

The Freethinker

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IT is a simple truism amongst critical thinkers that the emancipation of the human intellect began with the ancient Greeks, or Hellenes, as they actually described themselves. What has been aptly termed "the Greek miracle," "the glory that was Greece," in the famous line of Edgar Allen Poe, transpired between the sixth century B.C., which H. G. Wells once described as the most astonishing century in human annals, and about the third century B.C., when the last creative systems of secular philosophy to be evolved in the ancient world, made their appearance during this self-same era, during a period, that is to say, of about four centuries. The Greeks or, to be more exact, a small minority of them, began to pierce the veil of primitive myths and of imaginative guesswork with which the early priestly cultures had surrounded the enigmatic figure of reality.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Christian Censorship

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

Christian Censorship

The study of classical literature, in particular of the philosophical evolution of the ancient Greeks and of their later Latin imitators, suffers, however, from one serious initial disadvantage which modern classical scholarship linked so closely in our ancient universities with the age-old cultural monopoly of the Christian churches, has entirely, it would appear, failed even to perceive, let alone to analyse. That initial difficulty may be summarised in these terms.

Just as, say, an astronomer cannot observe the celestial bodies through glasses that are inherently defective, so the modern critical scholar who surveys the classical literature of antiquity, is, if we may put it that way, only able to see what the Christian Church has allowed him (or her) to see. For the classical literature, and, in particular, that which deals with what we may term, the more controversial subjects such as philosophy, science, history, or politics, has been subjected to a rigorous censorship which has extended over many centuries; a censorship, further, which was all-powerful in its contemporary society, and absolutely unscrupulous in its methods. For the entire "Age of Faith" which separates the essentially secular civilisations of classical and modern times (C.A.D. 400—1400) the Church exercised a complete monopoly of, and censorship over, its contemporary culture. Only that which was not obnoxious to the all-powerful Church and to its intolerant priesthood could hope to survive at all. The "classical literature" which has come down to us is actually a "bowdlerised" literature which has proved agreeable to, or, in rare cases, has survived by accident, the millennial surveillance of this age-old censorship.

A Modern Parallel

Recent examples of social reaction enable us to present this problem of classical scholarship in appropriate modern terms of reference. Let us suppose that the Hitler dictatorship and its contemporary Fascist satellites had won the last war, and had succeeded in imposing the Nazi "Third

Reich" upon mankind for an era equivalent to that during which the Christian Church exercised an absolute domination over the western world of "The Age of Faith." What, one can relevantly ask, would have been left of the majestic evolution of modern thought from Spinoza to Einstein? One can assume very little. In "Kultur" dominated by the "Aryan" tribal mysticism of the Nazi regime, which held that all human history was dominated by the mystical attributes of "race," and by the qualities inherent in the bloodstream of the Teutonic "chosen race," how much could have survived of modern science, and of modern scientific thinking? From Voltaire to Chapman Cohen, the

masters of modern critical thinking would have been indiscriminately condemned in obedience to a tribal mysticism akin to that of the ancient Jews and even narrower in its social incidence than Christianity, which was, at least, a cosmopolitan creed freed from the primitive superstition of the inherent sanctity of the bloodstream, the central and pivotal dogma of both the ancient Judaism of Ezra and of the modern Nazism of Hitler. Presumably, or so we may hope, mankind would have eventually again freed itself from the clutches of the Nazi regime. The "classical," that is, our "modern" literature which would have then have survived the Nazi censorship over a thousand years, would be similar to what survives to-day of ancient classical literature. Only the "Higher Criticism" evolved by the new secular culture would have to begin by sharpening its wits on *Mein Kampf* instead of on the Christian gospels.

What has Survived?

The classical Greek and Latin literature which has actually survived the long era of Christian censorship bears every trace of the highly selective process to which it has been subjected; the ancient materialists, the Ionian (Asiatic Greek) "Atomists," the school of the great Democritus, who represent both the highest scientific level of Greek scientific thinking, and, also, by that very fact, the school of thought most inimical to Christianity, have disappeared almost completely, is like an unsubstantial pageant faded. Whereas the voluminous literary output of the arch-mystic, and arch-reactionary, Plato, that "Christian before Christ," as Nietzsche so aptly styled him, have come down in bulk, several times the size of our Bible, a mass of eloquent mysticism and artful reaction. Meanwhile, Epicurus, the Deistic Rationalist, who appears to have disposed of Plato quite effectively in writings of an equally voluminous bulk, has only survived in a few fragments, presumably preserved by accident. In the work of another voluminous writer, Aristotle, who occupied a philosophically centrist position between Plato and his materialist critics, we note a careful process of selection at work. The Church preserved, what one could term, the dry bones of the Aristotelean philosophy, whilst seeking to remove, and to control, its scientific spirit. The result

seems to have been a careful "editing" of his work, which was preserved and made use of by the Church in its "bowdlerised" Christian versions. We know, for example, that the Church doctors—one can, hardly, perhaps, call them philosophers—saluted Aristotle, that is, of course, the "edited" Aristotle, as the greatest of non-Christian thinkers, as "the master of those who know" as Dante termed him. Actually, Aristotle does not seem to have been taken very seriously by the ancient world; what have survived are chiefly his notes rather than his finished works. It seems to have been the Christian (and Mohammedan) theologians who promoted Aristotle to the top-rank in the philosophic hierarchy. Whilst Plato has always been the favourite master of every shade of mystical and authoritarian opinion, "the First Fascist," as he has been not inappropriately described.

Scepticism on the Index

Naturally, the Christian censorship did not tolerate scepticism and, if any sceptical books have survived, this can only be ascribed to a rare and fortunate scepticism. There can be little doubt that Democritus and Epicurus were far deeper scientific thinkers than Plato or, probably, Aristotle. But all of Democritus, and nearly all of Epicurus has perished. The Epicurean school of philosophy lasted for, approximately, six centuries—(c. 300 B.C.-A.D.300) Its adherents, as we know from such writers as Cicero and

Diogenes Laertius (the author of the popular history of philosophy which has survived, presumably by accident), were numerous, influential, and active. But, with one notable exception, the great poem of Lucretius on *The Nature of Existence*, nothing of their, no doubt, voluminous literature has survived. Lucretius himself only survived by an accident, since all extant copies of his great philosophic poem descend from a single copy. Such, also, we understand, is the case with the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, also a Rationalist classic, though less aggressively anti-religious than was the Epicurean Lucretius. Even the Epicureans were deists of a sort, since their gods did nothing—model gods? But there were, apparently, even more advanced atheistic thinkers, the works of whom have, naturally, vanished without leaving a trace.

"Eternal Vigilance"

The ancient Greeks opened the road to human reason; the Christian Church closed the entrance and erected the sign "*Verboten!*"; *It is forbidden to pass this way.* The first tentative autonomous movements of the human critical reason, were submerged by the flood of Oriental superstition that flooded in on the declining servile culture of antiquity. It constitutes an example and, as the Nazi regime indicated, also a warning—"The price of liberty is still eternal vigilance."

Royal Patronage for Romanism

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

DONATIONS that the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen-Mother have recently sent to the rebuilding fund of St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Southwark, which was *blitzed* during the late war, have been described by Canon Bernard Bogan, the Cathedral administrator, as "believed to be the first royal gifts to a Roman Catholic cause since the Reformation." He was clearly wrong in suggesting this, and he ought to know better; for the Reformation took place in the reign of Henry VIII, and later R.C. monarchs of this country, "Bloody" Mary and James II, certainly supported their faith financially.

It was not until the Act of Settlement was passed in 1701 towards the end of the reign of William III that it was laid down that the English sovereign *must* belong to the Church of England. Under the Act of Union, 1707, during Queen Anne's reign, succession to the British crown was vested in Princess Sophia, Electress of Hanover and her heirs, *they being Protestants*. Prior to 1701, therefore, English royal personages with Roman Catholic leanings presumably exercised their generosity as they pleased; while, after 1707, any patronage of Roman Catholicism by British Royalty could, in view of the widespread anti-R.C. feelings in the country, only be indulged in surreptitiously.

The notable characteristic of recent gifts of the Queen, her husband and her mother to an R.C. cause, then, is not their uniqueness so much as the publicity that has attended them. They are reported to have been "most generous" and accompanied by "messages of noble encouragement." In rabid Protestant circles there is bound to be dismay and indignation over this royal gesture of sympathy with a papistical enterprise. The Freethought movement can scarcely join with them in their protests, since all that they are concerned about is that favours unequivocally preserved for Protestant Christianity are now being extended unequivocally to the Roman Catholic Church. Secularism sides with neither party, its principle being that privileges extended to any religious organisation are wrong.

However, we *are* interested in what lies behind this

public gesture of the Royal Family towards a religion that not so long ago was officially boycotted. Not being in the confidence of the three people chiefly concerned, we can only conjecture on the matter. Why have they now chosen to depart from the policy adopted by the late King of sainted memory and his equally extolled royal predecessors? We have not heard of any comparable gifts from the heads of R.C. states to Protestant causes. Or is it suggested that the Pope, General Franco and President Salazar are likely to reciprocate British Royal appeasement to Roman Catholicism by favours to Protestantism in Rome, Madrid and Lisbon when they hear about the former?

We must not overlook the fact that the gifts from our Royal Family may indicate leanings in that quarter towards Romanism, which claims many conversions from Anglicanism of recent years. With the undoubted weakening and shilly-shallying of the Established Church under the pressure of the claims of modern society, large numbers of its members have ceased to take any interest in organised religion, but a small section has sought safety in what must appear to it to be the welcoming shelter of R.C. dogmatism. Why should the two Queens, screened as they have always been from the influence of outspoken scepticism, not fall into this category? As for the Duke of Edinburgh, it is only a few years since he transferred his allegiance from the Greek Orthodox to the Anglican brand of Christianity, so his ties to the latter can hardly be as strong as those of his wife and mother-in-law. Let me repeat that we can only conjecture on possible explanations.

Perhaps a better one is that the "most generous" gifts and the "messages of noble encouragement" are try-outs inspired by official advice. If so, the powers that be should think again. No policy of appeasement will make the R.C. Church drop its ambition of world dictatorship. It will still deny freedom to all other churches and independent secular organisations in countries where it holds sway. It will seek to keep a strangle-hold on the education of as many

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The Painted Resurrection

By JOSHUA C. GREGORY

ON the last day, Mohammed preached, the dead will flock out of their graves. As is clear in the *Koran*, many scoffed at dead men raised to life from dust and bones. Sceptics had asked St. Paul how the dead could be raised, and what sort of bodies they would have. St. Paul called the doubters foolish; Mohammed was sterner with his disbelievers. A just epitome of his stern answer, gathered from the highly repetitive *Koran*, runs: "God can do it, and if you believe not, you go to Hell."

Since the sceptics, apparently, were many and persistent, Mohammed gave some helps to understanding. God brings winds, these bring clouds, and these pour rain upon the earth, barren through drought, to make it bear rich fruits. As God thus gives life to the dead earth, so he will restore the mouldered body. Mohammed intended an analogical argument, not a merely metaphorical expression; if God can revivify the soil, he can restore the bodies of the dead.

St. Paul presented his familiar analogical argument; as the seed dies in the ground and grows into wheat, so the dead corpse in the grave becomes the resurrected body. The argument is clearly fallacious, for the body is not the analogue of the seed, and dead seeds do not grow. Both he and Mohammed, however, try to ease any incredulity about the resurrection.

The Christian writer, in the familiar and eloquent passage, tries to bestow complete insight and faith. The glory of the celestial is one, the glory of the terrestrial is another, and as God gives to each seed its own body, so he raises the natural body, sown in the grave, as a spiritual body at the resurrection.

The *Koran* is more naive and earthly. In various places God is said to create man of dust, of moist germs, of clots of blood, and of flesh in shaped or unshaped pieces. What God once created he can create again; thus the resurrection is a second creation or birth. Those who do not believe this revelation will help to fill Hell.

According to a passage in the *Koran* God takes the soul of the sleeper, and sends it back to him when he wakes. When a man dies, God takes his soul and keeps it, though this detained soul, as another passage implies, will be paired with his body at the resurrection. The sleeper's body can receive its soul again; the dead man's decayed body must be resurrectively created to receive its soul once more.

According to some apocalypses during the last century before Christ, the righteous dead sleep in Paradise to await resurrection. In 1701 Thomas Parkhurst published "A Discourse of Angels" with a preface by George Hamond. The souls of the dead, the author thinks, are "not fully compleat" without their bodies. These souls, however, exist separately until they join their bodies again at the resurrection. In "their separate state they differ little from Angels," though, he qualifies, since a soul is only a person when it informs a body, it is not then a full person, as an Angel is. Our "Natural Bodies," however, the author urges, following the Christian tradition begun by St. Paul, and continued by St. Augustine, "shall be raised Spiritual Bodies." These will be "true Bodies," though they will need neither food nor drink nor sleep.

He who paints the resurrection presents the natural bodies presumed by the *Koran* more easily than the somewhat enigmatical spiritual bodies of the Christian tradition. It will seem to those who rise, the *Koran*, in effect, also says, as though they had slept overnight. The resurrection picture has all the solemn prestige of a long sacred tradition. That prestige tends to dissolve in the comic sight of bodies

rising from their graves to meet and greet as if just roused from a night's sleep, though their souls have returned from some empyrean, and their bodies have been promptly reconstructed to receive them. The strange return of the souls from storage may be concealed in the comic spectacle of normal life suddenly resumed under graveyard conditions. The painter can, perhaps, emphasise the more solemn aspects of rising unto judgment, but the summons spectacularly involves scrambles out of tombs, gaping coffins, bewildered meetings, questioning groups, and, perhaps, troubled saints or sinners if the resurrection process has forgotten their clothes.

Little children, rising from their graves, hearing the trumpets, and wondering at the fuss, mingle, as little children do, the sympathetic with the ludicrous. The painter can take a bit of theology from St. Augustine. According to this, infants will not rise with their little bodies, but with what would have been their full stature. Though this may save the painter from one comic trespass on solemnity, St. Augustine's comment helps to expose the inherent absurdities of the bodily resurrection.

Spectacle can be a subtle solvent of poetry, as, according to one critic, the cinema, intent on the spectacular, drowns the poetry of *Romeo and Juliet*. The painter, if he keeps close to the actual, touches too much comicality into the spectacle to preserve solemnity. The fat man, puffing out of the tomb, or the lean man, squirming like a worm under a coffin lid, dissolves solemnity into the comic. St. Augustine gives the painter one exegetical relief; since resurrection cures all deformities, the fat will not be too stout, or the lean too lanky. As St. Augustine removes one possible comicality, he supplies another. The colour of the just, he thinks, will be glorious, and they will shine as the sun. If the painter conforms to this doctrine, he may combine a painted splendour with the invading ludicrous.

The mingling of the trumpet summons to high issues with the trivialities of life is, no doubt, a paradigm of human existence. The uplift of the Messiah mingles into the rush for the bus, the bestowal of coats in the concert hall, and, it may be, the shiverings under draughts in the chamber. The comic, doubtless, is logically neutral, for a thing may be funny because it is true or because it is false. Since it also flourishes on degraded dignity, the comic element in the painted spectacle of the resurrection may expose the somewhat ludicrous survival of a now discredited belief.

In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton surveys many rise superstitions, and applies to them a cascade of adjectives: mad, absurd, ridiculous, impossible, incredible. The "resurrection of the body at the last day," he realises, would be one of these incredible superstitions if it were not one of the "many mysteries . . . apprehended alone by faith." The painted resurrection, by putting the mystery into spectacle, may intimate that faith is no longer called upon to apprehend it. The return of the stored souls, however stored, to slip back into their specially resurrected bodies, however spiritualised, is a quaint survival of a once deeply indurated belief. Dr. Joseph Priestley called himself "an organised system of matter." His notion of rearranged matter disarranged by death seems to magnify the incredibility of the resurrection, which the painted spectacle magnifies again, though Priestley does plead the Divine Power. St. Augustine adds to the incredibility when, as he says, the stature of the resurrected man is that either of his maturity or what it would have been at his maturity if he had not died before mature age. The desperate attempt to

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This Believing World

It is painful to see the "business" men, the "executives" and "doctors" and "lawyers" brought before the microphone or T.V. to testify to their fervent faith in Christianity—not, let it be noted, in "modernism," but almost always in the infantile Fundamentalist beliefs. The latest exponent on T.V. was Mr. George Cansdale whose talks on animal life have always proved most interesting and instructive; yet he was asked in an "epilogue" to tell us why he believed in Christianity. What he gave us was the "design" argument at its crudest.

He picked for his examples upon the way bats manage to fly in the dark without hitting anything, and the way "archer" fish manage to bring down insects by squirting water on them, as evidence for the existence of God Almighty—only God could have "designed" such marvels. Naturally he did not tell us of the way in which the tape worm's head is provided with hooks so as to make it difficult to dislodge once it is in our intestines; or the way cancer branches out so as eventually to prove fatal in spite of the most drastic operations; or explain the huge growth of the armies of rats, and lice, and typhoid, germs, the enemies of mankind which all must have been designed by our merciful Lord.

Believers in the Design Argument—and they comprise very nearly all who believe in God whatever their religion is—inevitably shirk explaining the "marvels" of astronomy. Of what use are the billions of stars, asteroids, suns, galaxies, meteors, comets, nebulae, and so on, with which "space" is filled? The distances between one galaxy and another are so huge that it is quite impossible to form in one's mind what they really mean, and no Theist has been able to explain where God comes in—if he does. Our bishops find it much easier to concentrate on Jesus Christ as a sort of "Saviour" than explain the "wonders in the sky."

In his book, "The End of the World," Mr. Kenneth Heuer gives a detailed exposition of what astronomers and physicists think must inevitably happen to our solar system and very depressing it is. The sun, which is the source of all our life and energy, will gradually get hotter and hotter and burn up everything on earth, and then gradually lose its heat; and our world will become a desert of ice—perhaps like Jupiter. Nowhere does Mr. Heuer bring in God or what God thinks and does. One thing is absolutely certain. Man, as we know him, must in the ultimate be blotted out.

If we manage to escape total annihilation through atom bombs, and then it will be our own fault, we shall have to face the dangers that all planets and stars must eventually face in "space." Sooner or later, we shall have "the end of the world"—whether by "the explosion of the sun or by the collision of the earth with the moon or the sun with a star," as Mr. Heuer points out. Is all this designed by God just as he designed the bat and the "archer" fish? The Design Argument always was a silly one. It has now been annihilated by science.

Every now and then our newspapers thrill their readers with an item of news, not so much as to what is happening between countries and races, as by telling us what some eminent film "star"—very often in real life both blonde and dumb—has just done. We were thrilled for example, when Miss June Haver told us that she was entering a convent, and even more thrilled when, after tasting the joys of being a Bride of Christ for some months, she decided it was better to be the bride of a less exalted male—outside. And we were thrilled when one of the famous Dionne

sisters felt that her "vocation" was with Christ Jesus, and both thrilled and surprised to learn that either this God or the convent let her down, and once more she preferred the humdrum secular world to that over which Jesus and his mother preside.

Let us face the fact that there are people who find, like Jesus, that celibacy suits them best, and allow our priests and nuns the right to do what they prefer. But there is no need to say that what they do is something far and away above the secular working life of the great majority of people. On the contrary indeed. By and large, priests and nuns are parasites, doing no productive work and living on the labour of other people. And the pretty stories of Miss Haver and Miss Dionne prove that to the hilt.

Correspondence

BRAIN AND MIND

SIR,—May I, as a confirmed Materialist, be permitted to give my reason for refuting the concept of Immortality.

It is undeniable that the workings of the brain, both consciously and unconsciously, depend entirely upon the passing of blood through it in the correct quantity by the action of the heart. Should this flow be cut off, the brain ceases to work, and therefore the animal concerned ceases to exist. To me this is obvious and elementary, and all evidence confirms it, much though we might like to feel that our own personalities are indestructible.

With best wishes for the continued success of *The Freethinker*, which I have now been reading with pleasure and enlightenment for the past fifteen years, and to which I owe my emancipation from a thorough Christian "education."—Yours, etc.,

S. Africa.

S. J. BARKER.

TEACHING RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

SIR,—It has always seemed to me that instead of pressing for the removal of the religious lesson we should do better, in the meantime, to advance the case for the teaching of comparative religion to children. This could be done either (a) sympathetically or (b) critically (i.e. scientifically). The latter would be ideal for it would exhibit the nature of religious illusions and show the common sources of such illusions. Christianity would then be exposed as merely one of man's many mistakes about the world he lives in, no more to be taken account of than Hinduism or any other creed.

Failing this, the other method, the sympathetic way, would at least be an improvement on the present pumping of just one religion into the child. All the chief religions of the world would be presented without exposing them as illusions, and the child would see there was a wider choice than Christianity, and in fact could reject the lot if he wished.

To keep on instilling Christianity into the child merely because he happened to be born in a Christian country, is quite out of keeping with the true objects of education, which should aim at the creation of adult human beings ready to take their place as citizens of the world.—Yours, etc.,

PETER HINDE.

[The N.S.S. passed a motion on these lines at its 1953 conference, and the advantages of your suggestion are obvious. The scientific way of presenting religion is, in fact, part of secular education, where religion would pass naturally into the history or geography lessons, as a phase of the history of human thought with local characteristics. But to present the various world religions sympathetically would require an Agreed Syllabus on a world-wide scale to make it apply fairly. A syllabus drawn up by Christians and interpreted by Christian teachers in schools would obviously result in the presentation of Christianity as superior to other religions, which is exactly what you wish to avoid.—ED.]

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT

SIR,—Although it is of recent date since I have started to take your publication, I have been impressed by your many remarks concerning the attitude of the B.B.C. towards Secular broadcasts concerning Religion.

On Sunday last the Epilogue was given, on television, by Mr. Cansdale who must be known to millions for his animal programmes, and by clever choice he proceeded to show the existence of God by design in nature. Of course such teleological argument is false, as can be shown by a study of the rudimentary organs, the mammary glands of the male for example.

However, I feel that such Epilogues given by popular laymen can do far greater harm than the prattle of the cleric, and every effort should be made so that the whole picture be given to the public rather than that part which suits the case in question.—Yours, etc.,

K. A. ADAMS.

THE FREETHINKER

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

To Correspondents

CORRESPONDENTS may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda. On the basis of an eight-page paper, space is the enemy, which means we cannot print as much as deserves to be printed.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £19 6s. 2d.; R. Burbridge (Canada), 12s.; F. Fiddian, £1; Mrs. D. Behr (South Africa), £1 1s.; A. Hancock, 5s. Total: £22 4s. 2d.

E. G. H. CROUCH, H. HARVEY.—Thanks for letters but the controversy is closed.

F. YOXALL.—The hypothesis of Laplace does not apply for the purpose for which he intended it, but is useful in explaining the stellar system. Re the solar system, its place has been taken by equally deterministic accounts, so there is no gain for religion.

H. FIDDIAN, E. R. DEAN.—Thanks for appreciative remarks re articles.

KEN JONES.—We admire the prose-poem on religious humanism. But would our secular and humanist ideals drop out of sight unless worshipped?

WM. SHAW.—The *Monistenbund* was first associated with Ostwald, a follower of Haeckel, in 1912. He preferred the term Energism to Materialism. It amounted to the same thing and avoided the charge of believing in "dead" (inert) matter.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 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.).—Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture. At Deansgate Blitzed Site, 7-30 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL. A Lecture.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: F. A. RIDLEY and 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.—F. A. RIDLEY, H. ARTHUR, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD and W. J. O'NEILL. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

Notes and News

Our reprinting of articles from Freethought journals overseas is not, of course, a one-way traffic. Material from *The Freethinker* similarly finds its way into the columns of our contemporaries abroad. For instance, Colin McCall has recently reappeared in *The Age of Reason* (America), and G. H. Taylor in *L'Unique* (France), while an N.S.S. tract reappears in *The Liberal* (Philadelphia).

Readers in the Birmingham area who are not already in contact with the local N.S.S. Branch are invited to take note of its forthcoming lectures on the last Sunday of each month in the Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street (off New Street). The meetings will be advertised in the *Birmingham Mail* the previous Saturday. Lecture programmes and other information may be obtained from the Secretary, Mr. T. G. Millington, 95, Wentworth Road, Birmingham 17. On

August 29 Mr. E. W. Shaw, of the N.S.S. Executive, is due to speak on "The Jesuit in Modern Society." The General Secretary, Mr. P. Victor Morris, will expose "The Farce of B.B.C. Religion" (September 26). The October meeting (31st) will be addressed by Barbara Niven, taking William Morris as her subject. On November 28 there will be chalk as well as talk when Mr. G. H. Taylor lectures on "The Mind of the Ape," using blackboard illustrations, and in December the meeting is brought forward a week to the 19th when there will be an open discussion on "Christianity in Modern Society." Congratulations to the Birmingham Branch on a compact and excellently produced lecture programme card.

THE PAINTED RESURRECTION

(Concluded from page 251)

rationalise the resurrection by presuming a spiritualised body emphasises the incongruities of the whole belief.

Though the poet can make an incredible, or even a grotesque, belief into convincing poetry, he is apt, at times, to expose its incredibility or grotesqueness. In *Paradise Lost* Satan's devils use gunpowder in cannon to pour iron balls on Michael's angels. Milton need not have descended to this absurdity, but his poetic flights cannot always conceal the absurdities of his supernatural realm. The painter, however he may invest, or try to invest, the resurrection with a spiritual significance, can scarcely keep the absurdities out of his spectacle. "Resurrection," the phoenix tells the Princess of Babylon in Voltaire's tale, "is one of the simplest things in the world." He amplifies his statement by the extra assurance that being born twice is no more astonishing than being born once. However earnest the symbolism or suggestiveness of the painter may be, the spectacular resurrection enforces the extreme, though possibly touching, simplicity of this belief. The phoenix cites many effects of resurrection; caterpillars becoming butterflies, for instance, or a kernal in the earth regenerated into a tree. When such analogies convince no longer, any more than the phoenix convinces when he claims, by the special favour of Ormuzd, the privilege of regenerating in his own shape, the painted resurrection always risks the exposure by spectacle of the inherent incredibilities.

The Princess is more puzzled by the soul of the phoenix than by its resurrected body. "When I carried your ashes in my pocket," she asks the bird, "what happened to your soul?" The detachment of the soul at death, its storage, and its slip back into its resurrected body now seem incongruous. The incongruity makes the elaborate reconstruction of the body, in itself incredible, still more incredible. The painted picture, with its spectacle of completed resurrections, may divert the mind from the incredibilities they involve. The painter may invest, or somewhat invest, the spectacle with a significance transcending, or partly transcending, the flocking from the tombs affirmed in the *Koran*. Still, if the painted resurrection retains spectacle at all, it can hardly fail to disclose, or at least to suggest, the essential quaintness of a bygone belief. The painter can paint Perseus and Andromeda without exciting the sense of absurdity because the episode is accepted myth. Since the resurrection is not yet openly mythical, but still retains an expiring claim on belief, it challenges the painted spectacle, and invites exposure. The exposure is almost inevitable, whether the incongruities involved forcibly in the spectacle stir a sense of the comic or merely of the incredible.

—NEXT WEEK—

"THE ATHEISM OF ASTRONOMY"

by F. A. RIDLEY

"How to read the Newspapers"

TAKE any newspaper from almost any country and examine it carefully. You will see that all items in it concern either Our Side or Their Side. (If the paper was written for Their Side, the Rules are, of course, reversed). Select any news item which contains a clear piece of double-think (one containing the words "aggression," "strength," "defence," "terrorism" or "firmness" will do admirably) and hold it up to the mirror—in other words go through it, transposing the two sides. If Our Side are displaying firmness somewhere, what would Their Side do in the same circumstances? "Campaign of Terrorism Against the Local Population," of course. Our Side "painful necessity"—Their Side "war crime." Our Side—"Resistance hero"; Their Side—"Terrorist bandit." And so on. Quite simple, but very salutary.

With more experience, you can begin to write your own news items. Let us take an example. The "hard news" is that the Taurocoprian Government Police have arrested the trade union leader, Mr. Ali Baba, distributing leaflets outside the Taurocoprian Town Hall. Case A—the Taurocoprian Government is on Our Side:—

"The authorities here are displaying praiseworthy firmness in dealing with subversive activities. Police yesterday arrested Ali Baba, secretary of the Communist-inspired Boiler-makers' Union. The Taurocoprian Home Office states that he was in possession of a large quantity of literature vilifying the Western Powers. His removal from the scene may do much to quiet a tense situation." Headlines: POLICE HOLD RED AGENT. Cheers for firmness, Down with Ali Baba!

Case B: the Taurocoprian Government is on Their Side.

"In spite of the Kremlin's attempts to tighten its grip on

Taurocopria, and in spite of savage repression, the Taurocoprian people are fighting back. Local newspapers have recently been forced to admit the arrest of Ali Baba, leader of the largest industrial union, on a treason charge; thereby giving the first official hint of the extent of the Resistance movement. His wife and child have also disappeared, and a 'confession' is expected shortly. The gravamen of the charge appears to be the possession of pro-Western literature . . ." Headline: UNIONS CRUSHED BY RED TERROR. Cheers for Ali Baba.

Or, of course,

"The broad masses of the Taurocoprian people are fighting back against the instigators of a new war. On American orders, Taurocoprian police to-day began to seize prominent workers' leaders." . . . The rest you know. Got the idea?

Now any of these versions may be true. The journalist who writes the column probably does not know which; he does know, however, which side is Right and which side is Wrong, and he is paid to see that you are left in no doubt. Hold it up to the mirror. Unlike human beings—who are usually kind and cruel, wise and silly, by turns (or at the same time)—Their Side hasn't a redeeming feature. If they abolish rationing, it is a measure of their economic difficulties; if they build a hospital, it is a preparation for war; and, of course, any attempt they may make to negotiate or talk peace, however opportune or however clumsy, is sinister beyond belief. Our Side, at least when it means England, is fortunately not yet as perfect in its own eyes as some other parts of the globe, but at least it can bomb military objectives without ever hitting a civilian, make atom bombs that threaten nobody, and so on. Armaments, of course, are wholly and entirely defensive on both sides, and a preparation for aggression on both sides, but not, of course, simultaneously.

In playing the News Game the following Glossary may help you.

| Our Side | Their Side |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| necessity | atrocities |
| Resistance movement | bandits, terrorists |
| negotiation from strength | sabre rattling |
| defence | threat of aggression |
| security | police state |
| resettlement | deportation |
| re-education area | concentration camp |
| liquidate | murder |
| liberate | raze to the ground |
| refugee | traitor |
| crusade | warmongering |
| Free Government | puppet regime |
| interrogation | torture |
| screening | iron curtain, purge |

Trump cards—Free World, Over-riding Needs of Defence, Law and Order, Western Way of Life. (These are a signal to the reader to suspend all critical thought for the rest of the sentence.)

Learn to play the News Game. It may save your life and the lives of others. It is, after all, your capacity for clear thought which comes between the bomb-release button and the finger of a small minority of mental patients in many countries who are prepared to risk the extinction of the species. It is you, not they themselves, who are asked to press that button. You would not burn a total stranger, Chinese, American or Russian, alive individually, by hand. Whether or not you do it collectively and at long range will depend on your skill and integrity in warding off the assaults made upon your sanity by the agents of insanity.

(From *How to Read the Newspapers*, by Alex Comfort, published by the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, 3d.)

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor, M.R.S.T. Materialism stated and defended. Price 4s.; postage 3d.

The B.B.C. and Freethought SUGGESTIONS INVITED

MR. J. HENRY LLOYD, Hon. Secretary of The Humanist Council, the liaison and public relations body representing the Ethical Union, Rationalist Press Association, South Place Ethical Society, National Secular Society and English Positivist Committee for aims held in common, has been in correspondence with the B.B.C. and has received a letter from Mr. Harmon Grisewood, the Director of the Spoken Word, inviting suggestions for further talks and discussions of religious or philosophic views other than Christian. This letter has been remitted to the bodies concerned so that each can put forward its own ideas to be combined in a comprehensive plan to be submitted to the B.B.C.

The July meeting of the N.S.S. Executive Committee decided that this was a matter meriting the widest consideration by members of the Society and readers of *The Freethinker*, who are now invited to submit concrete suggestions of topics they would like to hear discussed, with the names of speakers they would like to take part in such broadcasts. A sub-committee has been appointed to represent the N.S.S. and to submit to The Humanist Council suggestions on behalf of organised Secularism, and it is requested that all interested will send in their ideas not later than the end of August. Envelopes should be marked "Broadcasting" in the top left-hand corner and addressed to The Secretary, National Secular Society, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Whether or not this will lead to the adequate broadcasting of ideas critical of or opposed to orthodox Christianity, the B.B.C. invitation is an opening of which the N.S.S. will take full advantage. It is hoped that members and readers will co-operate by sending in a large number of varied ideas to add to those that Executive Committee members have on the subject.

P.V.M.

The Age of the Gospels—2

By H. CUTNER

NOTHING is easier for our priests and parsons to tell their flocks (or sheep) anything they like about the early Christian Fathers, or about what they wrote, and how full their writings are of quotations from the Gospels. These holy men of God *must* be telling the truth and, in any case, it is not very easy for the average layman to get hold of translations or to find the time for detailed comparisons. That is why people like Mr. Paris, the Roman Catholic editor of the *Faith*, finds it so easy to say what he likes about the Gospels—to his own followers. But why he should think that the properly instructed Freethinker is in the same boat passes my comprehension.

I pointed out in my last article that he had not even bothered to read his own Catholic Encyclopedia for, if he had, he could not have made the howlers he made—howlers which are contemptuously dismissed by the learned writers in that very pious work. And, of course, I could carry on in detail in the same way. For example, one of Mr. Paris' great authorities for "numerous texts from the Evangelists" is St. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 107) and just to show the reader how utterly absurd is the claim, let me quote the Catholic Encyclopedia again.

But first let me point out that it is admitted that eight out of the fifteen Epistles which bear his name are impudent forgeries by both English and Roman Catholic authorities. The Catholic Encyclopedia, however, is only recognised by Mr. Paris, so to it we will go. "They are by common consent," it says, "set aside as forgeries which were at various dates and to serve special purposes, put forth under the name of the celebrated Bishop of Antioch." And what about the other—genuine—seven? "Even the genuine Epistles," it is added, "were greatly interpolated to lend weight to the personal views of its author. For this reason they are incapable of bearing witness to the original form." And what else? The seven "authentic" Epistles have been so badly man-handled that the C.E. is bound to say, "Perhaps the best evidence for their authenticity is to be found in the Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians which mentions each of them by name"—unless—"unless, indeed, that of Polycarp itself be regarded as interpolated or forged"!

There is a heavenly witness for you—Father Polycarp, unless Polycarp himself is an arrant fraud! In truth, when the learned Catholic writers came to deal with all this early evidence, from the Christian Fathers they had very lamely to admit most of them were frauds and humbugs. The amount of deliberate forgery and faking in the early history of Christianity is appalling, and I am quite certain that Mr. Paris knows it as well as any blatant Atheist. But how are those who read him to find out the "deliberate mistake" (as Mr. Ronnie Waldman would say)? Only if they know the literature of the times, and how many do?

The great authority on Ignatius in the Church of England is Canon Lightfoot, and here is what he says about the seven "genuine" Epistles. "The Ignatian letters do indeed show a considerable knowledge of the writings included in our Canon of the New Testament; but this knowledge betrays itself in casual words and phrases. . . . Quotations from the New Testament strictly speaking there are none." And yet Mr. Paris has the effrontery to tell us that Ignatius has quoted "numerous texts from the Evangelists"!

And what about Polycarp? All Christians, Jews, and reverent Rationalists, quote Polycarp whenever they have occasion to deal with the "evidences" for Christianity. I fancy, all the same, they feel rather dubious about what

happened at his "martyrdom." He was sentenced to be burnt alive and so—

. . . the fire, shaping itself in the form of an arch . . . encompassed . . . the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like the flesh which is burnt . . . but as gold and silver glowing in a furnace . . . when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by fire . . . there came forth a dove and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished. . . .

This picture of a dove coming out of poor Polycarp as his body was burnt is not accepted by our reverent Rationalists even if they do like quoting his one Epistle. Is it genuine? Well, the Catholic Encyclopedia says its genuineness depends on the Ignatian Epistles. If these are forgeries, Polycarp's Epistle "must be a forgery by the same hand." That is a beautiful confession to make. I wonder what Mr. Paris has to say about it?

But does it contain "numerous texts from the Evangelists"? There are a very few which have some likeness to expressions in Matthew; but, as I have already pointed out, nobody denies that many "sayings" of Jesus were current long before any Gospel was thought of—sayings which were eventually incorporated both in the canonical and the apocryphal Gospels. There is not the slightest evidence that Polycarp saw any of our New Testament Gospels even if his Epistle is genuine; and there is a lot of evidence to show that it is not genuine.

But as Mr. Paris continued writing he became much bolder. Without any hesitation he tells us that Justin Martyr "says that the Gospels were written by Apostles and disciples, and were read at the meetings of Christians on Sundays." He even gives us chapter and verse from the writings of Justin.

In such an article as this, it is quite impossible fully to discuss the "evidence" of Justin for our Gospels. But, in the first place, I must point out that Justin nowhere mentions our Gospels. He never mentions an author by name—except John (not as the author of a Gospel) and perhaps Peter—and he does not call the Gospels by that name but "memoirs of the Apostles." There are a few quotations which look like quotations from the Gospels but they often differ as widely from them as similar ones do which are in the uncanonical Gospels.

Critics are hopelessly divided on the problem as to what were these "memoirs" of the Apostles; but nearly all agree that he had at least some other "memoirs" beside him for he quotes all sorts of things about Jesus not only not found in our Gospels but, as Cassels pointed out, "in contradiction with them."

The strange thing is that while Justin mentions many of the writers of the Old Testament when quoting that work, nowhere does he mention the names of the writers of our Gospels. Did he know them? He could hardly have done so without mentioning them if our Gospels were before him. He mentions the Apocalypse, and its author as John, but nowhere does he mention the Gospel of John. And it cannot be too strongly urged that Justin's "quotations" from the "memoirs" are in nearly all cases widely different from what are supposed to be the same in our Gospels—but the reader must for this compare, not the English translation, but the Greek "original."

No orthodox critic has so far proved that whatever Justin had before him were our Gospels. And certainly not that his quotations came from them.

Neurotic Aspects of Organised Religion

By R. READER

We must first distinguish between those who merely possess an inward conviction of a divine plan, and those who herd together in groups seeking to impose collective interpretations of individual conceptions upon the rest of the world, heedless of material consequences. The first group cannot be termed neurotic; free speculation about the universe has existed to some extent in every civilisation. But the behaviour of the second and far more numerous class shows striking parallels with neurosis as recognised by medicine. Let us trace some of these.

Neurosis starts by the individual being exposed to great fear in circumstances where he is unable to react against it; hence its onset is usually during childhood. This fear forms the basis for an anxiety which later becomes unconscious, and, unless compensated for by adequate affection in the individual's entourage, provokes neurotic behaviour. The invariable reaction to anxiety is *hostility*, and this, together with elaborate defence systems built up against the basic anxiety, influences all the neurotic's contacts with the external world. Thus he may be frankly hostile, suspicious, and even spiteful. Or his hostility may take the form of inordinate demands on other people's affection and esteem, in which case he may either set himself tasks quite beyond his powers in order to demonstrate his worth to others, or adopt an excessively humble, self-deprecatory attitude, so as to secure their patronage and attention. However, all is built on anxiety unknown to the outside world—often completely unknown to the neurotic himself—and unforeseen situations continually arise. Innocent words and actions may be interpreted by the neurotic as dangerous attacks on his defences that must be parried at all costs; nearly always by retreating to new positions. Hence the odd, sidling, shifting behaviour characteristic of neurosis.

Coming now to Christianity, the primary conditions for neurosis is present: fear of death. This is a fear that we cannot fight directly, and if, as the Roman Church well understands, it gains a hold in childhood, then the chances of a religious neurosis developing are very great. Hence the use of the threat of hell-fire and such practices as the whole family taking turns to sit by a corpse until burial.

The basic anxiety once established, the religious neurosis follows faithfully the course of the classical neurosis, that is, the anxiety becomes unconscious but induces hostility. The latter may be manifested directly (e.g., the sacrifices, burnings, hangings, and tortures inflicted in the name of religion) or it may take more subtle forms (e.g., the bitter struggle waged by some Christians for material gain, power and prestige, or the unnatural meekness with which others seek protection and the patronage of those more powerful than themselves). At the same time an elaborate system of artificial defences and justifications is constructed, meaningless for the normal individual. Hence chance words or actions may evoke a flood of antagonism, suspicion and hate. Hence the notorious ill-feeling existing between different Christian sects.

But, as with classical neurosis, the defence systems of religious neurosis constantly require repair. The resulting never-ending construction of mental reservations and "hedged" is, perhaps, the most characteristic symptom. Rational argument is powerless against it, for the Christian retreats in a curve to fresh defences with each advance of his adversary. It is like a chase at equal speeds around a circular table.

The realisation that organised religion partakes of neurosis has extremely important consequences. As any doctor will testify, the neurotic, on account of his internal instability, has unpredictable reactions to the most commonplace phenomena. He, therefore, cannot get along with other people. Indeed it has been observed that the mere presence of a neurotic can cause discord and ill-feeling between two personalities that are normally stable.

These are observable facts; neurosis is a recognised disorder and increasing numbers of such unfortunates are today under psychiatric care, in order that the reasons for their artifices may be discovered and, if possible, removed.

But when a sermon is delivered, the only tangible results of which are the perpetuation of, or acquiescence in, suffering, strife, tears and death, a *Te Deum* is sung; the orator approved and his words written down for fear that they should be lost to posterity!

Pending a wider dissemination of medical knowledge, and the recognition of this condition for what it is, we can take care that our children are preserved from these influences. We do not need neurotics to teach us that patience, truthfulness, honesty and industry are virtues, and violence, lies and cheating, crimes.

Sea and Sky Pilots

There is a great difference between the sea pilot and the sky pilot. The honest salt boards the ship, and takes her out to sea, or brings her into port. When the work is over he presents his bill. He does not ask for payment in advance. He neither takes nor gives credit. But the sky pilot takes credit and gives none. He is always paid beforehand. Every year he expects a good retaining fee in the shape of a stipend or a benefice, or a good percentage of the pew rents and collections. But when his services are really wanted he leaves you in the lurch. You do not need a pilot to heaven until you come to die. Then your voyage begins in real earnest. But the sky pilot does not go with you. Oh dear no! That is no part of *his* business. "Ah, my friend," he says, "I must leave you now. You must do the rest for yourself. I have coached you for years in celestial navigation; if you remember my lessons you will have a prosperous voyage. Good day, dear friend. I'm going to see another customer. But we shall meet again."

G. W. Foote.

Adam was the first man. God created him a big booby, who, to please his wife, was stupid enough to devour an apple which his descendants have never been able to digest.—VOLTAIRE.

The common people are to be caught by the ears as one catches a pot by the handle.—ANON.

Measure not men by Sundays, without regarding what they do all the week after.—FULLER.

ROYAL PATRONAGE FOR ROMANISM

(Concluded from page 250)

children as it can in this country, irrespective of the fact that a larger proportion of those children than is the case with any other denomination grow up to become inmates of Her Majesty's Prisons for criminal offences. It will strive to dominate the lives of the whole nation by controlling the votes of its dupes and using them for political bargaining. Nor will it hesitate to foster international misunderstandings and distrust, if these will forward its schemes. Has all this been kept away from the Royal Family of this country, that they should act as they have just done?