaps even the primary—task of Rationalism and of the Rationalist movement is to arrest the present menacing prostitution of science and to, once again, restore science and scientific research to their former rôle as the effective torchbearers of progress for mankind.

The Crime of Colour

By W. H. WOOD

ONE of the most vital and urgent problems facing the world to-day is the question of the colour-bar. Because this question of colour may not affect us individually in this country we neglect its vast importance and overlook the fact that it may indeed affect us very seriously unless we do something about it soon. For too long this matter has been regarded as Nobody's Baby and so we have adopted the attitude that it is better, and safer to leave it lying on the doorstep, or better still, pretend that it doesn't even exist! This disowned child of a shamed society is indeed a problem child and will require careful and sympathetic handling and understanding if it is not to develop into a monster that might well menace the whole civilised world.

Each time some glaring instance of colour prejudice and discrimination crops up in the newspapers, as it too frequently does, those responsible for the incident always hotly deny the truth of the report and declare "There is no colour-bar!" And so the matter is forgotten until the next incident occurs, followed always by the same disclaimer. But nobody ever thinks of protesting or doing anything at all about it.

On August 16, 1947, it was reported in the *Daily Express* that two Europeans in Johannesburg complained that an African waiting in a bus queue was too well-dressed because he happened to be wearing gloves. So they proceeded to knock him down and killed him with a stone, and then disappeared. Yet nobody bothered to do anything about it. After all, he was only a nigger!

Only a few weeks ago Josephine Baker, the famous coloured artiste, called a special meeting in a Paris theatre to relate her own experiences of colour prejudice in America. She and her husband were refused admittance to about sixty hotels in the United States because she happened to be coloured. And still we hear the same old cry, "There is no colour-bar!"

And again, in London, Mr. Oliver Messel, the well-known stage designer, called a Press conference to protest about the treatment of his friend the ex-Kabaka of Buganda, alleging that the colour-bar had been raised to

prevent the Kabaka from renting a flat in Park Lane. The usual disclaimers were made including, of course, the statement that there was no colour-bar! Also at a recent meeting of the Asian Club (which was televised) protests were made that London landladies closed their doors to coloured students.

In South Africa it is common knowledge that conditions for the natives have become intolerable. The Blacks are openly insulted should they dare to appear in any public building frequented by the Whites. Even during the Queen's tour there were instances of the colour-bar in operation in Bermuda. So what utter nonsense it is to pretend there is no such thing; and what a monstrous indictment of our own callous indifference that no attempt is made to do anything about it!

Why, we ask, is the Church so silent and apathetic when its missionaries take so much trouble to inform the coloured people that we are all sons of the same Father? The most appalling hypocrisy of all, however, is the attitude of Britain and America who called men of all races, creeds and colour to lay down their lives for "Freedom" and now treat them as sub-human inferiors! "Freedom" for whom? The answer is very plain. Having preserved our own liberty with the coloured man's help and sacrifice we now deny him *his* freedom and his right to equality with the White man for whom he fought.

(To be concluded)

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A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 110)

1915. G. W. Foote (b. 1850) dies. Chapman Cohen becomes editor of *The Freethinker* and President of the N.S.S. The Pioneer Press, now a company (G. W. Foote and Co.) goes to 61, Farringdon St. A legacy to the Secular Society Ltd. has been challenged and the Bowman test case starts. Secularists are exposing the influence of the Churches on the war mentality.

1916. Various sustentation funds have been making good the annual loss on *The Freethinker*, which, under war conditions, now rises to £400.

1917. The Bowman case closes with a victory for the Secular Society Ltd. There are two N.S.S. conferences this year as an experiment.

1919. Standring starts a paper, *Birth Control*, but it does not succeed, and of some 30 anti-Christian periodicals which have appeared in 80 years only *The Freethinker* and the *Literary Guide* remain of a non-political character on a national scale, though there is, of course, the *Rationalist Annual*, which has taken the place of the old *Agnostic Annual* (last issue 1907). With increased production costs the price of *The Freethinker* is advanced a penny to 3d. Cohen has a long epistolary debate with the Hon. E. Lytton; he also publishes *Socialism and the Churches* and *Religion and Sex*. H. Cutner begins writing for *The Freethinker*.

1920. Cohen debates with Horace Leaf on Spiritualism. McCabe is compiling his *Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*.

1921. Cohen's *Grammar of Freethought and Theism or Atheism* appear. The production of pamphlets and booklets is being maintained by the Pioneer Press, with Mimnermus, J. T. Lloyd and W. Mann, all *Freethinker* contributors, taking part; this year Lloyd writes on God-eating practices and Mann on materialism. G. Whitehead is lecturing for the N.S.S.

1922. Cohen is on the E.C. of a society for the abolition of the blasphemy laws, Gott having been imprisoned for blasphemy for the fourth time. *The Other Side of Death* (Cohen) is published, and McLaren attacks Sunday restrictions. There is now an N.S.S. Trust Deed.

1923. Leicester Secular Hall becomes the property of the local Secular Society. Secularists are pressing the case for Sunday freedom, with which cause Harry (Lord) Snell identifies himself. Cohen starts his series of *Essays in Freethinking*.

1924. The Lourdes "miracles" are making headlines, and secularists find an unusual ally in an adverse Lambeth Report on them. McCabe debates Spiritualism with Conan Doyle; Whitehead attacks theism.

1925. *The Freethinker* Endowment Trust is formed. Whitehead writes on conscience, and an anthropologist, Sir Arthur Keith, is welcomed by secularists as a spirited defender of Darwinism against Special Creation.

1926. Pressure by freethinkers induces the *Manchester Evening News* to invite Cohen's participation in a feature, "Have we lost faith?" and a long and profitable controversy ensues. Graham Wallas becomes R.P.A. president.

1927. Prof. J. B. Bury dies. Prof. Arthur Keith, in his presidential address to the British Association, attacks the Christian doctrine of special creation and defends Darwinism. Cohen's *Materialism Restated* is published, also Bertrand Russell's lecture to the N.S.S. at Battersea Town Hall, *Why I am not a Christian*. Among the N.S.S. speakers of this period are G. Whitehead (touring the country from Plymouth to Glasgow), J. T. Brighton in the North-East, and in the London area Messrs. Saphin (an ex-Baptist

minister), McLaren, F. A. Hornibrook, Corrigan, Le Maine, Bryant, Campbell-Everden, and an effective recent recruit is L. Ebury.

1928. J. T. Lloyd dies. *The Freethinker* Endowment Trust reaches £8,000. Secularists and rationalists are strenuously protesting to the B.B.C. against religious privileges on the air. Cohen debates materialism with Joad at the Caxton Hall. Secularists are circulating the attractive illustrated leaflets of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and also helping to publicise the Haldeman-Julius Blue Books, mostly by McCabe. Jack Clayton, in Lancashire, and C. E. Wood, in London, begin lecturing for the N.S.S.

1929. The N.S.S. and R.P.A. issue a joint circular containing a three-point questionnaire to election candidates on secular education, the blasphemy laws, and the B.B.C. South Place Chapel is sold and Conway Hall erected. Prof. Laski becomes R.P.A. president. The Thinkers' Library is started by Watts and Co. McCabe continues his attacks on the Papacy; Robertson's *History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century* appears.

1930. E. Clodd (b. 1840) dies. Trade depression has its repercussions and the number of lectures sponsored by the Executive of the N.S.S. drops to about 300, though there is the usual larger number by the branches. The Testimonial to Chapman Cohen reaches £1,500. His latest publications include *War, Civilisation and the Churches*; *Foundations of Religion*; *Freethought and Life*; and *Opinions*. He debates with Barbanell on Spiritualism. Llewellyn Powys writes his *Pathetic Fallacy* and C. T. Gorham makes an abstract of White's *Warfare of Science with Theology*.

1931. Secularists condemn the bargaining of successive governments with the religious vote regarding religious teaching in schools, and also press for an alternative programme during religious services on the air; they are criticising, too, the government's very pale Sunday Performances Bill. The Thinkers' Library has now sold 200,000 copies. *The Freethinker* reaches its Jubilee number. Cohen's latest publications are *Selected Heresies* and *God and the Universe*.

1932. The N.S.S. is hampered by religious bigotry reminiscent of the 19th century in two places: at Birkenhead a lecture hall hired by the society is cancelled at short notice under religious pressure and a court case fails to rectify the matter; at Durham, following an anti-N.S.S. demonstration by students, the police attempt to forbid further secularist meetings on the site; the attempt is not successful. There has been an influx of men of science to the Rationalists, for whom Keith continues to defend the evolution of man. Current publications include Kent's *London for Heretics*, and *The Revenues of Religion*, by a politician, "Alan Handsacre." In direct propaganda Liverpool report a most successful year with 115 meetings.

1933. The Bradlaugh Centenary is celebrated with meetings, a Commemoration Fund, a B.B.C. programme (brief and unsatisfactory), and Cohen's *Bradlaugh and Ingersoll*. J. M. Robertson (b. 1855) and Annie Besant (b. 1847) die. A gramophone recording is made of Chapman Cohen. Lord Snell becomes R.P.A. president. Ernest Thurtle pleads for Sunday cinemas; McCabe writes his *Existence of God*; McLaren continues Foote's work on infidel deathbeds.

BLESSED BE YE POOR

The late Dr. Inge left £98,198. No wonder he opposed Materialism.

This Believing World

For the sake of the two or three millions of Catholics in this Protestant country, the B.B.C. got Dr. J. C. Heenan, the R.C. Bishop of Leeds, to broadcast a religious talk the other day and, of course, he managed to get in a little bit of his own after the script had been duly censored—"We are so used to tolerance for minorities that we take it for granted. They don't elsewhere—in Spain and Northern Ireland." This upset the very sensitive Orangemen, and their Premier immediately sent a "protest telegram" which caused the B.B.C. to apologise for "the reference to the alleged religious intolerance in Northern Ireland." But what is the truth? Do Orangemen and women like Roman Catholics? Is there any beautiful Christian love whatever between Eire and Ulster?

On the other hand, we wonder whether Eire would allow an Ulster Bishop to broadcast his version of true Christianity to its people? We wonder whether Eire would permit it to be called "Lift Up Your Hearts," and allow a Protestant to call himself the Archbishop of Dublin? And we wonder what the Eire B.C. would say if the Protestant Bishop added a little tilt of his own after his script had been properly censored by the duly appointed religious authorities? But what a delightful example of the love of Jesus Christ (as Billy Graham would say) is shown in this little incident!

Enthusiastic reports are reaching America about the terrific success of the Rev. B. Graham in sending people back to the churches—which up to now have been more or less only sparsely filled. Will all the people who now flock to hear him be only too glad to go every Sunday morning to church, foregoing the delights of Sunday morning radio; and in the evening, will they prefer the curate's sermon to the TV play? Will they find the entry of Christ Jesus into their lives—this is a favourite expression of the reverend evangelist—have the slightest effect in their homes and business? Will the Christians who, in the past, so regularly filled the time of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children now be able to dissolve it? Will there be no more of the appalling cruelty to animals which also characterised so many true Christians? And no more divorces?

We were highly amused to learn the other day from *Psychic Realm* that "the philosophy of Spiritualism is a guide to mankind on how to live his life here . . . while the present troubles of the world are the direct result of the influences of Materialism." Now we are prepared to give the names of a dozen (or more) eminent Spiritualists who have been convicted of gross fraud, and we challenge our contemporary to give us the names of a dozen eminent Materialists who have been so convicted. And we might ask—why are our prisons so full of Christians and anti-Materialists that religious chaplains have to be provided for them; while there are no "Materialist" chaplains because there are so few Materialists, if any at all, in prison?

A spook has been haunting the Ferry Boat Inn at Holywell for something like 900 years and (as we reported some while back) a member of the Psychical Research Society, Mr. A. B. Cornell, had no difficulty in locating her with an Ouija board for, of course, she herself spoke perfect modern English and understood it—English being the universal language in A.D. 1050 exactly as now. Unfortunately, she herself recently gave the date of her death as A.D. 515—a few hundred years, in such a perfect piece of evidence for spooks, being of little matter. Crowds haunted

—in fact—the Inn, waiting for the spook; but even the presence of Mr. Cornell did not prevent Inspector Busby of St. Ives (who was there) admitting that "no incidents occurred"—though perhaps he meant that the crowd had behaved itself. Mr. Cornell himself said that he was "disappointed" as he hoped for "stronger signals," and we can only hope that the spook will appease him. We can't have such a brilliant investigator disappointed.

Our very pious contemporary, the *Daily Mail*, must have shocked its religious readers when it designated the late Mr. (Misery) Martin the "foe of Sunday fun." He never objected to "religious" fun on Sundays—all he wanted was to stop all Sunday entertainments, all drinking, all enjoyable meals, and all Sunday sports. He claimed, moreover, that calling him "Misery" brought thousands of pounds to the Society for the furtherance of miserable Sundays of which he was so long the secretary. There was no end to the number of true Christians who thought as he did, and who were willing to pay for the perpetuating of Dismal Sundays everywhere. And they are still paying.

After all, Jesus himself has been called the Man of Sorrows, and he would probably have shed tears even over the reading of the *Pickwick Papers*. That this is the way all right-thinking Christians prefer is shown by the row over some murals commissioned by a Sussex church. The artist, instead of doing the usual "namby-pamby" Jesus which the congregation wanted, painted a Jesus who looked "tough and brutal" though thoroughly in the tradition that the Saviour never laughed. So there's a row about it, and it looks as if the artist will lose his job.

Mood

I would have done a while with streets and men,
These clamant bells, the footsteps, and the sweat;
I have a need of silence, to forget
The learned lunacies of tongue and pen
Where faded wisdom claps a joyless lip
At the glum proving of a foolish truth.
Unsullied, I would find again my youth
When I went forth with sword upon the hip,
Mightily pointed for an honoured prize,
Towards the creaming shore's possessing tide
Where tiptoe on the brim of half the sea
Mountains protest their lordship to the skies
Under night's million jewels. I will ride
By hidden pathways once well-known to me.

Ah, all ye savage years that twisted breed
Upon the sour midden of the mind
Base dreams, dissolve! While there is yet to find
A small removal from the human need,
I would have done a while with sage and seer:
Long have I listened to the wise men speak,
Long have I sought, for I had much to seek;
But at the sentinelled portal of my ear
Their voices brought no answering countersign,
No more than children's murmurs at their play
Lost in a distant quarrel. I will have done,
Will rise and reach the things that once were mine,
The peace beyond this city's plangent day,
The strength within a silence, and the sun.

JOHN O'HARE.

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

THE FREETHINKER

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

K. LIDAKS.—Thank you for your kind contribution to our library. Your good wishes are warmly reciprocated. Bon voyage!

JAMES H. MATSON.—Thanks for your good wishes and promised contribution. The subject of Christian origins is of absorbing interest.

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). — Sunday, April 18, 3 and 7 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON.

Bradford N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: 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: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch). — Every Sunday, 3 and 6 p.m.: L. EBURY, W. J. O'NEILL and other speakers.

NOTES AND NEWS

Readers of *The Freethinker* have become accustomed to expect lively and stimulating thought couched in elegant prose from our distinguished contributor, Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann. Those who were privileged to hear Mr. Du Cann's speech as guest of honour at the recent annual dinner of the N.S.S. will know that our contributor combines incisive logic with high culture and an original approach to life and its problems. These qualities are conspicuously evident in Mr. Du Cann's new booklet, *Marriage: Sacerdotal or Secular*, just published by our *Pioneer Press* at the modest price of 1s. Quoting the old English common lawyer, John Selden, who went on record with the historic dictum that "Marriage is a desperate thing," Mr. Du Cann makes a powerful plea for both the drastic reform of our antiquated medieval divorce laws and for the effective secularisation of the whole concept of marriage itself.

As we have indicated before in these columns, the Secularist case against Christianity is *positive* as well as negative. It is concerned, not only with the effective criticism of antiquated religious dogmas but equally with breaking the stranglehold which Christianity and its medieval outlook have succeeded in establishing over so many aspects of our society. Nowhere, as Mr. Du Cann indicates in this timely pamphlet, has this been more so than in regard to the laws regulating marriage. As the author, himself a distinguished lawyer, concisely indicates, whereas the legal system of pagan Rome took a rational and liberal attitude towards the marriage relationship as a civil contract and a secular relationship, Christianity reversed this trend and established the conception of marriage, not, primarily, as a contract, but as a supernaturally-dictated and indissoluble "Sacrament," regulated

not by common sense but by the recorded prohibition of Divorce uttered by Jesus in the Gospels. Nowhere, one may affirm, has Christianity influenced human life more deeply or more disastrously than in its attitude to this most intimate of human relationships.

In England, as our author indicates, divorce could only be obtained by a private, and very expensive Act of Parliament prior to 1857, when, following a famous judgment of Mr. Justice Maule, a secular Divorce Court was established since which date, facilities for easier divorce have been slowly extended in the teeth of fierce opposition from the Churches. Mr. Du Cann indicts the present position as hypocritical and as typically illogical. He discusses the attitude of the Churches, and points out how the three main divisions of Christianity, Roman, "Orthodox," and Protestant, give opposing interpretations of the words attributed to Christ. Mr. Du Cann concludes with a powerful appeal for the secularization of the whole concept of marriage. We imagine that it must be a long time since so much common sense has been compressed into so few pages, and we hope that this timely pamphlet, upon which we congratulate its distinguished author, will be widely read outside as well as inside the Secular Movement. [*Marriage: Sacerdotal or Secular*, by C. G. L. Du Cann, Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, W.C. 1, price 1s., postage 1½d.]

Are all non-Catholics doomed to go to Hell? This (literally!) burning question was recently raised in the U.S.A. by Fr. Feeney, S.J. With what appears to us sound logic, the Rev. Father decided that they were, basing his conclusion on many eminent professors of the theological orthodoxy. However, the Church of Rome is a worldly-wise institution and, at a time when it is relying on Protestant support—not to mention Protestant Atomic Bombs!—to disperse "the spectre of Communism," this is *not* the appropriate time to condemn so many of its potential allies, including President Eisenhower, to eternal perdition. Consequently, Fr. Feeney was told to keep his mouth shut and, when he refused, was excommunicated.

Now the Rev. (or ex-Rev.) Father has published a sheet called *The Point*, the point of which is that all non-Catholics will go to Hell and, it seems, a good many Catholics as well, for not being Catholic enough! Indeed, according to Fr. Feeney, present-day Catholics—English ones in particular—are nothing but a bunch of crypto-Protestants; he mentions Mgr. Ronald Knox and the novelist Mr. Graham Greene in this category. In short, "all the regiment's out of step except our Feeney." We doubt if the Pope will like this, but, to judge from his frequent references to Hell-fire in the Gospels, we rather think that our Lord might have agreed with Fr. Feeney.

Theatre

The *Grand Ballet Du Marquis De Cuevas* lacks much in execution but little in the variety of their subjects.

"La Tertulia" is a light and amusing piece bringing in Ana Ricarda as a Spanish dancer, but apart from the castanet playing there is little that is Spanish in the foot work. "Doña Ines de Castro" is a dull piece not particularly brilliant, but "Prisoner in The Caucasus" has much to recommend it by its style and its relation to folklore.

Notably beautiful is "Annabel Lee" with Marjorie Tallchief in the name part, and she is not less graceful as The Night Shadow. Another new ballet, "Piège de Lunière," brings in a light-trap into which moths are attracted, and though original in its style it has many slow moments.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

Christian Origins Again—1

By H. CUTNER

BOOKS on the origins of Christianity, just as books on the "life" of Jesus Christ, appear to fascinate many publishers, and so we can expect them year in and year out, written from all sorts of points of view. As—I think that I am right in saying—Mr. Archibald Robertson is very "left," his latest work, *The Origins of Christianity* (recently so ably reviewed by Mr. F. A. Ridley in these columns) was bound to be written from a left standpoint. To make sure that there is no "deviation" it has the *imprimatur* of Messrs. Maurice Cornforth, Christopher Hill and Jack Lindsay—all, I believe, good Communists; but I am not as interested in the Marxist or Communist standpoint as in the book's historical aspects or, if it is preferred, as its mythical point of view. Mr. Robertson is, as is well known, a stout opponent of the Myth Theory of Jesus, and we are old opponents on the problem. After carefully reading what he has to say, I must confess being "of the same opinion still."

We get very little that is either new or fresh. Just as in any orthodox work on the subject, Mr. Robertson drags in Papias, Irenæus and Eusebius—what they say about the Gospels or what they do not say, or what they might have said. The idea appears to be that if only we can trust them, or rather trust Papias, we have a very early witness to the reality of Jesus, and what more can a believer want?

Christian writers on Papias do not stress *too* much that we have *not* got what Papias is supposed to have written or said, but only what Irenæus and Eusebius say he said. Now, Eusebius was a notorious liar—this is admitted even by Christian writers—while it may surprise some people to learn that we have *not* got what Irenæus is supposed to have written, but a very poor translation in Latin made when or by whom, God knows, for nobody else appears to know. It can even be argued that there never was any Irenæus at all, for nobody knows anything whatever about him except what is written in his "works."

Mr. Robertson is very, very cautious when it comes to Papias. He is "the first writer to mention any Gospel," but "plainly in the time of Papias there was no canon of the New Testament." That is, there was no "canon" of the New Testament in about the year 120 A.D.—a remarkable discovery by such an authority. Even orthodox writers find it difficult to say exactly when the "canon" was first suggested and finally accepted. Mr. Robertson tells us that Papias "knew of a Gospel attributed to Mark"—though the real truth is that *it is said* that Papias knew of such a Gospel—which is quite a different thing. Papias makes Mr. Robertson's Jesus say—and he believed in oral tradition far more than in written documents—"The day will come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each twig ten thousand shoots, and in each one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and in every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metrets of wine." And I see no reason to believe that, if there was a Jesus—as Mr. Robertson so fervently believes—he did not say this, if what he said in the "canonical" Gospels is true.

That great authority on the Canon of the Bible, Dr. S. Davidson, finds it difficult to obtain "satisfactory conclusions" from the "testimony" of Papias; and far from admitting, as does Mr. Robertson, that Papias knew of "a Gospel attributed to Mark," Dr. Davidson roundly declares "that the Gospels, if such they may be called, of which he speaks as written by Matthew and Mark, were not identical with the works now existing under the names of these evangelists." Why then is Papias dragged in at

all? Well, Mr. Robertson has to bring in some support for the existence of his Jesus, and Papias, who is almost always appealed to as a kind of heavenly witness for a Gospel by Mark and another by Matthew very early in the second century, by orthodox writers on the origins of Christianity, can be referred to with every confidence that few of his readers will go to the necessary trouble to find out what we know of the eminent Papias. The truth is, we know just nothing. It is all hearsay, and very poor hearsay at that.

When Mr. Robertson himself comes to the Gospel of Mark, however, he has to say that "Papias' account of the origin of his (Mark's) Gospel must be rejected." But this does not mean "exit Papias." He is still a superb authority for Mr. Robertson, who quotes him often as an "authority." Yet we have Eusebius telling us that Papias "was very limited in his comprehension"—which is tantamount to saying that Papias was a fool. And so he was; so were all the Church Fathers; they believed implicitly the most credulous twaddle and I find it hard to believe that this is not seen even by reverent Rationalists.

The truth is that apologists, Christian or Rationalist, just have to find some "evidence" for their Jesus; and Papias and Irenæus and Eusebius and other Church Fathers have to be roped in, no matter what hopeless drivel they write, simply because there is no other evidence. It is true that Mr. Robertson goes to the Talmud and the inevitable *Annals* of Tacitus—but the evidence we get from them is even worse than we get from the early Christians, as I hope to show.

The way Mr. Robertson goes to the Talmud is particularly interesting. He admits that it is not "history," and we cannot expect much more than "incidental references to Christianity." So he tells us that "in the Talmud he (Jesus) and his followers are regularly called *Notzrim*." The reader can rest assured that there is no mention whatever of Jesus and his followers if by Jesus is meant Jesus of Nazareth and his twelve (or thirteen) Apostles. There are a number of very confused stories of a number of Jesuses who are given various dates, not one of which conforms to those given in the New Testament; but if Mr. Robertson denies this, let us have the passage or passages where Jesus and his followers are called *Notzrim*.

He does give one passage from the Talmud (quoting Dr. R. Eisler) in which the teacher of Rabbi Akiba says he met a disciple of Jesus the Nazorean called Jacob. Unfortunately there are *two* stories of this Jacob, who is in the other one described as being a *contemporary* of Akiba, who died about 135 A.D. And we can leave it to Mr. Robertson to say which of the stories is true. He might also tell us who wrote them and when; for the Talmud is a compilation and, so far as I have read about it, no one knows how it was put together. Almost everything about it is conjecture.

But I shall say more about it in the next article.

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Expelled from Sunday School!

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

TO please Mum and because his pals Albert Harris and Michael Morton went too, Johnnie Brown attended the Sunday School of St. Peter's, the rather exclusive church whose congregation was largely composed of aristocratic Christians living in the district known as Belgravia.

Johnnie had a freethinking father who had no great objection to his son's learning about religion first-hand. Johnnie's mother was a non-churchgoing nominal Anglican who "couldn't be bothered" with arguments. She had a high respect for the superior mental powers of Dad, but clung to the notions of respectability she had learned as a child in a Gloucestershire village. While she was preparing the Sunday dinner she did not want her children running the streets.

To Johnnie the morning and afternoon attendances were no hardship. He enjoyed the Old Testament folk-lore and the New Testament drama, but never for a moment believed in any of the miraculous events that his teachers related to him. When the Sunday School marched to Church he entered the building without the slightest feeling of awe. During the ritual he wondered if those taking part really experienced a visitation of grace, and during the sermon, which he invariably found boring, he studied the ornaments, texts and stained-glass windows, read parts of the prayer book or joined in the common pastime of passing notes along the pews.

In time he was promoted to the top class, under a teacher, Miss Thwaites, a well-to-do spinster with a large house in a select square. She used to ask her favourite pupils to come to tea there, and Johnnie, who was always attentive and nicely brought up, was frequently accorded this privilege, until he dropped the brick that forever put him outside the pale of the church.

Easter was approaching, and Miss Thwaites told her class the story of the awful betrayal of Jesus by Judas Iscariot. She called it "the crime of crimes" and waited for members of her class to echo her horror, which a number of them promptly did. But not Johnnie, who ventured the opinion that everyone should be grateful to Judas, since he had played a necessary, if not very noble, part in the salvation of mankind. "Oh no," replied Miss Thwaites, "We should only be grateful to Our Lord."

Johnnie was not to be silenced by this. "If Jesus came to save the world by dying on the cross, and if he had to be betrayed before this could happen, how can we blame the man who betrayed him?" he asked. "Well, Johnnie, it was a very sinful act and God had given Judas freewill as he has to all of us," the teacher answered. Johnnie, however, had taken in the lesson of the previous week and came back with, "But Jesus had foretold at the Last Supper that one of the disciples should betray him, and had made it quite plain that he knew that Judas was the one. If Judas had not done so it would have proved Jesus wrong. Surely nothing could have happened otherwise than Jesus said?" "Perhaps you are right," said the worried teacher, "but it was very wrong of Judas all the same. And the Bible tells us that he was punished soon after in a very horrible way."

"I don't think that fair," said Johnnie. "You mustn't say that," said Miss Thwaites, "It may be difficult to understand, but God does not punish sinners unjustly. You see that, don't you?" "No, Miss," replied the boy. "Oh dear! We just can't leave it like that," said his teacher. "Don't worry about it, and I shall find out what Mr. Williams thinks, so that I can tell you next Sunday. I'm sure you'll understand then." Mr. Williams was the senior of a number of curates attached to the church.

Johnnie, alas, never received an answer that satisfied him. The following Sunday, after the opening prayers and hymn were over, he was told by Miss Thwaites to go to the Reverend Mr. Williams at his desk at the far end of the hall. "Johnnie," said that gentleman, "your class teacher tells me that you have been bothering her and upsetting the class by asking irreverent questions, and that you will not accept the answers she gives you. I want you to promise not to do that any more." "I can't do that, Sir," said Johnnie, "I want to know." "Then you had better get your hat and coat and leave now. That is all."

Johnnie dates the beginning of his enthusiasm for Free-thought back to that moment some forty-three years ago. He has frequently told the story to Christian friends who, without exception, have censured the curate for behaving as he did. But none of them has managed to answer Johnnie's point yet. This is a true story, only the names being fictitious.

Tom Mosley Honoured

THE Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society chose the final Sunday, March 28, of its 1953-1954 second session to pay a well-deserved tribute to its Secretary in recognition of his 25 years in that capacity and 42 years as a member of "The Cosmo." T. M. Mosley combines this work with the Secretaryship of the Nottingham Branch of the N.S.S., and he is indefatigable on the platform as a Free-thought lecturer, so readers of this journal will be pleased to learn that he was presented with a book of his own choosing, Archibald Robertson's *Christian Origins*, together with a cheque for £14.

The occasion attracted the best attendance for a long time, and Nottingham Secularists and their friends turned up in force. Some came from as far as Leicester, and many more would have been there if they had known that this redoubtable warrior was debating the subject of "The Resurrection: History or Legend?" with Mr. Gordon H. Hunnings of the Christadelphian sect. Of the debate it is only necessary to say that Tom found his fundamentalist opponent "easy meat." A. ELSMERE.

Obituary

R. R. PRYNNE

It is with great regret that we announce the death of Mr. R. R. Prynne, of Looe, in Cornwall, at the age of 83. A distinguished schoolmaster for many years, and a founder of many branches of the Co-operative Movement in Cornwall, Mr. Prynne had long been a staunch Freethinker—one of the stalwarts of the Bradlaugh-Foote-Cohen era. He was also an omniverous reader, and the present writer (who enjoyed his and his wife's generous hospitality) will always remember the many talks we had, not only on some of the world's masterpieces of literature, but also on many lesser-known works, long forgotten except for readers like Mr. Prynne and those of us who delight in the byeways as well as the high-ways of the world of books.

Mr. Prynne died on March 16 and was cremated in Plymouth without any religious ceremony. To his wife and family we tender our sincerest sympathies. H. C.

J. DANIELL

I am sorry to report the death of one of the last of the old Northumbrian stalwarts. Mr. J. Daniell was 80 years of age and belonged to the group who started in the Bradlaugh days and, in spite of all opposition—including, at times, violent—kept Free-thought and National Secular Society work alive in the North-East. He was cheerful and enthusiastic, in spite of a severe spinal accident in the mine many years ago, and the work he did will live long in his area.

He leaves a daughter to whom we extend our sympathy.

As he requested, an address was given at the crematorium by JOHN T. BRIGITON.

CORRESPONDENCE

N.S.S. AND HEREDITARY DISTINCTIONS

SIR,—Mr. Du Cann describes one of our "Immediate Practical Objects" as "the language of political chicanery, not scientific truth . . . false and misleading humbug"—strong language indeed, but the article in which he uses it shows very plainly that he has misunderstood the clause in question and has then misrepresented its real meaning. The item that has come in for his stricture is: "The abolition of all hereditary and racial distinctions and privileges fostering a spirit antagonistic to justice and human brotherhood."

As this clause stands on our membership form it quite clearly conveys that we are opposed to the system under which honours, privileges, offices and titles are dependent on the accident of birth. Mr. Du Cann, however, chooses to equate "distinction" with distinguishing marks, such as the colour of a man's skin and his mental endowment. He has not the slightest excuse for doing so, for it is not differences of this kind that foster mutual antagonism, but only the assumption of superior rights by sectional interests.

This "Immediate Practical Object" of the N.S.S. aims at removing a known cause of strife between man and man. It is sociological in character and has no connection with the biological question of scientific breeding with which Mr. Du Cann confuses it in his article. Note how he misrepresents the sense when quoting, by omitting the words "and privileges" and by introducing the qualifying phrase "since these are" into the middle of the clause, thus changing the meaning to suit his argument. When only two years ago the N.S.S. revised its statement of policy it did not go in for "politico-economic shorthand," nor was its language "a Victorian hangover," and a contributor to this paper who indulges in such statements should think again.—Yours, etc.,

P. VICTOR MORRIS,
Secretary, National Secular Society.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHURCH

SIR,—Rather belatedly, may I add something apropos Mr. Norman's excellent article on homosexuality.

Much poppycock is talked on both sides about this so-called deviation. Some queers are charming—but many are nauseating. And are there any grounds to support the theory that as a set they are more highly gifted and talented than other men?

Mr. Norman gives the impression that the Church regards sex relationships as "sinful and wicked." That is not quite true; Protestantism often regards them as that. The Church condemns promiscuous relations—but sex in itself she regards as God-given and healthy.

In dealing with homosexuality, she is far more tolerant than many Protestant sects. Recently, *The Tablet*, in reviewing Mary Renault's new novel dealing with homosexual love, was surprisingly moderate in its criticism. And homosexuality is one of those sins "crying to heaven for vengeance!"—Yours, etc.,

MALCOLM STUBBS.

JESUS AND CHRISTIANITY

SIR,—When Goguel says "Christianity is not the religion preached or taught by Jesus," it is reasonable to suppose there is such a religion for him, and it would be hard to suggest a better single phrase than "it is more blessed to give than to receive" to represent it and its Gospel essence. (Probably unintentionally you suggest this phrase is quoted in the "Pauline Epistles," whereas it appears in Acts in Paul's farewell to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus.) It is not obvious why you should exclaim because it is not found in our Gospels. There were apparently many others (cf. Lk. 1) and all of them that survive produced long after Paul was dead. "So what?"—Yours, etc.,

ROBERT H. CORRICK.

P.S.—Does Goguel suggest the religion of Jesus is not to be found, at any rate in part, in "our Gospels"?

CHRIST AND PAUL

SIR.—In your article "The 'Christ's' of the New Testament," in the current issue of *The Freethinker*, you state: "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."

You might be interested to know that a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, the Rev. Bleddyn J. Roberts, expressed somewhat similar views in a book called "The Literary Patterns of the Bible," published some years ago, in Welsh. In dealing with the materials which the authors of the Gospels used as

foundations or sources for their writings, he asks: "In other words, where, and how, can we discover the materials of Mark and Q?" And he answers: "Certainly not in the Epistles of Paul, because it appears that Paul knew hardly anything about the teaching of Jesus."

So you are in good company! We may yet see you being asked to give a special lecture to the students of one of our Welsh theological colleges!—Yours, etc.,

THOS. OWEN.

RELIGION TO-DAY

SIR,—The nineteenth century has passed, but in spite of its stupendous progress, it failed to kill supernaturalism. Organised religion, which derives its vitality therefrom, is now, as heretofore, the greatest enemy of Freethought. Its strength is greater now than at any previous time, since it commands the radio and the cinema, in addition to the popular Press.

Supernatural religion is taught in the State schools. Youth organisations are barred to unbelievers. Magazines for little children contain Bible stories. Even Darby and Joan clubs for the aged are usually controlled by a Church. Freethinkers have little cause for complacency. Anti-religious propaganda is certainly not obsolete. It is to be hoped that *The Freethinker* will continue to deliver its hammer blows on supernatural religion until that desirable state of affairs has actually occurred.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. HUXLEY.

FREE CLERICAL TREATMENT

SIR,—It is interesting to read in the article on medical etiquette in the British Encyclopædia of Medicine (edited by Sir H. Rolleston) that all clergy and their families, if they had any, expected free medical attention, and were usually accorded it, on the grounds that they would otherwise not be able to afford to keep up their social positions!

Perhaps someone will tell us whether the practice exists in other countries, and whether these gentry ever pay their nursing home bills, not to mention bills for medicines supplied by chemists (I include the shilling per prescription charge made in this country).—Yours, etc.,

F. HILTON, Ph.D.

WITCH-DOCTORS—1954 VERSION

SIR,—Perhaps it would be in the interests of your readers if they were warned of their approaching doom.

At a religious meeting I attended recently the preacher informed his fairly large audience that Jesus Christ is returning to earth soon. Those who have "accepted" him will be wafted off into the heavens to partake of eternal bliss. All others, which I imagine includes all readers of *The Freethinker*, have, to put it mildly, "had it."

The incredible fact was that this witch-doctor (1954 version) was believed by most of those present, including young people. And we boast of our education system!—Yours, etc.,

S. WILSON.

HUMANISM AND THE B.B.C.

SIR,—The B.B.C. have been broadcasting a series of talks entitled, "Faith and Life," in which adherents of various world religions have been talking about their particular religions. A Buddhist on Buddhism, a Christian on Christianity and so forth, but the last talk, which is to be broadcast on Wednesday, April 7, on "Non-religious Faiths," is to be given by a prominent Christian, Canon C. E. Raven, D.D. He will discuss amongst other "faiths" that of "Scientific Humanism," and we need hardly wait to hear this talk to know what his attitude to this "religion" will be.

This is only too representative of the B.B.C.'s biased approach to all questions of religion and belief. Surely "Scientific Humanism" should be allowed to put the case for themselves, and the ranks of Humanism are not lacking competent broadcasters. H. J. Blackham, Julian Huxley or J. Bronowski are all avowed "Scientific Humanists," and all have broadcasting experience.

Is it too much to expect that Humanists, Freethinkers, Rationalists and Unitarians be allowed some time to broadcast their ideas over the B.B.C.?—Yours, etc.,

ALAN E. WOODFORD.

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