

# The Freethinker

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SOME weeks ago we referred in this column to a recently-published French history of China, by the eminent French social historian, M. Robert Souzon. In this connection we discussed the author's ingenious theory which sought to explain the remarkable discrepancy between the religious record of the two greatest Asiatic lands. Why is it that, while India has, aptly, been termed "the most religious land" its giant yellow neighbour, China, can, equally aptly, be called by M. Souzon as "the most irreligious country on earth." The problem here posed is in itself of much theoretical interest, but it also assumes an ever-increasing importance in view of the ever more important role these two countries are playing in our contemporary world.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Religion, Nature and Society

By F. A. RIDLEY

### Prayer versus Work?

For our readers' benefit we recall briefly the salient points of Robert Souzon's analysis. According to the distinguished author of *La Chine* and other notable works, the fundamental difference between the two oldest and greatest Oriental civilisations lies in their divergent attitude to the destructive forces of external nature. India adores the winds which bring life-giving waters that are uncontrollable by man; whereas the Chinese were the effective inventors of the old tag, "*laborare est orare*" (to work is to pray). Faced with the ever-recurring threat of inundations caused by the great river-systems upon which China depends for her economic existence, the Chinese turn, not to prayer, but to work; not to the gods, but to the engineers! For, while the monsoon winds of India may be moved by prayer, but cannot be aided by human activity, the Chinese floods may be checked by consistent irrigation, and by the erection of dykes to withstand the rumbustious waters. Consequently, or so our French sociologist concludes, this basically different attitude to external nature expresses itself in radically contradictory philosophic attitudes. India, literally, rains gods! China is the paradise of the agnostic, the positivist, and the utilitarian.

### An Indian Comment

Such, in brief, is Monsieur Souzon's theory. How far, if at all, does it correspond with observed facts? It is, admittedly, a generalisation—well-founded or otherwise. When, and as, it is seen through Western eyes, it appears to meet the known facts. But, after all, we are not Asiatics. How does this interpretation of this puzzling contrast appear, at first view, to the peoples actually concerned, the Indians and Chinese? So far, no Chinese reaction has come to our notice; perhaps because the new revolutionary China has other more urgently practical tasks in hand; particularly since the floods of the "Yellow" and "Blue" rivers are politically impartial! They overflow Communist China with the same devastation now, as in the past when they caused destruction in the imperial domains of those "Sons of Heaven," the Chinese emperors. Just at present the two great rivers are so doing, spreading death and

desolation on a gigantic scale. We must always bear in mind that heavy rain, which in England merely interferes with sport, in Asia represents a destructive "Act of God." Such visitations in Asia result in eviction and toll of human life, on a scale comparatively in Europe to a major war. Since our author propounded his theory some twenty millions of people have been rendered homeless in China by the recent torrential rains. India also has had recently the biggest flood in Indian history, turning, according to the *Observer* correspondent (29.8.1954), north-east India and Eastern Pakistan into a vast inland sea twice the area of the island of Formosa. The first Asiatic comment on

M. Souzon's novel theory comes from India, written before the catastrophe reported above.

### "The Rains Bring in the Gods"

Under the above title a most interesting editorial appeared in the July issue of our gallant contemporary, *The Indian Rationalist*. One cannot admire too much the truly heroic fight that our Indian Rationalist co-workers display in the colossal task they have undertaken. They deserve all the help our older and more experienced movement can give them. We, in turn, cannot but benefit from the constructive criticism, particularly where their own experience of religion is concerned. Such constructive criticism is here admirably deployed in relation to the recent theory of M. Souzon. First, a word of personal explanation.

### Indian Materialism

The present writer is well aware of the existence of the outright Indian materialism of the classic era. He knows also of those Indian agnostic and positivist schools of philosophy, of which, we think, it may plausibly be contended, original (pre-ecclesiastical) Buddhism represented one such example. In a short article, alas, one cannot find room for everything. We do not think *The Indian Rationalist* will deny that, at least, in the historic and, particularly, modern times, religion and philosophical idealism have been the rule in India; materialism and scepticism the probably rare exceptions. Religion is, we suggest, typical of, at least, modern India, not materialism.

### Is Religion Inevitable?

Our Indian editorial describes the Souzon theory as "ingenious," and seems, in general, to accept the facts as stated. However that editorial disclaims any inevitability in the process, to which, they appear to think, the theory tends. Obviously in France, England and India the existence of militant freethought movements, and of their fighting standard-bearers, journals such as *The Freethinker* and *The Indian Rationalist* surely testify to this. It is the old paradox, "we are determined to be free"! Granted the external conditions, imposed by an already existing material universe (in the present advanced stage of

evolution), the human will and intellect proceed to modify the external impact of nature. The rain-bearing monsoon is a fact, but so also is *The Indian Rationalist!* Death is, perhaps, "inevitable," but not religion. We do not, from what we know of him, think the revolutionary author of the Souzon Theory would deny this. Certainly, we do not.

Our Indian contemporary very rightly points out that in the temperate West, where the monsoon is unknown, inundations do not swallow life wholesale, as in the Far East. Yet even here religion is still powerful; certainly so! And the fact that this is so, indicates convincingly that natural

causes are not the only causes, everywhere, of the power of supernatural belief. Indeed, not! *Social*, as well as *natural* causes, also exist. If in the more primitive East religion has a, primarily, natural cause, in the more technically advanced West, it is social cause which operates. There, droughts and floods; here, poverty, unemployment, war, and the Hydrogen Bomb! When, and only when, mankind has effectively mastered both Nature and Society, then, and only then, will the gods finally vanish. Their departure will be simultaneously from both East and West! Speed the Day!

## A Godless Speech

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE Presidential Address of Dr. E. D. Adrian to the British Association at Oxford on September 1 contained much for the Secularist and precisely nothing for the religionist. For the latter, in fact, it was one large Acid Drop. It was everything that a rational layman has a right to expect from a leading scientist of the day, and the President was conspicuously godless in just those places where certain Presidents in the past have seen fit to impose their private religious interpretation of the facts with which they have dealt.

Dr. Adrian is one of the foremost experts on the brain, and I have previously in these columns dealt with his work on the Electroencephalograph (recorder of brain activity).

He recalled, in his opening remarks, the controversy on evolution which followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, and spoke of the famous debate at the Association meeting of the following year between Bishop Wilberforce and Prof. T. H. Huxley, to be carried on at other places and times, and not infrequently with a marked degree of personal hostility.

The following passage from the debate is worth recalling. Wilberforce concluded his harangue by asking whether Huxley was related to an ape on his grandfather's or grandmother's side. "The Lord hath delivered him into my hands," whispered Huxley to his neighbour. Later, when dealing with this remark of the Bishop's, he said:

If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would be a man who . . . plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice.

Arising from the controversy, the following quip has often been related:

*Christian:* Your family may have descended from monkeys but mine hasn't.

*Atheist:* But evolution is a very slow process. There is still time.

Dr. Adrian related how, after his speech, Wilberforce "sat down to general acclamation and a fluttering of handkerchiefs waved by the ladies." Huxley, armed with knowledge as against empty faith, devastated his opponent's case, occasioning some consternation in the audience, and one lady fainted. After the delay which followed no one knew, not even Huxley himself, where the speaker had left off.

In spite of the Bishop's futile attempts to be funny, the evidence could not be gainsaid, simply because it was unpalatable, and, to quote Adrian, "in a few years the battle for evolution was won." It has now, he continued, "lost its power to arouse passionate resentment." The President no doubt was thinking of the more educated among churchmen and laymen alike. Some of our N.S.S. outdoor propagandists, however, could enlighten him as to the survival of such "passionate resentment" among sections of the populace.

The President spoke of scientific inventions being "blamed for the troubles of the times." It was obvious, he remarked, that advances in science could not avoid giving rise to the manufacture of deadly weapons. What was the solution? He might, at this point, have figuratively gone down on his knees and implored the Deity to do something about it. Or he might have advocated, as one Bishop did, that science should take a long holiday to enable us to "get back to religion."

But no. The remedy he offered was—**more science, the science of human behaviour and society.**

"Our predicament is the result of our curiosity and of the physical nature of the world we live in," he said, "but if we can make ourselves worthy of our increased knowledge we can live in safety." Science must study human nature to prevent its failures.

With all the modern technique of fact-finding, the truly objective study of human nature and human society, he claimed, would perhaps be "the most important scientific development of the century."

**"Our fate is in our own hands."**

Those are the words of the British Association President. They are also the message of Secularism.

## Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

Aye, we had poets fifty years ago  
That sang of death and love, of flowers and stars;  
They sang of hate, of liberty and truth;  
They looked upon the mountain and the sea—  
Heroes they praised, and cowards scorched with scorn.

They even sang of gold and crowns, when worn  
By men who used the sword to slay tyrants and thieves—  
Those poets fifty years ago hurled tomes of wrath  
Against the miserable lords of lies  
That ruled a world of poisoned servile slaves.

Where are those poets now—are they all dead?  
Does Silence shed no tear upon their graves?

But the poets of our later century  
Are tame and timid merchants of pale ink,  
Veiling their nothings in dull cloudy words  
Unheard or soon forgotten as the globe  
Rushes toward its ultimate fate of fire.

Blind voices wail in alphabetic caves:  
That Poetry, mother of arts, is dead as a nail  
And Song has left no echo in the soul.  
That the Dollar is the only god we trust,  
And a strip-tease Venus reigns as queen of love.

If this be true indeed, the sterile moon  
Will be sole mourner at the tomb of Time!

GEORGE SEIBEL.

# Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 20th Century

By F. A. RIDLEY

(Continued from page 292)

## "THE GIRAFFE WHICH GREW A LONG NECK!"

IN the early 19th century, the biological world was shaken by the "emergent" theory of Lamarck, that the giraffe had grown its long neck as a result of an effort of subconscious will. A "Jesuitical" deduction! and one, no doubt, derived by Lamarck from his actual observations of the famous Order of which the eminent biologist was a former pupil. For the Society of Jesus, and the Catholic Church under its inspiration, have grown a "long neck" in order to survive in the so "unmediæval" atmosphere of the modern world. It was the Jesuits who cautiously explored the modern world and, in modified forms adapted modern conceptions of politics, economics, ethics, and philosophy, to the obsolete mediæval conceptions which the Church had retained from the mediæval "Age of Faith." Old-fashioned Catholics, like Pascal, were horrified; but the process, with whatever mistakes and exaggerations, undoubtedly saved the Roman Catholic Church from an otherwise inevitable extinction.

## THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The French Revolution of the late 18th century, the secular successor of the Reformation, without which "the ideas of 1789" would never have achieved their spectacular triumph, finally put an end to the mediæval order in even the most backward parts of Europe. The abolition of the Spanish Inquisition by Napoleon, the heir of the French Revolution and its militant standard-bearer throughout the European Continent, may be regarded as the last dying convulsion of mediævalism in Church and State (1808). The 19th century, "the age of stupendous progress, the century, *par excellence*, of Liberalism, of Capitalism, of Nationalism, had dawned. What might be the prospects of that hoary atavism, of that now outmoded "ghost of the Roman Empire" in an epoch so totally alien to every pre-modern conception? How could a Church born, nurtured in, and exclusively adapted to a pre-industrial, pre-scientific age, hope to survive "semper eadem"—according to its ancient motto! "Forever the Same." To the generation born about 1800, the final demise of the ancient atavistic relic from another world was eagerly and confidently awaited. The famous English educationalist, Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, expressed in a sentence the confident opinion of a generation nurtured in "Liberalism"—and in "The Idea of Progress"—the keyword of the 19th century—when he uttered the scornful dictum: "Believe in the Pope? I would as soon believe in Jupiter!"

## THE NEW "COUNTER-REFORMATION" OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The end of the most ancient of European dynasties, of the Roman Papacy, seemed—at long last!—to be at hand. How could the ancient chameleon yet again change colour so as to survive in, so as to deceive, an age of industry and science? Would not this be to require a miracle? So argued the pioneers of Liberalism in "The age of stupendous progress." However, it must be conceded that, if so, the miracle duly arrived! For Thomas Arnold and his too-optimistic contemporaries have now been in their graves for a full century. The Catholic Church is still there; in fact very much so! There are still, to-day, many people, more, in fact, than in Arnold's day, who find it easier to "believe in the Pope" than to "believe in Jupiter!"—or even in Liberalism and in "The Idea of Progress"! Whether we like it not, this fact is so, and as Rationalists, we ask, "Why?" For the round century that links the

mid-19th and mid-20th centuries together has witnessed a remarkable "Counter-Reformation," one fully as remarkable, if less attributable to a single agent, than the "Counter-Reformation" of the 16th and 17th centuries, in which, as the German historian, Gustav Kruger, has aptly phrased it, the Papacy was the "King," a piece upon the ecclesiastical chess-board effectively manipulated by the artful Jesuits. As Hermann Muller has happily phrased it, "the Jesuits did not desire that one of their number should be Pope, since they naturally assumed that every Pope would be a Jesuit." The remainder of this paper deals with this serial "Counter-Reformation" of which the effective foundations were laid in the 19th century, but the full fruits of which (as is customary in a Church which claims to be "The Pilgrim of Eternity" and whose actions are measured by centuries) is only just now coming to its maximum fulfilment.

I now propose to trace the successive phases of this "Counter-Reformation": of this formidable Counter-Revolution which, in the teeth of "inevitable" progress, has diminished Protestantism, checked the advance of triumphant "Liberalism" and of its still more revolutionary off-spring, and which has recreated the Catholic Church as a great power. It is, indeed, probably more powerful, to-day, than at any time since "The Ages of Faith." To Rationalists and to believers in progress, it is a lugubrious but not, we think, unprofitable subject for consideration at a world gathering of Freethinkers such as is here assembled.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Whole libraries have been written on the political and theological activities of the Catholic Church. Its *sociological* evolution is, however, much less known; but it is, notwithstanding, very remarkable. Historically the Church of Rome, as is made clear by its name, stems from, and was born under, the Roman Empire of the Cæsars. Has not the great Renan reminded us that, whilst Augustus Cæsar would have been very surprised at the suggestion, yet it was actually the Galilean Fisherman Peter—or his unknown colleagues—who was to perpetuate the historic mission of the first Roman Emperor. As the German scholar, Ernst Troeltsch, has happily observed: "The Catholic Church is the last creative masterpiece of antiquity." This was reflected in the *social* teachings of the Early Church, which accepted the Servile State as practised throughout antiquity, and which, consequently, taught Christian slaves to "obey" their masters. It is noteworthy that, in the course of his lengthy indictment of the crimes and absurdities of the new religion, the conservative Pagan, Celsus, never charged Christianity with seeking to abolish slavery: a fact which we offer for the consideration of our "Christian Socialist" friends! With the State recognition of Christianity under Constantine, the identification of the Church with the ruling classes and the social system of the Roman Empire became absolute. Even if, as stated in the *Acts of the Apostles*, Christianity started as a communistic organisation on the model of its Essene prototypes, this did not last long: "the end of the world did not come, but the end of their money did," as a cynical critic has relevantly observed.

Whilst, however, the Catholic Church started as the upholder of classical society, the economic basis of which was slavery, she soon demonstrated her "Lamarckian" ability

(Continued on next page)

## This Believing World

**Believers in that hot-bed of Romanism, Eire,** must have always wondered why the Virgin never appeared there to visit dear little Catholics as she has done in France and Portugal. Eire cannot boast of a Lourdes or a Fatima. Probably this has worried even the Virgin herself, for at last a Miss Rosemary Cassidy, has come forward with the thrilling news that the Holy Mother of God appeared to her "in a vision"—whatever that means. Dressed all in white, Mary fluttered down from Heaven to the little village of Ardboe, Co. Tyrone, and soon 10,000 people from all over Ireland crowded in. A 35-year-old mother of nine children, of course, also saw the "vision," and altogether 100,000 people have visited the Holy Spot.

**Naturally, although quite jubilant, the Church** cannot yet say if Ardboe will be another Lourdes. A dozen or so "miracles" will, no doubt whatever, soon be forthcoming. But in the meantime all believers there spend most of their time grovelling on their knees in prayer—as indeed they should do. A young and beautiful Virgin, even if she did give birth to God Almighty, deserves their homage, and what better way of showing it than on one's knees? But the police and the Church are very wary. They are "concerned" that unscrupulous people "might try and take advantage of the believers"—though with Holy Mary to guard them, how could that be? Yes—please don't remind them and us. We are indeed living in the year 1954.

**Instead of the usual Sunday service,** the B.B.C. recently staged the Rev. E. H. Robertson to give a talk on what happened at the World Council of Churches in the U.S.A. No fewer than 100,000 people came in support there and listened to the reverent (and reverend) delegates discoursing on "unity" for "Christ the Hope of the World"—without naturally reaching any unity. The B.B.C. gave us recordings of some of the speeches which, to blatant Atheists like ourselves, looked as if they had been coined in a pure Billy Graham mint. One of our own Bishops implored everybody there, and everybody listening-in, to join with him in reciting the Lord's Prayer whatever one's language; and it must have added to the gaiety of the nations to listen to his typical parsonic voice with which no doubt he believed God must be approached.

**And will there ever be "unity"?** Of course there will—if all the Churches submit to Rome. There can be no other way. Rome holds all the cards and can call the tune. The Jesus Christ of Jehovah's Witnesses or the Christian Scientists or the Modernists or the Plymouth Brethren or any of the other 300 Christian sects, they all got from the Roman Church in the first place. Without Rome, there would have been no Jesus Christ. So back to Rome they must all eventually go for survival. Though even Rome might die before that happens.

**Whenever the Pope is not much "in the news,"** he nearly always plays a sure card—the "indecent" costumes "young people" wear. Throughout the centuries celibate priests and bishops, cardinals and Popes, have called attention to these "temptations" of the Devil, temptations which, no doubt whatever, the clergy are subjected to, and find so hard to resist. And think of it—"even in the House of God," the Pope moans, briefs are worn "unworthy of the occasion and spiritually ruinous" to young people. This whining about "indecent" costumes is always sure copy—and thus the Pope is "in the news."

**Another card the Churches play is "a call to prayer."** It may be against "blasphemy," or bad language, or even for Peace—but a "call" from the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury puts the Churches on the front page of our newspapers and is thus very good business. Have prayers ever stopped a war? Never. And so, if a war comes in spite of prayer, this only proves how "mysterious" God's ways are. Like Hitler for the Germans, God always knows what is best for us.

**And talking about the Rev. B. Graham**—we notice that he will not be allowed to conduct any revival meetings in "sin town" in Phenix City, Alabama. It appears that the "great" revivalist would cause such a terrific traffic problem that the police and troops could not cope with it. All the same, we wonder whether it is the "sin" in the city with which the all-conquering Billy cannot cope? And what about Jesus Christ speaking through Billy G.? Would he also have failed?

### CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION

(Continued from page 299)

to "grow a long neck" and to move with the times. In the feudal Middle Ages, so completely did the Catholic Church identify herself with Feudalism that she has often been mistakenly considered as a purely feudal organisation—for example, many contemporary Marxists make this identification. It is, however, clear that a millennium of the closest association between the Catholic Church and Feudal Society has left deep and lasting imprints.

#### THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

The capitalist system originated in the city states of mediæval Italy—in Venice, in particular—and became a dominant system of production with the "Voyages of Discovery" in the 15th century and the subsequent opening up of the world market in the era of "primary accumulation" of capital, as Karl Marx has shown in *Das Kapital*. The political revolutions of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, effectively substituted the capitalist system for its feudal predecessor as the leading economic system on a world-wide scale. For the Catholic Church, which fiercely resisted capitalism and its political revolutions right up to the European Revolution, the extension of the French Revolution, in 1848, the question of adapting herself to the new régime became, literally, a matter of life and death for the Church. This necessary task was accomplished by the Jesuits, the leaders of the Church in the era of rising capitalism, who grew an economic "long neck" and reconciled financial transactions, which the Feudal Age had denounced as "Usury," but which were the life-blood of capitalism, to the teaching of the "unchanging" (*sic*) Church. To-day, Catholic "usurers" live and die in the odour of sanctity! They are no longer fuel for the Inquisition. The casuistical alchemy by which this transaction was effected, was the Jesuitical theory of "Probabilism," under which, minority opinions not expressly condemned by the Church, were "lawful," for capitalists as for other people. The Jesuits used this casuistry very skilfully to get round the prohibitions against capitalist finance—"usury." Nowhere did the sons of Loyola render a more valuable or necessary service to the Church.

(To be continued)

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## 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.

T. K. CAREN.—You were asked to give evidence or authority that the word "hate" in the mouth of Jesus was wrongly translated. Instead, you have merely repeated what you said before. We are, however, dealing with the question in an article—to which you can reply—if you can. Please, either type your reply, or write more clearly.

C. E. BOUGHTON.—If you had gone to your newsagent he would have procured for you a copy of *The Bible* published by *The Times* for 1s. last June.

D. GARLAND.—The "ruined civilisations" referred to by Mr. Cohen were those of Greece and Rome. The third "nearly ruined" was, of course, Western civilisation.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

J. CLAYTON'S LECTURES.—Friday, September 17, 7-30 p.m., Crawshawbooth; Saturday, September 19, 3-15 p.m., Blackpool (near Central Pier); 7-30 p.m., Preston (Town Hall Square).

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 week-

day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt

Fields: a Lecture. At Deansgate Blitzed Site, 7-30 p.m.:

C. MCCALL.  
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead

Heath).—Sunday, September 19, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday

at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, September 19, 6-30 p.m., Old

Market Square: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.  
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.

### INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society), Conway

Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Friday, September 17, 7-15 p.m.:

L. H. BROWN, M.A., "The Social Value of the Family Unit."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,

W.C.1).—Sunday, September 19, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A.,

"Double Talk."

I suggest it is time that all who value clear thinking made up

their minds what it is they are fighting for. Are they fighting for

the purification or the "rationalising" of religion, or are they

fighting the religious idea? For my own part I am not fighting

to make religion reasonable, or to purify it, but to destroy it by

making its actual nature and its consequences clear to all.—

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### NEXT WEEK

## LIFE IN OTHER WORLDS

By F. A. RIDLEY

## Notes and News

A Roman Catholic procession several thousand strong (numerically) recently marched through the streets of Bala, N. Wales, behind a statue of "Our Lady of Fatima." A good deal of correspondence followed in the local papers, and the freethought view was excellently put in a letter of over 650 words headed "The Mother of Jesus," by "Hesgin," the nom-de-plume of one of our readers who has been writing similar letters in the Welsh Press for some 50 years. Congratulations to the *Merioneth Express* for daring to print the letter, which efficiently exposes the "morals" of the "Saviour" in his attitude towards his "immaculate" mother, besides drawing comparisons between Christ and other ancient deities.

At 7-45 p.m. on Friday, September 24, at the White Lion Hotel, Streatham, a debate will take place on the motion: "That Secularism includes all that mankind needs for social and moral progress." Mr. P. Victor Morris will open for the affirmative, and the opposition will be led by the Rev. O. Fielding-Clark, a Church of England Hospital Chaplain. Members of the Streatham Debating Society (the hosts) and visitors can take part in the debate from the floor, after which Messrs. Fielding-Clark and Morris will wind up. We are assured that visitors will be welcome, and that they may both speak and vote.

Bearing out information from the Home Office that we published recently, the Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police has sent a letter to the N.S.S. from which we have pleasure in quoting the following paragraph: "I am directed by the Commissioner to inform you that no candidate for appointment in this Force is required to declare his religious beliefs and a police officer's career is not prejudiced by the fact that he or she may have no religious belief." It is to be hoped that freethinking members of this Force already exercise their right to affirm instead of taking the oath when giving evidence before courts (which they have to do more frequently than do ordinary members of the public); if it is not their practice to affirm, they should commence to do so forthwith. The letter quoted can be referred to should any difficulties be encountered from superior officers or court officials.

Our appeal for a Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund has been enthusiastically received; and all who have read the lucid and forthright articles he contributed for more than fifty years to these columns will, we are sure, help to carry on the journal into which he put so much energy and skill. *The Freethinker* belongs to its readers, and every effort will be made, with their help to keep it to the splendid standard he set.

## Priestly Education

How is it that the average man and woman knows little of his own religion and nothing of the many other religions of the world? Over £100,000,000 is spent annually by the State on education in this country. If you asked Mr. Everyman what he knew of the Zend Avesta, he would, in all probability, think you were referring to a new patent food or parlour game. Thanks to the priestly control of education, the only two clear impressions left on the mind of the ordinary scholar are "Fear God, and Honour the King," which, being translated into plain English, means the continuance of Priestcraft and Kingcraft for yet another generation. Just as a countryman will retain his native speech almost unimpaired during many years residence in another far-distant place, so the unfortunate scholars retain to the last the religious and political prejudices they imbibe with their education. Even should some afterwards rebel, and see through the dogmas they have been taught, the spirit of them remains imbedded in their feelings.—MIMNERMUS.

# The Portraits of Jesus

By H. CUTNER

ALTHOUGH we know nothing whatever about Jesus Christ than what we get in the Gospels, and there, his "portrait" is never attempted, many books have been written about the various portraits of him that artists and sculptors have bequeathed us; and it is not surprising that the hand of the pious forger has almost triumphed against all commonsense and probability. After all, Christian literature is packed with forgery—why then should the same not be the case in painting?

If Jesus really was a Jew of the period before the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, he would have had Arab traits and complexion. He certainly could not have been "Aryan" in looks, though artists have nearly always tried to make him look like a good European *white* man of the Middle Ages. In fact, some German historians say Jesus was never a Jew at all—a claim that is not altogether surprising considering that outside the Gospels there is never a contemporary line about him. He could have been a red or yellow gentleman for all that we know of him.

About three months or so ago, *The Times* devoted a half-page to a statue of Jesus discovered during some recent excavations in Cheapside and, if one looks at it as a work of art, just as a statue of Jupiter or Pan, there is no reason why it should not be discussed. It is an early Renaissance figure and very well done; but *The Times* writer seems bewildered. He cannot discover why the statue was done at all. "What was the intention of the figure?" he asks. One might as well ask what was the intention of the artists—painters and sculptors—who gave us the superb paintings and sculptures of classical antiquity and of the Middle Ages. They were artists, urged to express themselves, as all artists are. And religion, as such, had nothing or very little to do with it. Most of the great artists were as ready to paint a scene from the "amours" of Pagan Gods as they were scenes from the Bible. Jupiter or Christ, Venus or Mary—it was all the same to them.

But this will never do for our very religious Christians. After all, Jupiter and Venus are merely Pagan Dieties, while Jesus Christ is God Almighty incarnated; and a picture of him must be authentic. *Everybody* knows what "our Lord" looks like. Besides, there is a "contemporary" description of him which all, or nearly all, believers trot out on every possible occasion to prove how right they are.

We are solemnly told that there is a copy of this in manuscript dating from the 16th century in the British Museum. This should convince even the stoutest of sceptics, but in case it does not, we are further informed that "it was formerly in the collection of a Chancellor of France in the 17th century and later acquired by the Earl of Oxford in 1724."

Some writers very lamely admit that the description is "apocryphal," but why should this put one off? After all, when a writer on Christian origins finds that something he claims about Jesus can be better substantiated by an "apocryphal" Gospel, why shouldn't he use it? Here I quite agree. When it comes to anything at all about Jesus Christ, any reference to him in the apocryphal Gospels is just as "authentic" as any in the New Testament Gospels. Few Christian writers have ever been put off by anything "apocryphal."

It appears that there was a Roman Pro-Consul called Publius Lentulus who wrote a letter to the Senate full of the usual stories about Jesus—whom he knew personally—raising the dead, curing the sick, and always moved by "the tenderest pity." He was "tall and comely," had long

wavy hair, a face "without spot or wrinkle," courteous, and "fair spoken," in fact, "a man for his singular beauty surpassing the children of men." (The wording of the various translations vary.)

This "portrait" is accepted, naturally, by all sorts and conditions of Christians—it was wholly swallowed by W. J. Brown writing in the *Sunday Dispatch*, for example—though the dear old Fathers of the Church have left on record the very opposite. Cyril of Alexandria relying, it is true, on "tradition," declared that Jesus was "the ugliest of the sons of men," a description also given in what is called the Slavonic Josephus, that is, a translation of the Jewish historian into the Slav language made, it is thought, about the year A.D. 900.

There is no need to go outside the Catholic Encyclopedia for an opinion of Lentulus. This very pious work, written by Catholic scholars—and there are some—declares that Lentulus is "a fictitious person" which completely settles the matter. The Roman Pro-Consul was "made up" by some religious fanatic just like the better-known *Letter to Abgar*, the King of Edessa, written by Jesus, was also "made up." In fact, lying for the glory of Jesus Christ became an institution—hence the multiplication of Acts, Gospels, and Epistles through the centuries. Their manufacture is still taking place.

It is not surprising to find that in this matter of a portrait that Luke is also dragged into the story. "Tradition" says that he was a painter, and that he painted Mary. In truth, some more modern artist has painted a picture of Luke painting Mary and, in a more Christian atmosphere, this work would have been passed as "contemporary"—thus proving the existence of both Luke and Mary. The Vatican, of course, has a likeness of Jesus attributed to Luke, but it does not appear to be very popular. It could easily pass for an Arab Sheik, or even a brown-skinned Palestinian Jew. But all portraits of Jesus, particularly those of famous painters, are just "made up." It could not be otherwise for Jesus is as mythical as Jupiter, and the various representations of Jupiter are just as authentic as those of Jesus.

When the supporters of the "true" portraits are driven into a corner, they take refuge in what is called the "Turin Shroud," with special reference to a book written by a very pious Catholic, Dr. Paul Vignon, who claims to have made many "careful experiments" of the Shroud. He has "proved" that the figure on the Shroud is undoubtedly Jesus, for it is the very shroud in which the Son of God was wrapped in after his Crucifixion, and this portrait was "printed" by his bodily emanations.

Anybody who cares to read the books on the marvellous cures made at Lourdes written by well-known Catholic doctors will find the same kind of proofs as supplied by Dr. Vignon. We have their word and we have his. And it is quite useless to discuss Jesus and miracles with Roman Catholics who are ordered to believe, and who do their utmost to prove that the Church, God's Greatest Gift to Man (like the Protestant Bible), could not possibly err. But the Turin Shroud is just as big a fake as the venerable Veronica handkerchief with which Jesus wiped his face, and "imprinted" his portrait upon, when he was carrying the Cross. Even the Catholic Encyclopedia found this too much to stomach, and actually said so. But it will be believed in for centuries to come.

If any reader is so simple-minded as to imagine that any exposure of the fraud and forgery with which the

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# No Freethinker Need Apply

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

DOES any reader of this paper, broadly subscribing to its views, want to adopt a baby? There will be great difficulty in doing so.

I learned of this when a couple in a provincial town wrote to me asking if I could put them in touch with Adoption Societies that did not subject prospective adopters to religious tests. They had been turned down by one Society on the grounds that they were not practising Christians. I promised to do what I could to help them.

The lady who answered my inquiry when I telephoned one Society made no secret of the difficulties in the way of non-religious families wishing to adopt a child. To start with there were many more applicants than there were children available for adoption. Then she informed me that mothers anxious or willing to have their babies adopted almost always stipulate that the children shall be brought up in a particular religion. She also said that a reference from a clergyman was required in respect of proposed adopters. She could not give me the name of a Society that would be likely to be of assistance to my correspondents.

A written inquiry to The National Adoption Society brought a reply from the Secretary to the effect that, whilst her Society was undenominational, its practice was to place a baptised child with adopters of the same religion, and an unbaptised one with people of the parent's religion. In the case of a Roman Catholic child, a priest's recommendation of proposed adopters as practising Catholics was asked for to meet the general requirements of the Catholic viewpoint. Apart from this it was not a condition that the recommendation of a clergyman was necessary.

"My Committee take the view that a religious upbringing is a help to a child, and naturally they would prefer parents where this is offered," her letter added. "If, however a parent stipulated that her child should be placed with a family affiliated to no religious body, it would seem that a kind family of good character and principles would be eligible to adopt such a child." The letter concluded with "We cannot recollect a parent coming to us with such a stipulation, and it seems that some parents who appear to be without religious affiliations nevertheless want their children to be given what they consider is the advantage of having a religion." From which, readers will gather that the prospects of success for freethinkers wishing to adopt a child are small indeed.

The trouble appears to be that this matter is in the hands either of denominational bodies with a sectarian axe to grind or of so-called undenominational ones with a bias weighting their judgments on the side of applicants of any religious creed rather than none. The Adoption Act of 1950 makes no mention of religion at all, yet by allowing arrangements to be carried through by registered adoption societies of the types already referred to, it opens the door to discrimination against freethinking applicants, however great the advantages they may be able to offer a child. Their chances are rendered less hopeful because a supply of illegitimate children from freethinking mothers is apparently non-existent!

The injustice of the position is clear when one asks whether there is any evidence to indicate that a child will be worse off in a freethinking home than a religious one. There is none at all. Still, it is not difficult to imagine what happens when an unmarried mother of an unwanted child is being interviewed. "Religion?" "C. of E." "Of course you want your baby to be brought up the

same?" "Oh, yes." Seeing that neither her own religious upbringing, nor that of the father of the child, has so far proved to its advantage in any way, the logic of the assumption that it is going to in the future is by no means clear. Actually there is no more justification for allowing parents who renounce parental responsibilities to stipulate the religion of adopters than to let them dictate what politics, hobbies and intellectual pursuits the latter shall have. If Miss A.'s child has to be placed with Jehovah's Witnesses, why cannot Miss B. ask for hers to be adopted by vegetarians, teetotallers or Aston Villa supporters?

At present the freethinker desirous of adopting a child finds that religious prejudice stands in his way, but the road to reform lies open without any change in the law. The power to make regulations governing the conduct of adoption societies rests with the Home Secretary. He could and should require them to eliminate religious discrimination from their negotiations and recommendations, and to base them entirely on the secular advantages likely to accrue to the children concerned. Thereafter, any prospective adopter against whom religious discrimination had been used would have the right to bring this to the notice of the Home Office for appropriate action. Meanwhile, aggrieved members of the public can write to their M.P.s suggesting that they ask the Home Secretary to introduce such a regulation forthwith.

## N.S.S. Executive Committee, 8th September

Present: Mr. Ebury, Vice-President (in the chair), Messrs. Taylor, Hornibrook, Tiley, Johnson, Corstorphine, Barker, King and the Secretary.

Six new members were admitted to the Parent and West London Branches. The Secretary reported the opening of the Cohen Memorial Fund for the benefit of *The Freethinker*. He was sure the Society would wish to support the appeal promptly and generously, to pay tribute to an incomparable leader and editor, and to safeguard the future of the paper that was so vital to the work of the N.S.S. Mr. Ebury agreed that immediate action was desirable, but thought that the announcement of the opening of the Fund had not stressed its urgency and importance enough. Previous appeals had only produced a tiny flow of contributions that had not been sufficient to meet the continuous loss that appeared to be inevitable with journals of an intellectual and progressive nature. He wanted to see regular reports in *The Freethinker* of the progress of the Fund that would stimulate sympathisers to place the paper on a sounder financial footing. His comments were echoed by others present, and a donation of £250 was unanimously approved. The hope was expressed that this would lead to a general effort to raise an adequate sum by branches, members and readers.

It was reported that the Broadcasting Sub-Committee had considered suggestions for submission to the B.B.C. by The Humanist Council. It was agreed that the drawing up of a report giving the special views of the N.S.S. should be left in the Sub-Committee's hands. A debate to take place on September 24 at the Streatham Debating Society between the Secretary and a clergyman was noted. An invitation having been received from the Kingsway Association, Mr. Ebury was chosen to speak in January on "The Secularist View of Life." A reply from the Admiralty regarding the report in the *Daily Worker* considered a month earlier by the Executive Committee stated that it was inaccurate, and a letter from the naval rating concerned bore this out. Further investigation of the case was proceeding.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.

## THE PORTRAITS OF JESUS

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"portraits" of Jesus are surrounded will make any true Christian change his mind about them, he had better think again. There is nothing anyone can imagine silly enough which will not be swallowed wholesale when it is connected with the "beautiful" and "simple" religion of Jesus Christ.

## Newcastle Notebook

By GEORGE MILLER

Some weeks ago the Archdeacon of Durham had a few words to say to us about the scarcity of candidates for the priesthood. These were echoed and amplified by the Rev. Charles Haig, still "talking with us" in the *Evening Chronicle*, but this is becoming a habit, for he expatiates on the paucity of recruits for the dog-collar brigade every so often, coupled with appeals to young men to come forward and taste "the joy of doing the most worthwhile job in the world."

He himself abandoned a career as a lawyer in order to follow Christ. Jesus has two thousand years start. The change-over was due to "one reason only, because God took hold of me and said: 'Charles Haig, you must give your life to preaching the gospel and caring for my children.'" We should like to have witnessed this chinwag with Jehovah, or heard a half-inch tape recording: it must have been as entertaining as the negro preacher's chat with the Lord in James Dyrenforth's TV play *Halcyon Days*. Mortal men who have oral or physical contact with God, or his arch-enemy sulphurous Old Nick, are rare these days, but were apparently rife in the unhalcyon Old Testament days.

The Religious Vocations' Exhibition recently held in Newcastle must have inspired hope in the breasts of Mr. Haig and his brethren of the C. of E. The Catholic and the free Churches must also have had their hearts lifted, for they, too, admit a shortage of manpower. We fear that the only exhibitions likely to attract Novocastrians in their thousands are those held every Saturday at St. James' Park during the football season.

Wearing the mask of anonymity, a new contributor to the *Chronicle* tells us he has faith in the Novocastrian's propensity to humble himself in abject reverence before a priest when he encounters one. But not at first. A priest newly arrived in town finds himself confronted by an Iron Curtain of suspicion, but after he has sunk into the soil a little and taken root the Geordies have the edge on all other tribes when it comes to showering love on men of God. We first endure, then pity, then embrace, as that 18th century Geordie, Alexander Pope, worded it for us. In point of fact, the use of "hypocrite" as a synonym for "Christian" is, rightly or wrongly, quite common on Tyneside.

The Jewish gentleman who attempted to board a Newcastle omnibus was politely refused admittance by the conductor.

"Sorry—full up."

"But . . . but . . ." protested the gentleman angrily, "I . . . I am a Rabbi!"

"So what?" shouted the conductor. "I don't care a — if you're Popeye!"

There ought to be two new commandments, one restraining shouting bus conductors, the other holding in check illogical Rabbis stranded where shouting bus conductors find them.

The Bishop of Newcastle will do a little invigorating manual labour on September 7, when he lays the dedication stone of the new vestry now under construction at St. John's Church. Total cost of the extension will be £14,000, of which £2,800 has already been coaxed forth in response to an appeal. The progress of the appeal is causing the Vicar

much happiness, and, he says, "many people will be waiting until after the holidays, and I know some city firms are taking collections through their staffs."

But what of those people who had a whacking good time on their holidays and returned rather destitute of cash? It would be wisdom on their part to donate spare shillings to their own personal funds. We can only conjecture the sources of the money received for church extensions and repairs when every preacher in the land tells us that this is a pagan country. If you marooned a priest in the arctic wastes he would, in less than a twelvemonth, raise £10,000 to build and equip a tiny chapel. For his own use, of course.

## Correspondence

### RELIGION AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

For the third time in a week, in the Bolton *Evening News*, there have been misleading articles about the cause of juvenile delinquency. May I make a few observations as one who has spent three years with juvenile delinquents and has been able to study hundreds of cases.

It is fallacious to pretend that lack of religious education has anything to do with juvenile delinquency. I would like to know then why there is more delinquency in proportion in countries where the Church is all powerful (Spain, Ireland) than in those with governments with a more secular attitude. And why there were only 14,624 cases of juvenile delinquents in 1952 in France where no religion at all is taught in council schools when, in the same year, in England, where religious education is compulsory in the schools, there were over 40,000 cases for a population which is hardly 10 per cent. bigger than that of France.

Teaching religion in schools is no deterrent to delinquency and there are reasons for this. In all cases of juvenile delinquency you will find one or more of the following reasons: (a) mental debility and a very low intellectual level; (b) poverty with all that it implies; (c) a dissociated family—i.e., where the father and mother are not together to bring up the child, due to many reasons (wars, divorce, death, illness, remarriage, etc.). This is the fact that strikes immediately anyone who studies juvenile delinquency as it happens in about 70 to 80 per cent. of cases, often without relation to the other causes. There has been no mention of these in the *News*.

Juvenile delinquency decreases in relation to the amelioration of the standard of living and with the return to normal family conditions after a war.

This applies to France as it does to Bolton and juvenile delinquency has dropped considerably in that country as the following figures show: 35,000 cases in 1948, 17,944 cases in 1950, 14,624 cases in 1952.—Yours, etc.,

J. TOUDIC.

### MORE RELIGIONS

The *Manchester Guardian* (August 25th) reported that Father W. Schiffer, S.J., from Japan, in addressing a Congress of Orientalists, stated that since 1941 no fewer than 120 new religions have been granted official recognition in Japan, some with a Christian basis other springing from Japanese Buddhism while the most original is held to be the "Electricity Culture Religion," whose divinity was Thomas Edison.

One could be humorous at the expense of these mushroom cults but it is a tragedy that such a vacuum should exist in the lives of so many people that can only be filled by trashy mumbo-jumbo, but when we criticise let our criticism be constructive and not negative.

Let us attempt to tell the people in this and every country where our voice can be heard how we believe they can achieve the physical or mental happiness that so many millions are seeking for if we can offer them no alternatives, then in all honesty we should leave them to their "opium."—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR MOYSE.

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF NON-SMOKERS (est. 1926) exists to enable members to travel, eat and enjoy entertainment in an atmosphere free from tobacco smoke. Young and old invited to join. Details from hon. sec., 23, Lyncroft Avenue, Ripley, Derbys.