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The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI — No. 28

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THE PROVERB "All roads lead to Rome" was presumably coined either during the secular Roman Empire of antiquity or during the ecclesiastical empire of the Papacy in the medieval Age of Faith. For it has been the extraordinary destiny of the city by the Tiber to have become successively the official headquarters of two "universal" empires — the empire which rose to supreme power over its contemporary world during the centuries that immediately preceded the Christian era, and the "spiritual" empire of the Church of Rome which began under the protection of the secular empire of the Caesars and eventually became itself the temporal headquarters of a professedly spiritual empire, dominating the western world as such, perhaps even more effectively than its secular predecessor had ever done. Certainly a remarkable destiny for a single town, the origins of which are lost in obscurity.

B.C., is quite probable; most ancient states were monarchical at some time or other. It is even possible that one early king may have been named Romulus, but that is the most that classical scholarship seems prepared to concede. The rest vanishes into classical mythology.

Pagan Theology and Romulus

Time was, however, when this would not have been so!

For, in the ancient pagan theology of the Roman Empire, the founder of the Eternal City was a sacrosanct figure whose history and divine origin were fundamental dogmas, guarantees of the divine favour accorded to the "ever-victorious" armies of Rome.

While there were plenty of

atheists in ancient Rome, including at least one High Priest, none other than Julius Caesar, we much doubt if any ancient historian would have dared to deny the divine paternity, or still less the historical existence, of Romulus, in whose existence and divinity pagan Rome had a vested interest, with the world providentially designed to be ruled from Rome under the auspices of the pagan gods. Nowadays when the pagan deities have gone to join the "snows of yesteryear", modern scholarship is free to work its wicked will on the legends of pagan Rome as on those of, say, the ancient Vikings.

Christian Theology and St. Peter

This happy state of things has not yet been reached with regard to St. Peter. Actually, whilst the legendary stories that have accumulated round the "first Pope of Rome", Peter, are not quite so extravagant as those around Romulus, they do not appear to be any better guaranteed when judged from the standpoint of critical scholarship. We know absolutely nothing about Peter apart from the New Testament, written at a much later date by people of unknown antecedents and obviously uncritical in their treatment. Not even in the N.T. is there any record of Peter being connected with Rome or with the Church of Rome. Actually the only evidence, if so it can be called, that Peter, assuming his existence, had any connection with Rome, is to be found in the last chapter of the document described as the First Epistle of Peter, where the writer refers to himself as writing from Babylon. It is true that Babylon is sometimes used in early Christian literature as a synonym for Rome, e.g. in the Apocalypse. But, as the French scholar Saloman Reinach has aptly commented, while the term "Babylon" may be applied as a term of abuse to Rome, as in the Apocalypse, it would hardly be given as the writer's address if he were writing from Rome! As Reinach points out, the Babylon referred to appears to be a place of that name in Egypt near the modern Cairo. (The original Babylon can hardly be meant, since it was a ruin by this time.) In any case very few modern liberal scholars believe that the Epistle of Peter was actually written by Peter. Actually, the Catholic dogma that Peter

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

St. Peter and Romulus

By F. A. RIDLEY

Two Mythical Founders

Unlike some other famous cities, such as Alexandria and Constantinople, the "founders" of both pagan and Christian Rome were obscure, perhaps entirely mythical, figures. Neither of these posthumously famous persons—Romulus, the founder of pagan Rome, and Peter, the Jewish founder of the Papacy of ecclesiastical Rome—is fully historical, to say the least. Romulus was, it is said, born of a virgin and suckled by a she-wolf, a combination of circumstances even more unusual than the Gospel stories of the birth of Christ. Even in the New Testament, Peter appears as a vague and shadowy figure of unknown origin and with his death wrapped in legends. Though the Papacy today stands or falls, as on a fundamental dogma, on the assumption that Peter founded the Papacy and the Church of Rome historically, it is not at all certain—outside the "inspired" and not always accurate pages of the New Testament—that any such person as Simon-bar-Jonas, alias Peter, alias the Prince of the Apostles, ever existed. The alleged founder of ecclesiastical Rome may be as mythical as Romulus, the first King of Rome.

Peter and Romulus

Modern historical research, even in the sphere of secular history, is still largely controlled by theological considerations which have nothing in common with historical science. In the two cases of Peter and Romulus non-historical influence becomes very evident. For Romulus, the offspring of the war god Mars and the virgin Rhea, was created by a pagan theology no longer operative. Hence modern historical scholarship, disregarding theological considerations, indicates an increasing tendency to disregard the patriotic legends of pagan Rome and to relegate not only his alleged parents but Romulus himself, along with his brother Remus and the foster mother, to the domain of legend. That there were kings in Rome prior to the Roman Republic, doubtfully ascribed to about 500

founded the Church of Rome cannot be traced back further than about 200 A.D. at the earliest, much later than any book in our New Testament, which appears to have been completed soon after 150 A.D.

Peter and Paul

In the official Liturgy of the Church of Rome the "glorious apostles Peter and Paul" are usually bracketed together. Actually, taking the N.T. as our sole authority, one can make out a much better case for Paul rather than Peter as the actual founder of the Church, as also for his existence as an historical character. Paul, unlike Peter, is actually represented as going to Rome, and, even if he did not write the Epistle to the Romans, the fact that he was supposed to have written it indicates that an association between Paul and the Church of Rome existed from a much earlier period in the annals of the Church than was the case with Peter.

Peter and Modern Scholarship

Nowadays the dogmatic teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is fully elaborated. Peter was the first Pope, divinely commissioned to rule the Church, endowed with

an infallibility which he has bequeathed to his successors: the divinely ordained Rock (Petros: "stone" in Greek) upon which the "One True Church" is based until the end of time. All the above assumptions are articles of faith and if any one of them could be shown false nothing would be left to the Vatican but to close its doors. The historical existence and Roman connections of St. Peter represent a vested interest, a *sine qua non*, for one of the most powerful organisations in the world. Faced with this formidable fact, critical scholarship in professedly Christian lands is as reticent in querying the Petrine legend as the theology of pagan times was in regard to the legend of Romulus. Indeed, only a few Protestant writers, aiming to expose the rival contentions of Rome, have so far turned the searchlight of modern critical knowledge on the Petrine legend. When modern secular scholarship demolishes the Catholic legend of Peter with the same boldness applied to that of Romulus, a notable step will have been taken in the intellectual evolution of mankind and a notable victory will then have been gained over the dead hand of religious obscurantism and its present stranglehold on secular knowledge.

Catholic Influence in American Unions

[An abridged version of an article in the *Liberal of Philadelphia*, June 1956.]

NOT ONLY is our public school system deliberately being destroyed by the U.S. Roman Catholic hierarchy and their subversive laymen agents, but the American trade unions are now practically dominated by these self-styled loyal Americans, subjects and agents of a foreign power, the ruler of every Roman Catholic on earth, Pope Pacelli.

I learned from James Morton Freeman's pamphlet *No Friend of Labour*, the following:

The Xavier Labour School in New York City was founded in 1935 by Jesuit James B. Carey; by 1948 it had grown into some 100 Catholic labour schools established in every industrial city in the U.S.A. Jesuits directed 24 of them, 32 by diocesan authorities, the rest sponsored by Catholic fraternal organisations, colleges and the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

The Secretary of Labour, James P. Mitchell, is Roman Catholic. The A.F.L. President, George Meany, is Roman Catholic.

[The article here lists other prominent trade union officials who are Catholics.—Ed.]

The C.I.O. President, Walter Reuther, has said, in the course of a statement reported by the Secretary of the Newspaper Guild, C.I.O.: "My economic philosophy comes from the Papal Encyclicals."

In April 1952, in *Converted Catholic* magazine, Angelo Vallo pointed out that the C.I.O. was then 60 per cent. Catholic, and the Transport Union of the C.I.O. was 90 per cent. Catholic. He said that "through direction of the Roman Catholic clergy, reporting directly to the Pope, the Roman Church is taking over the American trade unions."

The R.C. newspaper, *The Pilot*, October 23rd, 1954, published Archbishop Cushing's address delivered at the seventh Constitutional Convention of Utility Workers of America, C.I.O., on October 21st, as follows:

"While begging God's blessings on your deliberations during this Convention, I take the opportunity of commending you for your continued efforts to keep clean your leadership and your organisation from every taint of disloyal, anti-religious communism.

"Your actions have not been without self-interest. You have recognised that the present-day Red, as the agent of an alien power, is an enemy of your nation, and of the national tradi-

tions which have enabled the labour movement to prosper here in America. . . .

"Both as a citizen and as a spokesman for morality I would like to remind you of your solemn obligation to vote, to use your great privilege of participating in the choice of those whom you wish to serve as your rulers. . . . Propagate the Truth. Explain the Truth. Defend the Truth. But in a Democracy you must not forget to vote for the Truth."

Every citizen of America, non-Catholic and Catholic alike, should, by now, know that the Church of Rome is an alien power; irreconcilable with democracy; a huge political organisation. They should have fortitude enough to stand up like men and women, loyal citizens, and fight this alien *Roman Catholic* power that is bent on destroying the human rights of every citizen.

The Fascist Church of Rome has for too long been riding us with boots and spurs. Remove their boots and spurs, put the Church of Rome in her place; force her to abide by and uphold U.S.A. laws, or get out of U.S.A., and stay out.

Chapman Cohen on Jesus

WHETHER the Jesus of the New Testament is or is not a myth, it is certain that the Jesus of the "advanced" Christian is one. And if I am to speak quite plainly, it is a myth that is saturated with humbug. For even if the moral reforming Jesus were admitted, he is only a cover for something else. It is Jesus Christ the incarnate God that is required, and once our assent to the moral reformer is given he is dropped and we are presented with the God whom we are asked to worship. The Christian clergy as a whole are not in the least interested in Jesus as a mere moral reformer; they are only interested in the character that can be used as a figurehead for a religion. But today the God grows increasingly unattractive, so assent must be gained on a non-religious issue. You are now asked to believe in Jesus, not because he is "very God of God", but because he was a good man, a teacher of sound economics, a force for "moral uplift", a Jerusalem social worker or district visitor who did good for all men. And under the cover of the jubilation that follows this remarkable discovery the reformer is dropped and the God is established in his place. The nature of the trick is not probably seen by all those who work it, but it is quite evident to those who have their eyes open and their wits alert.

(*An Atheist's Approach to Christianity.*)

Censorship

By JOHN A. LEE (NEW ZEALAND)

MABEL HOWARD, M.P., has discovered "a disgusting book" in the General Assembly Library, and she is handing it over to the police. I do hope the General Assembly Librarian is not placed in jeopardy. I am sure that if anyone went through all the books in a bookshop, starting at the Bible and going on to Rabelais and *The Decameron*, they would find many disturbing paragraphs. The Bible is not a parade of holiness—it contains much about very sinful men; indeed, there is not a commandment which sinful men do not break. Murder, theft, violence, sadism, homosexuality, incest, adultery, prostitution, onanism, bestiality, fraud, genocide, idolatry, lust in all its forms are there. The conduct of man is surveyed in all its disgusting manifestations, and all are understood and forgiven the penitent in the New Testament, although crucifixion is sadism at its apex. If Mabel Howard reaches for Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* she will find occasional disgustingly true references to Nero, Tiberius and to other Caesars. If she reaches for the *Confessions of St. Augustine* she will discover that the Saint was a homosexual until he put behind him the urges of the flesh and lived the life of what religionists call the spirit. Rabelaisian has come to mean bawdy, broad, but it is good for us to realise that at the dawn of printing scholars wrote rhymes much like those boys write on the lavatory walls; such knowledge is an essential part of our education. *The Decameron* was one of the first books to be printed, and as we read it we know that in those times the crude processes of the body were much in the mind of scholars. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is bawdy. Smollett has a term for a shrew which would startle the moderns. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is the story of a woman who was a whore, who was incestuous, a transported felon, and so on, and Winston Churchill recently confessed to enjoyment of its reading. Burton, author of *The Thousand and One Nights*, was honoured by the Crown, but there are those who would burn his book; indeed, his wife burned many of his manuscripts after his death, an incredible act of literary vandalism. *Frankenstein* is a horror story which made our spines tingle; for sheer horror Edgar Allan Poe is unparalleled. Voltaire's *Candide* I have read a half dozen times, but there are those who would prosecute its references to experimental biology. There are those who would burn the Havelock Ellis *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* during periods of hysteria. In the General Assembly Library there is a rare and magnificent book of newspaper cartoons of about 100 years ago, none of which could be published today. There are *Ulysses* (James Joyce), Romain's *Body's Rapture*, Caldwell's *God's Little Acre*—the world and certainly the Parliamentary Library would be the poorer without them.

But who will call these books in the General Assembly Library corrupt? An adult? Nonsense! Would *Well of Loneliness* corrupt a juvenile? It would bore to tears. I do not think any youngster would get past the first episode in *Memoirs of Hecate County*, 14s. 6d., which an Australian Federal Minister wisely unbanned after the ban had been imposed for some time. Premier Chifley unbanned Steinbeck's *Wayward Bus*, 2s. 9d., by cable, while holiday-making in New Zealand. Reaching backward again, I am sure no juvenile would be corrupted by the *Golden Ass of Apuleius*, 3s. 6d., *The Satyricon of Petronius*, 18s., Ovid's *Art of Love*, 18s., or Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece*. The intelligence which would read these would not be easily corrupted.

I cannot see an M.P. being corrupted by reading. I can

see many an M.P. becoming rabbit-like by not reading. M.P.s are average people. They tell average stories. "Have you heard this one?" M.P.s go to smoking concerts. The average M.P. is an average man and holds his end up. Those who never tell bawdy yarns are the exception. I never heard Nash or Nordmeyer or Fraser tell a hot one, but I have seen them explode at a piece of true humour, although, to be fair, I am sure they would wince at dirt for dirt's sake. However, M.P.s are not so easily corrupted. I tell few yarns myself; I admit I tell a few and laugh at many. For every allegedly smutty book in the world in which we live boys and men hear a thousand bawdy stories and remain uncorrupted. Sex is always the subject of humour, in the street, in the barrack room, in the bar-room. But people do not behave as the stories they tell, but as they were brought up. No healthy person is corrupted by nude beauty in photograph or painting unless, as with French cards, the work has been produced to corrupt. Nudity is not corrupting.

September Morn was prohibited in the U.S.A. and later sold five million copies and appeared on walls the world over. What nonsense to suggest that *September Morn* corrupted. "Definition is difficult," said the Premier. Exactly. Obscenity seems to relate more to subjective than objective definition. I cannot imagine any M.P. being so susceptible as to be corrupted by a book. I wonder what books Mabel Howard, M.P., has asked the General Assembly Library to buy for her. I asked for dozens, good books, but books alive.

Books of the sort I have mentioned have a place in a scholar's library, but not on the shelves of a bookshop. No M.P. would be corrupted by their presence. Booksellers get scared when M.P.s start to denounce books. None would want to sell a banned book for the profit; there is no book which could be sold in N.Z. which could meet the costs of prosecution.

The Rt. Hon. Walter Nash says he endorsed licences in a way to exclude crime and sex. 999 novels out of 1,000 are about crime and sex. The atrocious slush is considered to be all right, the realist can be suspect. Not that Walter would be unfair. Apart from his *Forever Amber* ban, now no longer in existence, 16s. posted, I think I would trust Walter not to become hysterical about books. Love interrupted by villainy and deceit is the main standby of hundreds of writers sex, sex, unreal, escapist dishonest. Crime, arson, forgery, murder, blackmail, bank robbery, theft, and so on, is the substance of about 60 per cent. of imported books. Sir John Allum, Mayor of Auckland, read three who-dun-its a week. No one would suggest that a quarter of a century of such reading would be likely to cause Sir John Allum to murder a political opponent or rob a bank. The no sex, no crime ban is impossible. Sex is in every sticky love story and crime in every who-dun-it.

There were plenty of paper backs when I was a lad and I read them. The first Gorky I read was *Twenty-six Men and a Girl*. I picked it out of a sixpenny bin in Auckland about 43 years ago. The novel of Paul de Kock in which a hero fled from wife to wife pursued by husbands, I read in the same way. I read the Zola books in sixpennies. There were sixpenny books about Charles Peace, eminent murderer. I read a sixpenny Sappho, and all the crime fiction I could lay hands on. It is true we also read the magnificent fourpenny paper backs of the R.P.A., the books of Tyndal and Spencer and Huxley, and so on. But

(Concluded on page 225)

This Believing World

Whatever Methodists were supposed to believe in their early days, modern Methodism is always ready now to throw overboard, if necessary. A puzzled believer recently asked the *Methodist Recorder* what was meant by the "resurrection of the body" and the *M.R.'s* expert had no hesitation in declaring that it did *not* mean "belief in the continued existence of our actual present bodies by some sort of biological sequence". To believe this is "a literalist misunderstanding" of the New Testament. It is astonishing how often modern Christianity is ready to throw overboard so many "literalist" quotations from the Bible. The one it hates most is that in which Jesus, in the clearest terms, tells you to hate your parents to be his disciple. Jesus never, never meant this—what he meant was to love your parents though, through some "misunderstanding", he did not actually say so. How very strange!

★

Although all Roman and Anglo-Catholics insist that Jesus made marriage absolutely indissoluble, this is, of course, not the case, as anybody familiar with the Bible must admit. At one time, the Church had the power to prevent divorce—but now? As in so many things, even that stout Anglo, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is obliged to tell his clergy that they can marry divorced people in their churches or not as they please. He knows as well as anybody that marriage in a church is *not* legal without the civil marriage, and that people are beginning to realise that marriage in the "sight of God" alone is pure clap-trap. Better then for the Church to marry people, divorced or not, in church than to lose them in a register office. So the canon law had better be dropped.

★

The Church of England is quite disturbed that fewer babies are being baptised—though the fact that most young mothers haven't the least idea why they should be is not given as one of the reasons. One mother thought, for instance, that it was necessary because otherwise the baby would not be buried in consecrated ground if it died! And Godparents are as ignorant as parents. Whether baptism is a religious ritual taken over from the Zodiac sign Aquarius, the "water bearer", or whether it had to be introduced because the early Christians rarely washed and it had to be forced upon them, is not really known; but it was always a Godsend for the Church. As in the case of marriage, it was an additional Christian stranglehold on the people. The wily old Church!

★

What is a good Christian mother to do when her wicked husband sneers at her belief? This baffling question has had to be answered many times in the past, but the "padre" who answers religious questions in the Leicester *Evening News* has an unfailing cure. "Go on quietly praying for your husband," he advises, especially as "a father who is indifferent or antagonistic to the Christian religion will develop an arrogant, selfish nature." But the intriguing thing about this is that practically all the monstrous parents who torture and even kill their children, as any officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children will admit, are fully believing members of the Christian Faith. So are nearly or all the people who torture animals. What has Christianity done for them?

★

The Tricentenary of the Resettlement of Jews in England has naturally brought in many enthusiastic accounts of Judaism—as if Biblical criticism had utterly failed in dealing with the Old Testament. As an example, the Rev.

A. Altmann, writing in *The Observer*, tells us that Judaism "conceives itself as having originated with the divine call" which made Abraham "become the Father of a nation". Whether Mr. Altmann really believes this is difficult to say, but there is not a scrap of evidence that Abraham ever lived in spite of Mr. Altmann calling in "the reckoning of archaeologists". No archaeologist or anybody else has given an atom of proof that Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or any of the 12 sons of Jacob were historical personages. They are myths.

★

The truth is that, in boosting Judaism, modern defenders have to leave the Bible severely alone—if they can. They concentrate, as far as possible, on "secular" conduct and "secular" example though they like to talk at length about the "rôle of the Jewish people in the messianic process", whatever that means, for nothing can be vaguer. In the State of Israel can be found Jews working side by side who believe every word in the Old Testament, and others who ridicule most of its superstitious nonsense and belief in myth and miracle. Judaism is riddled with unbelief quite as much as Christianity.

★

So at last there is "definite" proof of Virgin Births—not, of course, with the Holy Ghost or an Angel as the happy father, but through "skin grafts", whatever these are. The defender of Virgin Births appears to be Dr. Helen Spurway, who is a eugenics lecturer at University College, London, and about 19 women have come with proof that they are definitely virgin mothers. Whether all this will bring in the Roman Church with a pronouncement from the Vatican remains to be seen. But we doubt whether a skin graft will be allowed in this way to compete with the Holy Ghost or even the Angel Gabriel.

Branch Line

It is with very great pleasure that we announce the re-establishment of the Edinburgh Branch, N.S.S. Due to the determination of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. W. Cronan, old and new members have been brought together, and the Society is once again represented in the Scottish capital. Edinburgh—once termed the Athens of the North—becomes an international meeting place during the three weeks of the famous Festival of Music and Drama, which is always inaugurated by a Service of Praise and Thanksgiving in St. Giles' Cathedral. It will be one of the tasks of the N.S.S. Branch to demonstrate the folly of this ceremony; but throughout the remainder of the year, too, religion has to be combated in Auld Reekie. We wish Mr. Cronan and his fellow-members every success and call on unattached Freethinkers in the district to join the Branch. Mr. Cronan's address is 52 Sloan Street, Edinburgh, 6.

Meanwhile, Nottingham Branch, with its effective blend of youth and experience, is increasing its area of activity. On Sunday, July 1st, Messrs. R. Morrell and R. Powe held the first Freethought meeting in Mansfield for many years. But the Branch does not neglect the social side and recently took part in a Summer outing to Derbyshire under the guidance of the Branch President, Mr. J. W. Challand. Places visited included Chesterfield, Bakewell, Derwent and the Blue John Mines.

C. McC.

—NEXT WEEK—

2500 A.D.

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE FREETHINKER

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

The FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d.

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

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.

E. FINKEL and M. BARRETT.—Your arguments are of course valid as against the old-style Omnipotent God of the Christians, but take no account of later theistic twists such as the "argument from Limitation of Power, in which "God" possesses all the power that exists (for Good), but all-the-power-that-exists is not enough to overcome all-the-Evil-that-exists.

E. MILLS.—Our *Bible Handbook* amply demonstrates that the "Holy Book" is untrustworthy. It is therefore useless merely to quote the Bible as though it carries its own proof.

W. E. BOX.—You have detected an error in McCabe's *Popes and their Church* (page 30), where he seemingly leaves Charlemagne alive in 823. Information about the Popes was given in "Facts for Freethinkers" in our issues of February 3rd and March 9th.

S. G. PORTER.—Readers who are members of a trade union will do us a service if they will acquaint us with authentic information of Catholic influences.

CONSTANCE FRAZER.—Agnosticism has been dealt with many, many times in our columns. If any agnostic has something new to say (which we much doubt) we shall be interested to see it.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.

Bristol (The Downs).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER (Cardiff).

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.

Flat Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: Various speakers.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 15th, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "St. Swithin".

Notes and News

The Kashmir dispute has many aspects on which we are unqualified to pass judgment. It is unlikely, anyway, that a simple solution is possible. Yet, in one respect at least, the secularist's support must be on the side of India. The primary achievement of that country of many and powerful religious forces (and, in particular, of its enlightened leader, Mr. Nehru) was its decision to build its house upon the rock of secularism. Pakistan, instead, has chosen to

Freethinker Sustentation Fund

To July 1st, 1956: A. Hancock, 11s.; P. G. Bamford, 12s.; Mrs. Vallance, 16s.; J. West, 10s.; C. E. Ratcliffe, £1; W. H. Goldsmith, 10s.; C. Pustan, 10s.; Dr. W. H. Cilliers, 6s.; F. S. A. Davies, 11s.; H. T. Derrett, £1; J. T. McDonald, 10s.; F. H. Eastman, £1; D. Davies, 4s.; R. F. Derrett, £1; C. Coates, 7s. 10d.; D. Harris, 6s.; proceeds of sale of *Secular Poems* by C. E. Ratcliffe, £2 14s. 3d.—Total, £12 8s. 1d.

build on the sands (one might say, the quicksands) of religion. This cardinal difference between the two states is recognised by the Kashmir Premier, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. Kashmiris, he said—speaking in Srinagar on June 26th—"had demonstrated their faith in secular principles by standing up boldly against aggressive designs by Pakistan". "He was certain," he continued, "that they would not be swayed by religious appeals."



MANY readers will have noticed Mrs. Margaret Knight's telling articles and letters in *The New Statesman and Nation* and *The Observer* recently. The *Sunday Dispatch* (1/7/56) gave further publicity to the demand for more freedom of the air when it reported an interview with Mrs. Knight. She has, it states, "been trying to get the BBC to allow her to give another broadcast" in order that she may "develop her controversial arguments about giving children 'scientific humanism' instead of religion". "But every time she asks the BBC if they will let her discuss it on the air they reply politely but firmly, 'Sorry, there's nothing we can do about it just now.'" The *Dispatch* gave Mrs. Knight's comment as "It's rather like fighting an eider-down." In one way or another, though, the BBC has lately been made aware of a gathering feeling that the expression of religious criticism and of secular alternatives is a vital feature of democratic society.



UNFORTUNATELY, *The Observer* has been compelled to bring the correspondence on "Atheism and the BBC" to a close. It coincided with the controversy caused by the "Krushchev" edition, with consequent restriction of space. Nevertheless, *The Observer* upheld the fine liberal tradition in British journalism by printing a fair selection of the letters it received, and it now intimates that: "We do propose to return to this subject some time, either editorially or in some other way." It hopes, too, that "there will then be opportunity for some further correspondence". We eagerly look forward to this event.

CENSORSHIP

(Concluded from page 223)

we read all the notorious books too. I believe few are corrupted by reading, many by environment.

The real problem of our times is economic. We have always known that if boys and girls get as much money to spend as mother and father they will want father and mother's freedom. We did not have car fares where hundreds of juveniles have motor-cycles and cars. The result of this new economic freedom has been good generally, but where the environment is vicious financial freedom has exaggerated the vice. Let me again repeat that for every sexy book a juvenile reads he or she hears a thousand bawdy stores. When boys and girls go wrong they need restraint, understanding, engagement in some healthful activity. But while the world spends millions on militarism, on degrading advice about wounding and killing, why should we get excited about sadism in a gangster boy? The sadism of a napalm bomb is taken for granted.

“Based on Hatred”

By H. CUTNER

IT HAS ALWAYS been a policy with me to read both sides of any case and, in particular, anything written by someone who, while agreeing with me, also violently disagrees with me. Thus it is a pleasure to come across a letter like that of Mr. J. Ottaway in these columns (June 15th).

Mr. Ottaway gave up believing “in things supernatural” at the advanced age of 16, but was disgusted when he came across an atheist pamphlet which “contained this fragrant little gibe” — “Jesus Christ died on the cross and parsons have been living on it ever since!” One can well imagine how his tender little soul was seared to the quick by this “fragrant little gibe”, and we can understand, of course, as he has never seen a copy of THE FREETHINKER since, he can say, “This seems to be about your level”; and even add that it is enough “to drive a decent fair-minded atheist straight into the arms of God”. How any gibe, fragrant or not, could drive an “atheist” who denies that there is a God, straight into his arms is not very clear to the particular atheist writing this, but that is a small matter. After all, the naughty low-level hate-loving FREETHINKER has existed 75 years, and not even Mr. Ottaway can explain away that astonishing fact. How many weekly journals with a special and most unpopular message can boast of such a record?

But when it comes to *hate* — not even the most inveterate atheist writing for, or reading this journal, can equal the hate which dominates Mr. Ottaway — a hate, indeed, enough to drive him right into the arms of a non-existent God. That would take some beating.

We neither blame nor hate a God who does not exist. But when a God is produced — even by an atheist like Mr. Ottaway — who is called the Creator of the world and everything in it, who else can be blamed for the “suffering, cruelty, and ills of the world”?

Where have we said that all Christian priests are *wicked*? How does Mr. Ottaway know if he has never read this journal? Did he learn at the age of 16 to put up a dummy and then blame us for it — or what?

And how noble it is for such an atheist as Mr. Ottaway (from the age of 16) to admit that Schweitzer is “a good man”. Schweitzer ought to give him a medal.

But the gem of Mr. Ottaway’s “pleading” or rather “hate” is in connection with neo-Malthusianism. How dare we say that neo-Malthusians have been “vindicated”? No wonder he is almost blind with hate and rage.

The plain answer is that of course they have been vindicated by Christians themselves. From the days of Richard Carlile (in 1825), right down to World War I, our Christian Churches, magistrates, Members of Parliament, and reformers generally have moved heaven and earth to see that contraceptive knowledge must be denied to the people — not, of course, to the rich, but to the poor. And to see that this prohibition was enforced, the whole of the machinery of the law was brought to bear on any person who had the temerity to defy it. Any number of obscure persons selling contraceptives or giving information were fined or imprisoned or both; and one of the culminating points was reached when Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were sentenced to six months’ imprisonment and heavily fined for publishing the famous *Fruits of Philosophy* by Dr. Charles Knowlton — about as mild a work on the subject as could be imagined. It was not the fault of the good Christian magistrates and judges who tried them that they did not serve their sentence. But no one was safe from prison who advocated contraception, and certainly no one

was safe from Christian libels and lies. Bradlaugh was more bitterly attacked by Christians for his neo-Malthusianism and his liberal views on sex than he was for his atheism.

And now? Christian Welfare Societies, finding it perfectly safe after the lone fight put up by Freethinkers, come in and laughingly are ready to show how and to allow their followers to practise “family planning” as they please. Family planning sounds so much more decent than plain birth control. Even the Roman Church allows the “safe period” though, of course, it does not allow “blatant” contraception.

It was a body of Freethinkers more than anybody else which made family planning respectable, and Christians have at long last to admit it. But — naturally — not atheists like Mr. Ottaway (from the age of 16). Our neo-Malthusian Freethinkers have, for him, *not* been vindicated. Their reputation will, I am sure, survive even his godless displeasure.

And so will THE FREETHINKER.

Voltaire Celebrations at Geneva

WE have now received details of the arrangements between the World Union of Freethinkers and the French National Congress for the Voltaire celebrations in Geneva.

Saturday, August 18th, 1956, 2.30 p.m. Meet at Les Délices, Voltaire’s house, now the home of the Voltaire Institute. Director Mr. T. Besterman; see the collections and library. make definite arrangements for the following excursions:
Sunday, August 19th See Geneva (if clear and fine to the summit of the Salève, a famous view point).
Monday, August 20th Ferney-Voltaire, where for twenty years Voltaire reigned as a feudal seigneur, in a free zone on the frontier.

Tuesday, August 21st Montriond, Lausanne, where Voltaire had a third house, forming a triangular bolt-hole; Lausanne is also famous for visitors such as Gibbon, Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth.

Wednesday, August 22nd, Chateau of Chillon, famous lakeside stronghold, subject of Byron’s poem.
Thursday, August 23rd Coppet, the home of Mme de Staël and a centre for progressive thought.

Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers, writes: “Those who wish to join in the above should make hotel arrangements with a travel agency, such as Cook’s or W.T.A., which have a first call on certain hotels. I can recommend for the impecunious a students’ pension, Pension des Délices, rue des Délices, Geneva, almost next door to Voltaire’s house. The Hotel Beau Séjour has also been recommended. For those who wish to stay longer and visit the Alps, I can recommend a modest but excellent little hotel at Finhaut, with fine views from the windows of most rooms, good food, but not fitted with running h. and c. in the bedrooms; from Finhaut (about 4,000 feet above sea) magnificent views of Mont Blanc are to be obtained. The hotel is hence called Hotel Mont Blanc, Finhaut, Valais, Switzerland.”

We hope the visitors will include a number from Britain; they are assured of an interesting and happy holiday in friendly and stimulating company, celebrating the memory of one of the greatest of Freethinkers.

“I am glad I don’t believe in God. When I look at the misery of the World and its bitterness I think that no belief can be more ignoble.” — Somerset Maugham (*A Writer’s Notebook*).

REVIEW

“Mark Rutherford” A Neglected Victorian

By VICTOR E. NEUBURG

William Hale White (Mark Rutherford), a Critical Study.
By IRVIN STOCK. Allen and Unwin. 25s.

IN HIS VIVID RE-CREATION of rural English Puritanism, William Hale White — “Mark Rutherford” — is unique amongst novelists. He is one Victorian writer of power and intensity who has been fairly consistently overlooked. At a time when interest in the nineteenth century is considerable, and scholarly evaluations of period and personality are being attempted, such neglect of his work is puzzling. It is to be hoped that this book, which seeks to show him as a great figure of 19th century English fiction, will establish him finally as a major writer. Dr. Stock has a profound knowledge of the Victorian religious scene, and his study is both sympathetic and profound.

The first two of his novels, *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*, appeared posthumously, edited by the author's friend, Reuben Shapcott, and all his subsequent four novels were issued in this manner. Hale White's authorship was not made public, but was freely discussed in letters to such friends as G. J. Holyoake. A good deal of Hale White's own life appeared in these two books, but it is probable that the character “Mark Rutherford” was drawn partly from the tragic and shadowy figure of William Maccall whom Hale White knew. Two years after the publication in 1885 of *Deliverance*, appeared what is generally considered the greatest of his novels, *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*. This was followed some years later by *Miriam's Schooling*, then *Catherine Furze*. The last novel, *Clara Hopgood*, was published in 1896. It is upon these six novels that his reputation as an artist rests. The three volumes of occasional pieces published as *Pages from a Journal*, *More Pages from a Journal* and *Last Pages from a Journal*, and an autobiographical fragment, quite perfect in its way, represent no change in his development.

“Hale White,” writes Dr. Stock, “may well be thought to deserve more attention than he has received. He deserves it for various reasons: because of his value as the historian of a segment of English culture not elsewhere, except to some degree by George Eliot, so understandingly or so vividly preserved; because of a dramatisation of the problems of moral freedom as subtle — and almost, for his time, as daring — as that to be found in the work of André Gide, with whom in fact he has a startling affinity; and because of the beauty of his art, in its style and its dramatic clarity and power.”

All these, however, were the literary by-products of his work; the quality of his greatness as a novelist lies in “the passionate sharing of his insight”. Hale White — who did not begin to write until he was 50 — suffered a good deal in his life. For 30 years he watched his first wife dying of a progressive paralysis — disseminated sclerosis — which gradually crippled and blinded her. It is hardly surprising that he wrote to his son: “As we get older, we find that endurance is the exact synonym for life.” This was an immediate reality for him, and one which is reflected in the intensity of the best of his writing; his life and art were intimately connected, and the study of his work most properly begins with some knowledge of his life.

Dr. Stock devotes the first three of his chapters to a biography, one each to the novels, one to the last writings and a final conclusion. His book is in a very real sense a critical and perceptive study, though it does seem that the

analogy between White and Gide is overstressed. There is an excellent bibliography, which includes a most useful section on articles on Hale White which have appeared in books and magazines. In the field of literary criticism, the last word can never be said, but since Dr. Stock has done so much towards a reassessment of “Mark Rutherford”, his book will remain one of permanent value.

FOR NEWCOMERS — 10

The Collapse of God

A SCHOLARLY DEFENDER of the belief in some kind of god wrote: “Simply by observing the outer world, primitive man was forced to be conscious of a God” (Voysey, *Theism for all Mankind*).

Precisely! But what qualifications has primitive man for “observing the outer world”? Such qualifications come with the advance of science and discovery. It is then that the intellectual setting undergoes a vital change. It was a change completely disruptive of the notion of God.

The voyages of Diaz, Columbus, Da Gama, Magellan and others made for great changes in the map of the world, and the Biblical notion of a flat earth became impossible. Copernicus revived and substantiated the theory of Aristarchus that the earth revolved round the sun. This planet was not the darling of creation. Galileo and Newton reduced the motions of matter to a problem in physics and mathematics. Gradually the chances of divine interference were abolished. Newton's *Principia* (1687) showed that celestial bodies attracted each other with forces directly as their masses and inversely as the square of their distances. The orbit taken by planets was accounted for by the sun's attractive force. Newton's central force abolished the need for Kepler's genii. And though the nebular hypothesis of Laplace has since failed for the purpose for which it was intended, it has been replaced by other equally atheistic accounts. With Lyell and others, geological progress swept away floods and cataclysms and the idea of special Creation about 6,000 years ago. Archaeology, palæontology, the discovery of fossils and implements, primitive art depicted on the walls of caves — here, also, was a rude shock to religious tradition.

Philology showed the natural origin of language; biology related man to the rest of the animal world, and the possible intervention of deity became more and more remote.

Small wonder that in this new mental environment men should begin to ask what there was left for God to do. And this is noticeable in many subsidiary changes that accompanied the advance of knowledge. For example, “trial by ordeal”, with the verdict in the hands of God, died out. The sale of indulgences and charms, and other religious practices, began to be questioned. Disease was no longer to be attributed to the activity of demons or the punishment of God. The doctrine of the Creation, Fall and Redemption crumbled when the foundations of special creation were removed. If no creation, no fall; no fall, no need for atonement. Storms, famines, pestilences, eclipses — the reason for each was to be sought in nature: where remedies were required, they were to be worked for, not prayed for.

The clinching arguments came from comparative mythology, destroying the supposedly unique nature of Christian revelation, and from anthropology, which, in the hands of Tylor, Frazer, Robertson-Smith and others, showed that the origin of religious beliefs can be sought in studying primitive peoples, past and present. They showed how these peoples, surrounded by natural forces which are to them mysterious, and experiencing dreams, hallucinations

and other states of mind, of the causes of which they have no adequate knowledge, they proceed to people their world with a host of spiritual agencies.

The whole story of the progress of natural knowledge is the story of the gradual recession of God from doing everything to doing nothing.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Oriental Oddities

In Indonesia's new Cabinet Moslem representation is so strong that frequently Cabinet meetings are interrupted for a joint prayer session, led by the Minister for Religious Affairs. Perhaps if they pray very hard they will get an exclusively Moslem Parliament.

★

Buddhist leaders are making vigorous demands for total prohibition in Ceylon, and the Premier is to direct all Singalese diplomatic missions abroad not to serve alcoholic liquor at official functions. A dry season is anticipated.

★

An Israeli Arab chieftain, Sheikh Suleiman, interviewed recently by a newspaper man, confirmed his friendliness for the young state of Israel. Since its inception, he said, his wives had increased in number from 20 to 39. He now has 79 children ("I don't know how many boys or girls, but I love them all, and thank God my strength is still with me").

Asked to comment on the recent controversy in THE FREETHINKER between Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Bennett, he said, "Who is Malthus?"

★

Worrying news reaches us from Ceylon, where anti-Catholicism seems to be growing. Returning Catholics have complained that opposition has become more open and that recent legislation has been designed to cut down Catholic activities, especially in the field of education. (Shame!) No more European sisters are to be permitted to take up residence in Ceylon.

But the worst is yet to come. Be brave! The further complaint is that in the last election, parties of Buddhist monks visited some villages carrying a statue of the Sacred Heart in one hand, and a statue of the Buddha in the other. The villagers were told that their electoral choice was between Christ and Buddha, and that they could show allegiance to the latter by voting for Bandaransika's party (which eventually won by an overwhelming majority).

D. SHIPPER.

CORRESPONDENCE

SUSTENTATION FUND

"FREETHINKER! Here's towards you in grateful remembrance of countless benefits received. Vigorous at birth, robust at 75; in the salutation of the East, May your shadow never grow less!" H. T. and R. F. DERRETT.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

My sincere congratulations on the 75th birthday of THE FREETHINKER. We owe a debt of gratitude to those noble men who have carried on this ceaseless battle for truth. The more I see of how religion can influence people, the more I agree with the Irishman who said "Thank God, I'm an atheist."

Dr. W. H. CILLIERS (S. Africa).

JESUS BELIEVED IN HERMAPHRODITES

When Jesus said "They shall become one flesh" he was referring to the Rabbinic myth about hermaphrodites as created by Yahweh in the beginning of the world. (Gen. 1. 27), according to Dr. David Daube, Professor Civil Law, in his book, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism: Jordan Lectures*. London: Athlone Press, 1956.

Writes the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement* (May 4th, 1956): "Some of the parallels in Part II may strike the reader as somewhat odd, such as that the teaching of Jesus on marriage ("they shall become one flesh") contains a mysterious allusion to

the belief (found in Philo as well as among the rabbis) in the androgynous ideal "man". But the case is cogently argued and supported by eight points; if accepted, it settles all doubts about Christ's teaching on divorce; an androgynous union (as in the beginning) cannot well be dissolved."

"Thus one more grotesque superstition in the so-called Jesus is debunked. Now fancy the Christians defending the indissolubility of their marriages by the Rabbinic myth of Yahweh's hermaphrodites!" GREGORY S. SMELTERS.

CHRISTIAN CLAIMS

We are told quite brazenly by Christians that they abolished burning at the stake, and abolished slavery, when the real fact of the matter is that in face of secular opinion they had to suspend these two horrors, and indeed it looks as if these suspensions will soon come to an end unless the people awoken to the devilish intentions of leaders of religious thought and political opinion.

PAUL VARNEY.

"FOR TRUE COMMUNITY"

I would like to see under the title of THE FREETHINKER, "For true community". When among rabid Socialists in South Wales, I always insisted it were folly to try building a new order upon the old god-belief. A firm scientific foundation is paramount. Let us supply it and build on it.

H. FIDDIANS.

POINTS FROM LETTERS

Freethinkers should see that their children are excused from taking part in religious ceremonies and classes in school as well as from monarchist and imperialist demonstrations. The principle of human unity will never be impressed upon the minds of all concerned unless these definite acts are done and rigorously persisted in.—E. G. MACFARLANE.

I trust you will not let the BBC's treatment of the N.S.S. become forgotten as a mere miscarriage of justice. Keep up the pressure.—A. WADE.

Although only 16, I believe I have matured enough mentally to see the light of Freethought through your fine paper. Believing in a God is merely an escape from the fact that we do not yet know how the universe started.—MICHAEL STITCHER.

OBITUARY

ISAAC KURASH

MR. ISAAC KURASH, who died on December 18th, 1955, at the age of 65 and left his body for medical research into the cause of death, cancer, was cremated at Streatham Crematorium on January 28th. The deceased, who was well known in sporting circles, had been a Freethinker for many years. We convey our sympathy to his widow, who is a member of the N.S.S., and to his surviving relatives. Mr. F. A. Ridley delivered an address.

MORALS WITHOUT RELIGION. By Margaret Knight. Price 6/-; postage 6d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 4/-; Paper 2/6; postage 4d.

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SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By G. W. Foote. Price 3/9; postage 4d.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS. An Anthology for Freethinkers. An antidote to the BBC's Morning Lament at 7.50 a.m. Price: Cloth 5/-; Paper 3/6. postage 4d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner. Price 1/3; postage 3d.

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 6d.; postage 3d.

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