

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

IN his little-known book, *Ancient Rome and Modern America*, the Italian historian, the late G. Ferrero, drew a highly instructive and interesting picture of life in the leading nations of ancient and of contemporary times. There are, indeed, many striking similarities: Nero and Caligula, for example, would make ideal Hollywood "heroes"! More seriously, the great republics of classical and modern times produced an entire congeries of strange religions and of fantastic cults. In the Roman world, one had, of course, a host of bizarre cults: Attis, Isis, Osiris, *et al.*, besides the more ambitious proselytising creeds of Christ, Mithras, and Manichaeus. Also there were the "depths beneath depths": cults compared with which even Christianity appears almost rational! Weird theosophic cults, of which Burckhardt has given us some fantastic exhibits in his great work on the era of Constantine; and of which Lucian gives us a vivid glimpse in his essay on Alexander the Wonder-Worker, a kind of ancient "Cagliostro" or "Blavatsky."

"God's Own Country"

In modern America most of these ancient religious phenomena can be reduplicated. It is a matter of common knowledge how many Christian sects of the most "fundamentalist" hue abound, and how "revivals" of religion become regular "nine days' wonders." Where else but in "God's Own Country" would one have a politician of the top flight, like the late William Jennings Bryan, a former candidate for the Presidency, publicly affirming in a court of law, when asked if he believed every word of Genesis in view of modern geological evidence that "he put his trust in the Rock of Ages rather than in the Age of the Rocks"? Whilst, in England, our present-day saviour, Billy Graham, is only the latest of a whole series of evangelists, and counts Torrey and Alexander Moody and Sankey, Aimée Macpherson and Billy Sunday, amongst his predecessors.

Three American Religions

Like "Ancient Rome," "Modern America" also produces its own indigenous religions. Out of many such three creeds which originated in the U.S.A. have acquired a world-wide following. Mormonism, Christian Science and Jehovah's Witnesses, to give our American cults the names by which they are popularly known, have long since crossed the Atlantic and have acquired an international notoriety and a cosmopolitan following. One can, we think, relevantly add, that the fact that each of these three cults continues to describe itself as a bona fide branch of the Christian religion does not alter its character as, essentially, a new religion; all three represent *American* religions conceived and reared amidst the melting pot of "Modern America," just as those ancient cults of which Christianity is, to-day, the sole survivor, originated in the melting-pot of the Roman Empire. It is true that none of the three,

neither the creeds and organisations founded by Joseph Smith, Mrs. Eddy, nor Pastor Russell has, so far at least, enjoyed the glittering fortune which History ultimately reserved for their ancient Christian predecessor. But religions—even American ones!—are subject to the law of averages. In any case, there is still time! It is probable that all three American-born religions have actually made more headway during their first century of existence than did the Christian cult in the first century of the era which has now come to be called after its name. Of these three already world-wide cults, two, Mormonism and Christian Science, are fairly well known and reliable accounts

from an objective angle have been written upon their strange history and still stranger tenets.

The American Jehovah

The Mormon cult has been the subject of much fiction besides factual investigations, sometimes stranger than fiction! Christian Science has been extensively written up. One recalls in this latter connection that fine book written for *The Thinkers' Library* by the late Dr. H. A. L. Fisher, the well-known Oxford historian, *Our New Religion*, which gave the Rationalist reading public a concise and lucid survey of that cult which a sarcastic Christian ecclesiastic of another more orthodox persuasion once described as "neither Christian nor Science"! Now Dr. Fisher has found a worthy successor in another veteran publicist of the "Rationalist Press Association," Mr. Royston Pike, already known as the author of several scholarly books in the field of comparative religion. In his recently published book, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, Mr. Pike gives us the first concise and well-documented survey of the least-known of the three American religions which have already attained international standing: the strange bizarre cult commonly described as that of "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Jehovah Crosses the Atlantic

This new cult of the old Hebrew god, Jehovah—the "Witnesses" cling to the old spelling!—arose in almost complete obscurity—just like early Christianity—about the year 1874, under the leadership of an American revivalist, Pastor Russell. Originally, it appears to have been a kind of "Seventh Day Adventist" affair which only differed from other sects of a similar nature in holding that the world was due to end on a *definite* date, with the return of the Lord in glory "on the clouds of Heaven." At least, 1874 seems to have been the original date for doomsday, but when the dire event had to be postponed due to the unaccountable failure of the Lord to turn up, it had to be postponed several times; nowadays the orthodox belief amongst the "Witnesses" appears to be that Christ *did* actually arrive in 1914, but in a spiritual unseen way, which, at any rate, cannot be contradicted. The Founder, Pastor Russell, died on October 31, 1916. His successor was the better-known "Judge" Rutherford, author of the famous slogan,

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Jehovah Crosses the Atlantic

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

"Millions now living will never die," and an orator of note, who, *inter alia*, addressed many audiences in the British Isles. Unlike Russell and Rutherford who wrote many books, besides lecturing extensively, the present Head of the Sect, Nathan H. Knorr, who succeeded Rutherford after his death on January 8, 1942, appears to have written little and is quite unknown outside the ranks of the "Witnesses" themselves.

"Jehovah's Theocratic Kingdom"

Thus, as regards its foundation and early tenets, the American cult of "Jehovah God," as the "Witnesses" usually describe "the jealous god," bears a remarkable resemblance to the beginnings of Christianity, which similarly appears to have originated in a belief in the immediate coming of doomsday. The early Christians, like the early "Witnesses," had to keep postponing the Lord's return, eventually, into the indefinite future. In fact, at least one of Mr. Pike's readers came to the conclusion that Jesus—if any?—and the earliest Christians would probably have found themselves more at home amongst the "Witnesses" than amongst other more orthodox and more pretentious Christian sects! For whilst the Churches must, in the present writer's opinion at least, be given credit for having, to some extent, civilised primitive Christianity, the modern "Witnesses" appear, apart from the fact that some of them can read and write, to be about as primitive as the most "primitive" Christians. "Jehovah's Theocratic Kingdom," as the "Witnesses"

style their régime, is, we should say, probably pretty similar to the beliefs of the actual first generation of Christians; certainly more so than the sophisticated residents in Lambeth Palace or the Vatican. We think that St. Peter probably welcomed "Judge" Rutherford as a brother at the "pearly gates"!

"Religion is a Racket"

In one thing, however, the "Witnesses" have the advantage over the early Christians; their founders were businessmen! This is obvious from their systematic activities and from the enormous sales of their publications. That undoubted administrative and business ability can go hand-in-hand with the weirdest beliefs and with the most fantastic superstitions is made abundantly clear in Mr. Pike's well-documented pages. Despite their obvious fanaticism, the followers of the American Jehovah evidently come from the land of the dollar, and know how to serve both god and Mammon impartially! That "religion is a racket"—that is, of course, *other* religions—is one of their favourite slogans. But the Church of Jehovah, to judge from the statistics here recorded by Mr. Pike, has not itself done too badly. Anyhow, by writing what is, we believe, the first intelligible and documented account of "Jehovah's Witnesses," Mr. Royston Pike has both rendered a service to the science of comparative religion, and provided the critical public with a lucid factual account of one of the strangest of modern religious phenomena.

[*Jehovah's Witnesses*, by E. Royston Pike, Watts & Co., 10s. 6d.]

Different Approaches

A HUMANIST friend, from outside the ranks of Secularism, puts forward a well-intentioned criticism of the militant attitude against religion in a letter from which I quote the following extract:—

"I have long thought that Rationalists and Secularists would much more effectively and attractively put their case if they dropped the word 'religion' as a point of attack and concentrated on the irrational elements in most (but not all) religions. The common man subconsciously links religion with morality, much more than he does with speculations about God and the after-life, and consequently attacks on religion are taken to be attacks on morality and are mistakenly rejected as such. This is quite an unnecessary handicap to rationalist propaganda. Whether Humanism be described as a philosophy or a religion does not really matter, any more than whether it is an old or a new one; but I am sure you do not really mind if those of us who find some useful meaning—quite consistent with our rationalism—in the word 'religion' use it to describe what we believe, and if furthermore we trace what we believe back to earlier beliefs of rational men."

This is a serious and sincere plea, and ought not to be dismissed as a timid refusal to face facts; but I believe my correspondent and those who share his views to be mistaken, and I shall endeavour to put the Secularist point of view so that the two approaches can be compared. I would begin by asserting that what he calls "the irrational elements in religions" are their very essence, while such rational elements as are found associated with them are foreign importations from the secular environment.

I deny that the general run of men and women regard morality as being a more fundamental constituent of religion than is the supernatural. The matter can easily be put to the test by questioning people we meet. Tell them that someone is deeply religious, and their first idea in the great majority of cases is that you are speaking of someone devoutly attached to a particular religious body.

It will be assumed that the person referred to believes in a god, a soul, a future life and spiritual beings; that he or she prays, takes part in religious ritual and is guided by religious rules; and that his or her position may be defined as Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Hindu or other unmistakably religious description. "Humanist" is not (yet, at any rate) generally accepted in this category, although some Humanists speak and write as if it were.

Of course, religion and morality are closely linked in the ideas that the ill-informed have about them. That is because the lie that moral ideas are god-implanted in the human conscience is allowed to continue unexposed while the truth that they are the outcome of experience in society has been very generally suppressed. This has resulted in religious duties—i.e., those concerned with supernatural beliefs and practices—being held up as of first importance, while secular ones have had to take second place or be neglected altogether. The disastrous effects of such muddled thinking loom large in the history of the past two thousand years. We Secularists refuse to refrain from attacking religion, which to us is synonymous with superstition, through the fear that we shall be accused of attacking morality. That is sheer misrepresentation, and we have our answer in the Principles and Objects of the National Secular Society.

Having agreed to co-operate with Rationalist and Ethical organisations in furthering aims held in common under the banner of an all-embracing Humanism, Secularists do not depart from their characteristic conception of Secularism as the antithesis of religion. They should not be expected to do so, for they are in the direct line of descent from the early pioneers who blazed the trail of mankind's mental emancipation from the toils of superstition and priestcraft. On the other hand, they realise that other modern Humanists have evolved by way of religious groups that are undoubtedly far in advance of the old orthodoxies. The Humanist who has been closely

(Continued on page 163)

The Man from Ectoplasm

By DR. CARL H. LOEB

MY name is Kosmos. I am an inhabitant of the planet Ectoplasm. I am one of a team of investigators each of whom has been assigned a task to explore a specific field of activity on another planet. My assignment is to analyse the supernatural beliefs of the inhabitants of the Earth, and in this report I shall specifically deal with a widely accepted deity identified by various names like Jehovah, Yaweh, Elohim, Adonai and who occupied and rules the primitive minds of the earthly inhabitants.

The scientists and investigators from Ectoplasm travel from planet to planet by means of carriers that can be contracted and then become visible to the inhabitants of the Earth, or expanded to microscopic thinness and transparency, making them invisible and undetectable to Earth-people at their present stage of retarded civilisation. Until about four human Earth-years ago we were unnoticed because we never contracted our space carriers sufficiently to become opaque and visible. Since then Earth-people have taken cognisance of our means of transportation and allude to them as flying saucers.

As I shall return to my subject of investigation and examine the mental illusions that possess Earth-people in the form of deities, I begin with Jehovah, who is very popular in those areas where, alongside the superstitious attributes which are primarily creations of the mind and romantic delusions, there exists considerable technological progress and rudimentary science of the type that was understood and practised on the planet Ectoplasm about seven thousand light years ago. Realise that our great advance in all fields must solely be attributed to the fact that our people on Ectoplasm always combined imagination with pure reason and logic and at no time tried to explain unknown phenomena by ascribing them to a deity, but simply admitted them as unsolved problems and then attempted a factual solution; while the Earth-people for centuries were ruled and retarded by fear and primitive superstitions from which they are slowly evolving. The few with ability to think logically were made up mostly of selfish men who found it profitable to withhold the fruits of their investigation from the masses and kept them in ignorance to better use and exploit them. So I find alongside of grains of logical scientific approach to problems tons of ignorance and primitive explanations that would appear preposterous to a child of Ectoplasm.

Even atomic energy, that has been obsolete with us much longer than the oxcart on Earth, and which is used crudely and rudimentarily by Earth-people, is primarily earmarked by them for destructive purposes and as a means to enrich certain groups, and to enslave and abuse others. The most useful tool to obtain this end is what is called religion instilled into Earth-people by an organised effort. They train the minds of newborn in fear by organised suggestive propaganda technique, conditioning an otherwise normal mind that would respond to logic, to accept illusionary figments of the imagination, often succeeding to the point of making the five senses actually experience as real, words and phrases describing non-existent entities like spirits, ghosts, souls, angels, devils, hell, biological monstrosities of virgins producing offspring without intercourse or artificial insemination.

Let's return to our subject of Jehovah and examine the delusions woven around this deity of which I have been unable to find any physical evidence that can be corroborated through the unaberrated senses of an Ectoplasmian or any of the most powerful extensors of our senses like

the Electronic-ionic Ultrasonic Micro-otoscope that magnifies visibility and sound more than a hundred billion times over and above the most powerful microscope used to-day by Earth-scientists.

Earth-people have an obsession of insisting in explaining anything by rationalising and theorising, and in most instances without experimenting and trying out by practical observation and careful analytical processes, that which they are about to prove. They seek primarily good explanations rather than truth and demonstrable facts. Through centuries of conditioning by their religious leaders and exploiters, they have made a virtue out of superstition and pride themselves in accepting as truth and fact the most preposterous delusions that find no counterpart in the actualities of their daily lives nor ever take place in any manner supported by physical evidence that can be examined by anyone besides the teller of these tall and wondrous tales.

Often these beliefs are referred to as wonders and mysteries; while they invariably have been found to be mysteries in all my investigations, I could see nothing more wonderful in them than the imagery and ravings of our little children when they play with discarded packing boxes and imagine they are navigating flying saucers and visiting planets and chasing comets in space; while during all this romancing they are fenced in their four-by-four playpens.

These Earth-men are actually proud of perverting their five senses to the extent of inducing hallucinations; in fact, many cults practise a system of teaching their members methods of inducing auto-intoxication by continuous shouting and raving of magical words and sentences like Hallelujah, and Praise the Lord, Amen. This is done faster and faster, louder and louder; making it necessary to increase the respiratory rate and depth to an extent that results in overloading the blood with oxygen, causing dizziness and auto-intoxication, which in turn produce mental hallucinations causing the victim to experience sight, sound and sensory symptoms similar to those inducible by alcohol poison or certain specific drugs. The victims do not necessarily respond in a similar manner. The response is more or less dependent on the temperament of the practitioner or the religionist; the more neurotic and emotionally unstable manifest the most violent symptoms ranging from animalistic primitive noise, to uncontrollable jerks and ties, and usually ending in exhaustion preceded by orgasmic spasms.

These symptoms are more pronounced in the younger religionists. The oldsters go more or less through a performance of ritual and they try to conform by play-acting the part of the youthful members—except a few professionals like preachers and deacons, who derive their income from these antics (directly or indirectly), and a small fringe of maniac-depressives, and sexually starved.

(To be concluded)

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

(Concluded from page 162)

associated with the Society of Friends, Unitarianism, Liberal Judaism or philosophic Buddhism may well have a nostalgic tenderness for religion as he has experienced it; but he ought to make an effort to understand the attitude of his fellow-Humanist of the Secularist wing, who looks at Roman Catholicism, Fundamentalist Evangelism, nationalist Zionism and fanatical Mohammedanism, and says, "These represent real religion, and I have it not."

P. V. M.

This Believing World

In a recent TV "In the News," Mr. A. J. P. Taylor shocked Roman Catholics by coupling them with Communists saying, "I would say emphatically that nobody who is a Communist can claim as a right to be employed by the State. They are, in fact, as Roman Catholics are, in the service of a foreign power." Although Mr. Walker-Smith, M.P., "deeply resented the remark as far as Roman Catholics are concerned," it is one which is absolutely true. Roman Catholic allegiance is first given to the Pope and his Oriental religion, and if it were a question of choosing, most Roman Catholics would say, exactly like Communists, to hell with the State.

That one-time hilarious Christian sect, the Salvation Army, with its phoney military titles, is once again in the news for, with careful publicity, it manages to make the election of a new "General" as important as the election of a new Pope. Actually, it is just as important—or not, as one pleases. Neither is a world-shattering event, neither makes the slightest impact on human progress. On the contrary, both perpetuate an out-moded "Fundamentalism" which, in intellectual circles, is a subject for laughter. Yet the *Radio Times* devotes a long first article to the "Army of the Lord" as if it really meant anything whatever to culture. Would anybody at the beginning of the century, except the very pious, have believed that the Army's crude Hell, Devils, Angels and Heaven could possibly have survived?

One of the sad stories of the recent terrible floods in Australia is of some people in a car, knowing that they would be swept away, spending their time singing hymns and reading the Bible. The text chosen was from the Psalms—"I am come into deep waters where the flood overflow me"—which is exactly what the flood did. God Almighty who doeth things so well, who even looks after every dear little sparrow, appears this time not to have looked after his own. These unfortunate victims really believed that they would wake up in the arms of the Lord—or did they? Would it not be fairer to say that they would have preferred to wake up in a cosy room with a hot breakfast waiting for them?

From the way the Rev. B. Graham is still being boosted up in our press, for anyone to differ from the maudlin accounts of his wonderful success seems to be precious near the frightful crime of blasphemy. But here we have *Psychic News* heading a leader, "Don't be Silly, Billy," and telling off the brilliant revivalist in no uncertain manner. It appears that he recently said, "The only way we can get rid of demons is through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the only One who overcame the Devil. There is no way in which the Devil can be defeated except through Jesus Christ." *Psychic News* calls this very religious outburst "tommy-rot"!

But surely Mr. Graham is quite right? If a Devil (we just love to give him, like the illustrious Billy, a capital D) comes your way, slap a Crucifix into his face and watch Him slink away completely baffled. No Devil can face the Cross of Christ. Even dear old Mephistopheles, one of our favourite Devils, and the bosom friend of Faust, could never get past the cross on a sword, and he would have disappeared as if an atom bomb had blown him up if he had had the misfortune to come across the glorious Saviour Himself. We will even go further. There isn't a Devil in the Infernal Regions who could stand five minutes of Billy Graham's own sermons. And one hasn't to be a Devil to make that sad confession.

The world-famous Holy Shroud of Turin has at last attracted the attention of ex-M.P. Mr. W. J. Brown who appears never to have heard of it before; and it almost persuadeth him to be a Christian. It reveals for him "a face of astonishing majesty" thus no doubt proving Jesus to be a veritable King indeed. In any case there are, or have been, quite a number of "cloths" bearing an imprint of the face of Jesus, and no doubt there would be more if handkerchiefs had been in use in his day. Some of those in existence are called "Veronicas," others are "Acheropites."

It should interest Mr. Brown as well as others to learn that the Saviour Himself sent his likeness, photographed on a cloth, to Abgarus, the King of Edessa—from one King to another so to speak. And just as the Turin photo is guaranteed by the Vatican, so the Eastern Church guarantees the Acheropite. Both are miraculous, and provide unique evidence that the Only Son of God is Christ Jesus, and that the two Churches are absolutely Divine.

To a world more and more materialistic, boxing champion Don Cockell gives the holy news that he regularly prays to Almighty God. The fact that he is now winning should prove to a sceptical world the wonderful efficacy of prayer; and we are bound to admit that prayer plus better boxing will at least help towards a win. Mr. Cockell fills columns of lyrical slosh in his endeavour to prove how prayer has helped him and why it ought to help others. But in a boxing match, is it not taking an unfair advantage if one's opponent does not pray, and thus has to do without the mighty arm of the Lord? Future opponents of Cockell have only themselves to blame if they don't pray and lose. We advise them to pray and to sing plenty of hymns as well—and that might give them at least an equal chance.

CHAPMAN COHEN More Press Tributes

A great general of Freethought is dead! In the face of death very little can be said. It is the end and we know it. We can only express our thoughts for the one who fought so valiantly for the Best of Causes.

I had the great pleasure of knowing Chapman Cohen and having visited him at his home on several occasions.

Younger hands must take over. They have a great advantage over those who are gone. They have their example. And what a pattern they laid out for those who follow!

Hail and Farewell Chapman Cohen!!

—*The Age of Reason*, New York, U.S.A.

Chapman Cohen, the former President of the National Secular Society, who edited *The Freethinker*, London, and flooded the world with thousands of brilliant articles and books in defence of rationalism during half a century died on February 4 at the age of 85 years. He belongs to the line of giants like Bradlaugh and Foote who took charge of the Freethought movement at the end of the 19th century and built it into a mighty organisation with a resplendent literature. On behalf of the Rationalists of India we pay our homage to a great personality and offer our sympathies to his widow and son.

—From *The Indian Rationalist*, Madras.

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.

MARRIAGE, SACERDOTAL OR SECULAR? by C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 1s.; postage 1½d.

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THE FREETHINKER

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

We greatly regret that the Rev. J. R. Broom's name last week was wrongly printed "Brown."

K. LIDAKS.—Sorry we cannot use your letter. It would require re-writing.

Mrs. E. M. AMOR.—Many thanks for your interesting letter—and for your address.

CHAS. NEWMAN.—If you will let us have your list we will tell you how to make your Cohen library complete.

N. M'CRAE.—Christian charities exist, granted, but the need for them has arisen in a Christian-controlled social structure.

K. WILLIS (Miss).—We note you have been favoured with spirit appearances. You believers are certainly on their priority list. Why don't they pay us a visit? Their Ministry of Supply seems badly organised.

SCOT.—A Deist is certainly not excluded from N.S.S. membership. See its principles.

E. MACD. (Mrs.).—Cohen's *Theism or Atheism* should dispose of the Agnostic position for you.

A. F. B.—If matter is not solid, what is?

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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, 3 and 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER, E. MILLS and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.

North London Branch N.S.S. (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.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEIL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD, G. H. TAYLOR. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Friday, May 21, 7-15 p.m.: Mrs. E. FERGUSON, "Social Security—the Next Steps."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, May 23: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "T. H. Huxley a Reevaluation."

Notes and News

Readers of *The Freethinker* and attenders at N.S.S. lectures who have asked Mr. G. H. Taylor to expound more fully the Neo-Materialism which he advocates will be interested to know that in the current issue of *Plain View* Mr. Taylor has a twenty-page article on the subject, too long and technical for the general type of exposition usual in these columns.

An interesting experiment in connection with the public demonstration regularly held after N.S.S. conferences is being made this year at the suggestion of Manchester

Branch. Weather permitting, it will take place in the open air on the Deansgate Blitzed Site where branch meetings are held all the year round, but the speakers will represent the Society as a whole and will include the biggest "draws" from Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park.

N.S.S. members going to the Conference from London on Saturday, June 5, are advised of the following times of trains:—

Leaving London (Euston)	Arriving Manchester (London Road)
11.45 a.m.	3.30 p.m.
2.45 p.m.	6.46 p.m.
6.05 p.m.	9.35 p.m.

The third class fare is 53s. 8d. return. The Secretary will reserve seats (1s. extra) for members travelling by the 11.45 if they will inform him at least a week in advance.

Northern Notes

By C. McCALL

A FEW weeks ago I held in my hands a book which revolutionised the world. It was Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Not just one of the multitudinous reprints such as I have on my own shelves, but a genuine first edition in its original green cloth binding of 1859, looking almost as good as new, reasonably priced at £35. Much as I would have liked to own it, my pocket forbade. A few days later I saw evidence of the revolution it had caused. Writing in the *Manchester Evening News* (April 12, 1954), the Dean of Manchester attributed Christian antagonism to the book to "the wrong views of the inspiration of the Bible which were held a century ago." "The ideas of creation and of evolution do not contradict one another," stated the Dean. I returned to the bookshop and again caressed the green-backed book.

* * *

Coming away from the last football match of the season, I was confronted—like many thousand others—with the warning "Prepare to meet thy God!" Not surprisingly, the awful words were treated with derision. The valiant banner-bearer had chosen the wrong psychological moment: our team had won, you see! Had it lost, the situation would have been different. Quite a number of supporters might well have contemplated such a meeting through the medium of *hara-kiri* without recalling the snag that—as Hamlet rued—the Almighty had fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. As it was, they were merely amused. But who can expect such a banner-bearer to know much about psychology? He reminded me of his spiritual ancestor, St. Simeon Stylites, and I was moved to turn up Gibbon's delightful account of that absurd Saint and his "celestial life."

* * *

Christian speakers were busy in Manchester during Holy Week, holding meetings to explain the significance of the Crucifixion. They received gratuitous assistance from the B.B.C. That pious institution kindly vouchsafed "Suggestions for thought and prayer on each day in Holy Week" in the mornings and meditations on the Seven Words from the Cross in the evenings. The latter series culminated on the Saturday and the *Radio Times* contained a touching little design showing a bleeding heart ringed by thorns. It was rather reminiscent of the "Sacred Heart" emblem which, with the influx of Irish Catholics, is becoming increasingly conspicuous in the North of England.

A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 143)

1946. C. A. Watts (b. 1858) dies. The World Union of Freethinkers meets in London. W. Griffiths becomes N.S.S. treasurer. The Executive have been able to arrange 280 meetings in the year. The Bradford conference shows some dissatisfaction with N.S.S. leadership and an interim conference is held in London: F. J. Corina is expelled for an attempted secession of the Bradford Branch.

1947. A Birmingham conference is organised by a London committee of the World Union of Freethinkers. Avro Manhattan's *Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century* appears. At Bradford Corina starts, and edits, *Freethought News*, anti-N.S.S., and the Bradford dispute is taken to court as two rival groups claim to be the official branch.

1948. The court decides against the Corina group, who are then refused N.S.S. membership; and Corina founds the Freethought Society at Bradford, containing N.S.S. personnel; 212 lectures are sponsored by the Executive of the N.S.S. in the year. J. E. McGee's *History of the British Secular Movement* is published in America.

1949. Chapman Cohen resigns the N.S.S. presidency after 34 years: as an octogenarian he is no longer able to be as active as he would wish. R. H. Rosetti is nominated as president, but opposition reduces this to acting president. Still trying to recover pre-war standards, the E.C. sponsor 224 lectures in the year. F. A. Ridley's *Evolution of the Papacy* is published.

1950. With voice and pen secularists are exposing the dangers of a Catholic grip on political and T.U. machinery. Cutner writes his *Sabbath Day* and the present writer *Can Materialism Explain Mind?*

1951. The N.S.S. supports the Marriage Law Reform Society to rectify an anomaly in the Marriage Act: they expose the Pope's "mother or child" edict. The N.S.S. Executive has sponsored 243 meetings in the year and begins Conway Hall meetings addressed by a panel of speakers. There are now branches in Nigeria and in Fyzabad (W. Indies), but generally the membership has declined to its lowest point, this being reflected in the smallest conference since the society was founded. Chapman Cohen finally relinquishes the editorship of *The Freethinker*, which, with the Pioneer Press (G. W. Foote and Co.) is being taken over by the Secular Society Ltd.: as the paper is losing £40 weekly a fund has begun. The new editor is F. A. Ridley. Following the deaths of John Seibert (Secretary) and R. H. Rosetti (President), F. A. Ridley becomes acting President of the N.S.S. and P. V. Morris its General Secretary. W. O'Neill joins the N.S.S. London speakers.

1952. After intermittent appearances *Freethought News* is suspended. Glasgow Secular Society rejoins the N.S.S., in which unity again prevails, and conference duly confirms the election of Ridley as President. The N.S.S. Practical Objects are revised and a Handbook issued; freethought advertising signs are now displayed from the office.

1953. T. F. Palmer (b. 1871) dies. In succession to F. C. C. Watts, Hector Hawton becomes editor of the *Literary Guide*. Approximately 3½ million copies of the Thinkers' Library have now been sold. A bill to remove Sunday restrictions is defeated. The N.S.S. reaffirms its adherence to republicanism and exposes the superstitious Coronation ceremonies. Wreaths are laid on the Bradlaugh monument at Northampton during a gathering of secularists and rationalists. There has been a 50 per cent. rise in

N.S.S. membership in two years. Continuous five-hour Sunday meetings are being held at the Marble Arch by a succession of N.S.S. speakers, the experiment proving a success.

(To be concluded)

HEREDITY

By A. YATES

MR. C. G. L. DU CANN'S article, "Defence of Heredity" (*The Freethinker*, April 2), is evidently written for the purpose of exalting the "class" to which he conceives himself to belong.

He tells us that a moment's clear thinking shows "that it is more important for a man, woman or child to have good ancestry than anything else—except lots of money."

No one will deny that to inherit good health is of the first importance in life. But Mr. Du Cann's views of heredity extend beyond that. *Mens sana in corpore sano* may be possessed by any base proletarian who cannot trace his ancestry further back than his grandfather. By "good ancestry" he means the being descended from titled, wealthy or otherwise socially distinguished persons. "Pride of birth," he says, "is frowned on only by fools," and those institutions founded on the hereditary principle should be maintained.

In support of his assertion he says: "Ask any breeder of cats, dogs, pigeons or race-horses if ancestry is not everything . . . there is no scientific authority for supposing that human heredity does not proceed on the same Mendelian lines."

Now, a moment's clearer thinking, and a little more knowledge of the subject would have shown Mr. Du Cann the absurdity of his argument. If human beings were bred like prize cats, dogs and race-horses there would be some ground for his contention that ancestral ability is inherited. But the history of "noble families" does not support any such claim. In capacity, mental and bodily, is proportionately, as rife amongst them, as amongst the "common herd." The hereditary principle does not operate in accordance with Mr. Du Cann's aristocratical predilections. To talk of pure undefiled ancestry is nonsense. Each of us is a descendant of countless millions whose individual characteristics, good and bad, may at any time be transmitted by heredity. This accounts for the difference in mentality and physique in members of the same family, and also for the fact that the children of gifted parents are often dullards, while the parents of distinguished children are ordinary folk. How often has the scion of a noble family had reason to curse the hereditary principle for some congenital taint derived from profligate ancestry?

Mr. Du Cann's blunder is the assuming that social position is a guarantee of ability, and he cites what he calls "the lasting quality" in such families as the Spanish Alvas, the English Churchills, Cecils, Asquiths, etc. He is oblivious of the fact that most of them owe their position, not to their personal qualifications, but to the privileges of rank and family influence which have afforded them opportunities denied to abler men of inferior social status.

What of the great masters in literature, art, music and other fields of human achievement, most of whom had no ancestry to boast of, but whose productions make contemptible (by comparison) "the ability and lasting quality" of the persons he names?

For Mr. Du Cann's behoof I quote Pope's biting couplet. The poet had an extensive acquaintance among the "Quality" of his day.

"What can enoble knaves or fools or cowards?
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

Spiritualist Folly and Fraud

By C. McCALL

ON January 9 two years ago, the Sunday newspaper *Reynolds News* combined with *Psychic News* in organising what was called an "Investigation into Spiritualism" in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. The hall was packed with 2,000 people, whilst on the platform were several dozen more, some of them dignitaries of the City of Manchester, others dignitaries of the spiritualist movement. The Chairman was local M.P. Mr. Will Griffiths and the mediums were Mrs. Ena Twigg and Mr. Gordon Higginson. From what I recollect of the occasion, nothing very remarkable occurred, although it was hailed as a "triumph" by *Psychic News*, 75 per cent. of the voting audience declaring they were "satisfied that the Dead can return." Similar meetings were held in other towns in Britain.

Actually, the whole "Investigation" was quite worthless. At one point when a Higginson "message" held no significance for the parent of a departed spirit, an unknown woman on the platform obligingly confirmed its truth and announced that she had been the deceased's school-teacher. This woman turned out to be a Mrs. Edith Guy, described by *Psychic News* as a well-known spiritualist. However, the so-called "Testing Committee" found no evidence of collusion between the mediums and those who accepted the messages (Mrs. Guy was never "tested" anyway!) and it was a great day for spiritualism. At the time, I wrote to *Reynolds News* and objected to the title "Investigation into Spiritualism," stating that there was no opportunity for any kind of investigation and asking why no member of the N.S.S., R.P.A. or Manchester Humanist Fellowship and no magician was on the Committee. Not surprisingly, my letter was never published, nor did I receive a reply.

This experience, and some acquaintance with the widespread appeal of the occult among educated people, leads me to welcome a recently published book by the American, Joseph F. Rinn, entitled *Searchlight on Psychical Research* (Rider, 25s.). Here is a man who knows virtually all there is to know about the ruses of mediums, and he has conveyed a great deal of his knowledge to the reader. The book represents sixty years of real investigation into spiritualism and is the most complete exposure that I have ever read.

A close friend of the great Harry Houdini, Mr. Rinn was an expert conjuror and magician himself, and had no difficulty in beating the mediums at their own game. He was brought up a Roman Catholic and hoped to substantiate his faith by the scientific proof of spiritual phenomena. He concludes his book with the sentence: "During my investigations I never found anything but fraud and never met even one person with supernormal or supernatural power."

That, however is the conclusion. It is preceded by nearly four hundred pages of argument, explanation and demonstration that are devastating to the spiritualist case. No reputations are respected that do not deserve respect: Mr. Rinn is completely ruthless, as the genuine investigator in psychical research must be. I recommend his book to that large body of people who approach spiritualism thinking that "there must be something in it"; who ask "How do you account for this?" and insist that "it can't possibly be coincidence or fraud."

Not that I think it will convince many of them. Nothing is likely to do that, as Mr. Rinn's story shows. For the fact that emerges most forcibly from his pages—after the dishonesty of the mediums—is the appalling credulity of psychical researchers. "It is remarkable," writes Mr.

Rinn, "how men of intelligence accept a supernormal or supernatural explanation for a feat which they see performed and which they cannot explain." Professor James H. Hyslop, Secretary of the American Society for Psychical Research, is a case in point. Although one-time Professor of Logic at Columbia University, his logic did not prevent him from believing in psychic eyes and psychic breezes—the latter emanating from a scar on the forehead of the notorious Eusapia Palladino.

Even more astounding is the capacity for accepting what are sometimes termed paranormal phenomena at second-hand, and the current popular favourite in this field is E.S.P., by Dr. J. B. Rhine, out of Duke University, North Carolina, U.S.A. Mr. Rinn's final chapter deals with these alleged scientific proofs of telepathy and clairvoyance and quotes a number of criticisms of them. Letters that passed between Dr. Rhine and Mr. Rinn are also printed, together with several from the late Harry Price. One of Mr. Price's letters reports his attempts to duplicate results obtained by the Parapsychologist of Duke University and failure to find a "vestige of E.S.P." "What is there in the air on your side of the Atlantic that produces such brilliant 'telepathists'?" asks Mr. Price. The question was apposite, for the medium Mrs. Eileen Garrett had achieved extraordinary success in telepathy and clairvoyance in Dr. Rhine's Laboratory of Parapsychology but failed to repeat her performances in the Psychological Laboratory of University College, London.

It is encouraging to know that the overwhelming majority of American psychologists did not accept either Dr. Rhine's methods or his claims. One, Dr. Henry C. Link, described them as the "perfect example of modern emotionalism disguised by a scientific vocabulary and machinery," while of 360 replies to a questionnaire sent to members of the American Psychological Association, there were only five favourable replies on the question of extra-sensory perception. The Society of American Magicians also examined reports of the experiments and Ted Annemann, editor of *Jinx Magazine*, guaranteed to duplicate them. "While Dr. Rhine may be honest," said Mr. Annemann, "I'll bet he's an easy mark to deceive by trickery," and he noted that two of the Doctor's most successful subjects were sufficiently close to marry later. Could it be that the students "put one over" on their mentor? That, you may say, is speculation; but it is fertile speculation. Still, if it is facts that you insist upon, here are a few given by Mr. Rinn:—

1. Dr. Rhine's patented E.S.P. cards can be read from the back when light is reflected from the back of the cards at a certain angle.

2. Dr. Rhine refused an invitation to take his successful students to Johns Hopkins University for experiments under independent observation.

3. He refused, likewise, to accept certain amendments suggested by Mr. Rinn which would reduce the chances of fraud, on the grounds that the latter was not a qualified person to advise.

When Dr. Rhine further alleges that will-power can successfully influence the throw of a dice one cannot avoid agreeing with Mr. Rinn that "his claims have become so preposterous as to be unworthy of any level-headed person's serious consideration."

Searchlight on Psychical Research is a record of human trickery exploiting human gullibility, as all true histories of spiritualism must be. But it is also a record of an unceasing determination to expose ostensibly psychic phenomena as fraud and of the remarkable success achieved. Mr.

Rinn was more than equal to everything the spiritualists devised. He not only exposed, he demonstrated. His baffling performances led some believers to credit him with mediumistic powers—as they did Houdini. I cannot think that the book will be welcomed by spiritualists, as the publishers contend on the jacket, but by Freethinkers it will. Discursive it may be, in parts; a little immodest in others, but these minor defects are readily overlooked. For—Dr. Rhine notwithstanding—Mr. Rinn was fully qualified for the task he undertook.

Catholic Book Censorship

Books which Catholics Must Not Read

"ALL men are forbidden to read books that are contrary to faith in God, good moral conduct and Christian virtue," a rule so sweeping that it can be interpreted as banning a large proportion of all modern works on science, medicine and morals. In practice this rule means that no Catholic is allowed to read, knowingly and without special permission, any book attacking any fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church. "The Church is not afraid of truth," says Father John C. Heenan in his "Priest and Penitent" (p. 94), "but She is very much afraid that a clever presentation of falsehood will deceive even the elect."

The general subject of book censorship is included in Canons 1384-1405 of the Codex, but for brevity's sake I shall quote here, as above, from the most authoritative Catholic work on doctrine—Father Henry Davis's four-volume "Moral and Pastoral Theology" (Vol. II, p. 418, imprimatur Archbishop of Birmingham).

Catholic bishops must enforce a boycott against all books defined by Father Davis as follows: (1) books by any writers which defend heresy or schism or attempt in any way to undermine the very foundations of religion; (2) all books . . . which affect to prove that true divorce is permissible in the case of adultery; (3) books which attack or hold up to ridicule any Catholic dogma, such as the creation of man, original sin, the infallibility of the Pope; (4) books which professedly treat of, narrate, or teach matters that are lewd or obscene, such as the defence of methods of birth control. Catholics are directed to be on the watch for such books and to denounce them. As Father Davis puts it: "All the faithful and those especially who are clerics or who hold high positions, or who are learned, should denounce any book which they consider dangerous."

When a book has been denounced officially, it is a grave sin for a Catholic knowingly to buy, sell, borrow, own, read, or lend it to anybody. The penalties apply to the booksellers, publishers, readers and reviewers unless they get special permission to handle contraband goods. As Father Davis says:

"Excommunication, specially reserved to the Holy See, is incurred, ipso facto, by the publisher of any book written by apostate, heretic, or schismatic in defence of apostasy, heresy or schism; it is incurred by those who defend the said books prohibited by express mention and by name by Letters Apostolic. Furthermore, the same excommunication is incurred by those who knowingly read or keep such books without due permission."

It is quite easy for Catholic scholars and writers to get special permission to read forbidden books, but that permission is instantly withdrawn if it appears that the victim is drifting from the faith. The hierarchy will not even permit its people to read the Protestant and Jewish "good-

will books" included in a joint inter-faith bibliography. The most authoritative American journal for priests, the "American Ecclesiastical Review," published the following question and answer on this point in its issue of September, 1945:

This complete absence of cultural reciprocity might not be considered serious if the boycotted books were merely partisan denominational tracts. Actually the Catholic boycott includes all books which specifically attack the major social policies of the church even when those policies have no direct bearing on worship or theology. No book favouring sterilisation of the feeble-minded, birth control, euthanasia, artificial insemination, therapeutic abortion, cremation, communism, humanism, materialism, state operation of all colleges, nudism, or divorce can be deliberately and knowingly read by a good Catholic. Incidentally, the boycott extends to all non-Catholic religious services and all joint discussions of doctrine with non-Catholics. "It is wrong," says Father Davis (Vol. I, p. 286), "to play the organ in a non-Catholic church as a help to the religious service or to be a member of the choir during services. . . ." These rules of no reciprocity were enforced by Catholic chaplains during the war.

—From *John A. Lee's Fortnightly*. (Abridged.)

An Area of Peace

"Ex Oriente Lux": that Latin cry
Brought hope to Western Man, as Eastern light
Came with the rising sun, that doth defy
The cold and darkness of the Western night.

Now from the warmth and light of Hindustan
The cry goes up, "Ex Oriente Pax";
"An Area of Peace," proclaims her greatest man,
And offers that which mankind now most lacks.

Nehru, we tend our heartfelt gratitude
For your wise words on armament and war;
We long to see your area an amplitude
Where peace shall dwell, and grow, while spreading far.

What Asia starts, next Europe will befriend,
Till peace upon America descend.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

—From *The Indian Rationalist*, Madras.

Hell Still There

When they who have led lives of pleasure, of covetousness, of self-willed sin—when such come to lie upon their death-beds, they may perhaps feel that awful, impossible wish that they could pass into nothing; for to be nothing were better than to be in the strong grip of Satan, amid the intolerable heats of hell. Dying sinners may feel that their immortality is to be an unendingness of pain, of remorse, of despair; and the deadness and the dumbness of passing into nothing, though it surely would make even a dying sinner shudder, would be more bearable to think of than the life in hell—the living in fire, the feeding on fire, the breathing fire, the being clothed in fire, the thirsting for cool water where all, all is fire—above, beneath, on this side, on that side, a far-stretching country of burning fire. Fearful is the thought! fearful enough to quench lust, to cool anger, to make us out of love with money, to spoil our appetites for worldly pleasures!—*The Blessed Sacrament*, by a Parish Priest.

NEXT WEEK

Interviews with N.S.S. Speakers—2. J. W. BARKER.

By G. H. TAYLOR.