

# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI — No. 30

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

MOST TEXT BOOKS on English constitutional history ascribe the foundation of our parliamentary system to Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, who led a successful revolt against the Crown in the 13th century. His father left a sinister reputation as the butcher of the Albigenes. Be that as it may, the memory of the Earl is still preserved in Leicester by a spacious building, De Montfort Hall. English secularism also had its origins in the Midland city. From 1853 intermittently, and from the sixties consistently, there has existed a Leicester Secular Society which is actually the oldest secular society in Britain, ante-dating any N.S.S. and post-dating any similar local societies that may have had a prior existence. Since its public inauguration on March 6th, 1881, a few weeks, incidentally, before the first appearance of THE FREETHINKER, the Society's Secular Hall in Humberstone Gate has been the scene of an uninterrupted sequence of social, intellectual and propaganda activity, the cumulative influence of which, considerable in the city itself, has radiated far beyond the Midlands.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## England's Oldest Secular Society

By F. A. RIDLEY

### A Notable Centenary

Not many institutions survive in this troubled world to celebrate their centenary. On April 6th, 1853, the following notice appeared: "Leicester Secular Society, 148 Belgrave Gate. Lectures and Discussions every Sunday evening." Even if, however, the Society elects its official Centenary date as from 1867, since which date, the official history of the Society assures us, there has been no break in continuity, or even, as from 1881, the date of the official opening of the hall, it is scarcely open to doubt that the Leicester Society will survive to enjoy its well-earned centenary. To the student of English social and intellectual development the Leicester Secular Society is an interesting and instructive link between the age of Robert Owen, under whose auspices the first secular movement in Leicester appeared, founded by an Owenite missionary (Owen actually spoke in 1830 at Leicester), to our present age of atomic power and automation, the society is perhaps the last link between two ages: may it be long before it becomes a "missing link"!

### A Galaxy of Heretics

Perhaps the most influential and probably the best known of the multifarious activities of the Society consists in the uninterrupted series of Sunday lectures at the Humberstone Gate Hall ever since its official opening in 1881, a spectacular ceremony graced by the presence and active participation of a whole galaxy of heretics including, *facile princeps*, the arch-heretic of his era, Charles Bradlaugh, President of the N.S.S., Radical and Republican M.P. for Northampton and the *bête noire* of Victorian orthodoxy in both Church and State. But even without the great Tribune of the people the platform was on that occasion sufficient, including the two most famous women orators of the day

in Mrs. Annie Besant and Mrs. Harriet Law, the poet James Thomson (author of *The City of Dreadful Night*), G. J. Holyoake, for half a century a familiar figure in advanced circles, and a galaxy of contemporary talent both national and local; conspicuous among the latter was Josiah Gimson, then President of the Society, and perhaps the man most responsible for the building of the Secular Hall and for the wellbeing of the Society at the time. Nor has the subsequent roll of the Society's lecturers been less distinguished, including as it does such names as Bernard Shaw, William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen. Among the officers of the Society

was (in 1898) no less a person than ex-Father Anthony, Joseph McCabe, then on the threshold of his long and brilliant career. His successor was Mr. F. J. Gould, to whom allusion has recently been made in THE FREETHINKER. Amongst the many publications of this eminent secular moralist and educationalist not the least useful — at least to the present writer! — is his lucid and heavily documented *History of the Leicester Secular Society*, which must always be an indispensable source-book for the study of secularism in Leicester, a book to which the present writer is indebted for many of the facts cited above. Mr. Gould's succinct little history was published as far back as 1900 and it were much to be wished that a second edition could be issued, bringing the story into the present year of grace — and disgrace — in 1956. As the oldest secular society and now officially affiliated to the N.S.S. it were much to be desired.

### The Famous Five!

Anyone who has seen the Secular Hall must have noticed the five busts of Socrates, Voltaire, Owen, Paine and — last and perhaps least! — Jesus. The mythicist view of the titular Founder of Christianity was evidently not subscribed to by the 1881 vintage of Leicester secularists! Actually, apart from Robert Taylor, all or nearly all of the English Freethinkers in the 19th century accepted the existence of an historical but human Jesus. Indeed, quite a number of them displayed at times an almost religious enthusiasm to rescue their historical Christ from his professedly Christian disciples! However, this particular bust of the "carpenter of Nazareth" roused, as was inevitable in the fundamentalist Victorian era, a good deal of hostility among Christians, and apparently some heart searching among secularists. "I was considerably surprised and shocked," wrote an indignant correspondent to a local paper, "to see the name of Jesus in such a position and am altogether at a loss to find how the secularists can claim him as a teacher and expounder of their views of life." This and similar outbursts brought a reply from the President of the Society, Josiah Gimson. In a series of letters to the *Secular Review* he contended that "Jesus enjoined the performance of right actions towards our fellow men as our

first duty, and his gospel was moral rather than theological, and therefore secularist". This point of view was probably more common among Victorian Freethinkers than among those of today.

Actually the inclusion of the bust of Jesus seems to have been a fine stroke of irony at the expense of the Leicester clergy, who roundly denounced secularism as immoral. Mr. Gould cites the following gem from the discourse of a contemporary Leicester clergyman, Canon Vaughan, alluding to the Secular Hall: "Even if they themselves feel able to resist the enervated demoralising influences involved in their denials or disavowals of God and immortality, and to live virtuous and honourable and useful lives in the strength of, or in spite of, their own agnostic principles, yet who can doubt what the tendency of those denials and disavowals must be, and that from their new Hall in Humberstone Gate there will radiate influences most injurious to morality amongst us?" One can understand that the setting up of a bust of Jesus over this (from the orthodox viewpoint) den of iniquity, must have been very galling to the

## The Evolution of Mind

By JOHN G. JACKSON

IF MAN SURVIVED the Ice Age because he had a better brain than any of his competitors, how did he get this superior equipment? This brings us to the question of the evolution of Mind. We use the word "Mind" here in the strictly scientific sense. An authoritative and scientifically accurate definition is given by the well-known American psychologist, Professor J. P. Guilford. "The mind," says he, "if it has any scientific meaning at all, is the functioning of the brain. But since the brain cannot function alone, but only in conjunction with nerves, receptors and effectors, mind is better defined as the functioning of the entire nervous system. (*General Psychology*, page 24, by J. P. Guilford, New York, 1942).

There are three main sections of the brain, namely: (1) fore, (2) mid, and (3) hind brains. The fore brain is divided into two parts, bound together by a band of fibres, and these two sections of the fore brain are called the cerebral hemispheres. It is here that consciousness has its seat. Here also the thinking process takes place. Were it not for the cerebral hemispheres, men could never learn to perform the numerous tasks requiring great skill and ingenuity. The mid and hind brains in man are much smaller than the fore brain, and they control only the automatic and unconscious activities of the nervous system.

Messages are brought from the outside world to the cerebral hemispheres of the brain by the afferent or sensory nerves; then the messages are relayed from the central hemispheres to all parts of the body by the efferent or motor nerves, and movements in the various muscles are produced. Each part of the body is connected to a special area of the brain. There are areas controlling sight, speech, hearing and smell, and motor centres governing the movements of the different parts of the body. Then there are large tracts of the cerebral hemispheres known as association areas. Here mental pictures are formed and memories stored.

But the most complex part of the brain is the pre-frontal area. It is the master control centre of the brain, and the seat of the higher mental faculties. An able student of pre-historic science has aptly asserted that: "As we study men of old times it will be seen that this (the pre-frontal area) is the last part of the brain to develop, and that since the days of the first ape-men, it has increased very much in size and complexity. This marvellous brain, with its well-

Leicester Christians!

As for the other busts, Voltaire and, nowadays, Paine may be said to have received their due from posterity. Socrates is, in my opinion, vastly overrated; religion rather than rationalism should rank this first effective protagonist of the human soul among its saints. I am, however, particularly pleased to see the bust of Robert Owen, a great man who has never yet had adequate recognition; it is for more enlightened ages to estimate his immense political and intellectual impact on the modern world.

### Floreat Leicester

The Leicester S.S. still pursues the even tenour of its heretical way under the guidance of Messrs. Kirk, Hassell, Cartwright, etc., and one of the proudest distinctions held by the present writer is to hold an honorary life membership of the Society, which I have the honour to represent, along with the N.S.S. on the E.C. of the World Union of Freethinkers. *Floreat Leicester!* May the oldest secular society long flourish.

organised association areas and dominating pre-frontal area, has been the chief factor in man's evolution." (*Men of the Dawn*, page 12, by Dorothy Davison, London, 1934.)

The lowest animals have no brain. They have a nerve running from head to tail, with smaller branch nerves radiating from it. The head part of this nerve increased in size and evolved into three nodules. This was the earliest type of brain. The nerves of smell ran into the fore-brain, and the optic nerves were connected with the mid-brain, and the taste nerves hooked up with the hind-brain. In the reptile, the pallium or smell-brain is predominant. In the apes and man the pallium has shrunk down almost to insignificance. The smell-brain has been overshadowed by the Neopallium, a structure dominated by vision.

The earliest mammals had snouts and smelled their way through the world. When the more intelligent mammals took to the trees, they had to rely more on sight and touch than on smell. So they lost their snouts and their brains expanded. As their heads bulged to accommodate their growing brains, the eyes crept from the sides of the head and began to face front. The fields of vision of the two eyes overlapped and produced stereoscopic vision.

Life in the trees, besides stimulating the growth of the brain and improving vision, also brought about the differentiation of the forepaws into hands. It was this combination of brain, eye and hand that brought man's forerunners to the top of the heap. In the words of Sir Grafton Elliot Smith: "Man's intellectual pre-eminence is based primarily on the evolution of macular vision in a primate with adaptable hands which attained the erect attitude when the cerebral cortex under the conscious influence of vision came to control and regulate posture." (Cited by Joseph McCabe. *Riddle of the Universe Today*, page 52, London, 1934.)

The Great Ice Age began about 1,000,000 years ago, and ended about 25,000 years ago. The ice advanced and retreated four different times. So there were four cold glacial periods and three temperate inter-glacial periods. In North America, the ice covered an area of 4,000,000 square miles at its greatest extent. In Europe, the greatest glaciation covered 2,000,000 square miles. In the Miocene Period, the human species divided into two main types: (1) Paleoanthropic, and (2) Neoanthropic. These two types lived through the Pliocene Period and struggled for survival in the ice fields of the Pleistocene Period. Before the Ice Age was over the Paleoanthropic line had died out, leaving the future to Homo Sapiens, the end product of the Neoanthropic line.

(from *The Truth Seeker*, New York.)

# Who Moved the Stone?

by T. R. FERNANDO

THE FACTS COMMON to all the Gospels suggest two possible explanations of what it was that actually happened. The first is that Jesus did not really die at the end of the crucifixion. "There is no evidence which a jury could admit that he was ever actually dead," says Froude. We know that it was unusual for crucified men to die within three or even six hours. So well known was the fact that crucifixion was a lingering death by exposure and that the victims remained alive over twenty-four hours, often as long as three days, that Origen is convinced that the swift death of Jesus was nothing short of a miracle. St. John indicated (John XIX, 31 sq.) that the Jews expected that Jesus would live on and they obtained a special order to have his legs broken in order to hasten his death and to remove the body before sunset, when the Sabbath began. The same evangelist testifies that the two thieves who were crucified at the same time were alive at the end of the day, and their legs were broken, while the legs of Jesus were not broken, solely because he was believed to be dead. Eventually, when it was reported to Pilate that Jesus was dead, "Pilate marvelled if he were already dead, and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead." (Mark XV, 44.)

The only approach to direct statement that Jesus died is that he "gave up the ghost." (Mark XV, 39.) This expression evidently means no more than that he lost consciousness, for we find Cardinal Wiseman (*The Connection between Science and Revealed Religion*, Vol. 1, Lecture V, page 257) accepting the interpretation that, when the side of Jesus was pierced with a spear (John XIX, 34) — which was long after the giving up of the ghost (verse 30) — Jesus was "still faintly alive, because otherwise the blood would not have flowed", a very good reason.

Jesus therefore did not die when he gave up the ghost, but remained "still faintly alive." In that state, he is immediately taken down, according to John's narrative, and Nicodemus rubs him all over with myrrh, aloes, spices — a mixture of a hundred pounds in weight. Such ingredients go to produce a restorative liniment in our pharmacies today, and the rubbing is now called massage. A man in the extreme of exhaustion, almost in a state of suspended animation, is vigorously massaged by loving hands with a powerful liniment. (See Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* for the Eastern form of massage and restoration) wrapped in clean, sweet linen and laid in a rock chamber to rest. What is likely to happen, if the man is young, robust in health, clean in life and with a splendid constitution? The blood is set coursing pleasantly in the veins and after a few hours, Jesus revives. Perhaps it is near dawn on the Sabbath morning (1) and the guards, tired with watching throughout the night, are a trifle dazed. Jesus awakes. At first he cannot realize where he is. But, presently, the terrible events of the previous day come back to him. He recollects his plight, and knows that in Jerusalem there is no safety for him. The whole population has preferred the criminal Barabbas (2) to him. If he is to live, he must flee, perhaps into his own Galilee and teach there in secret, guarding warily from the authorities the fact he is still alive. Jesus rises in the rock chamber and approaches the entrance. Perhaps through the chinks between it and the covering stone, he sees the drooping forms of the Roman guards. Remember the tomb was not a modern grave, but a rock chamber (3)

with an entrance at the side, and a rough stone covering it. Gently, tentatively, Jesus pushes the stone. The slight noise arouses the soldiers. They are superstitious pagans, credulous and in a state of nervous excitement, for they have been told to watch for the Resurrection of a god and, brave as they are in ordinary affairs, this uncanny business unsettles their mind. With beating hearts, shaken between duty and credulity, they look round. Slowly the stone is displaced, and a pale form draped in flowing white robes (4) emerges into the morning light, the face seeming radiant with the glistening liniment. A ghostly figure, it completes the terror of the guards. They either flee or stand dazed, appalled, powerless to impede. Jesus issues forth and swiftly strides away, hiding his face in the white diaphanous linen.

In the meanwhile, the Magdalene, (6) alone or with others comes to the tomb. The guard tells her an incoherent story. She thinks the body is stolen and hurries away to tell the disciples. On the way she meets or overtakes Jesus. He conceals his face from her and she mistakes him for a gardener. (8) Jesus, when he finds that it is the Magdalene, reveals his face and says: "Mary". In a sudden access of wonder, fear, joy, doubt, she flings herself at his feet. (9) He tells her he is hastening to Galilee and bids her tell his disciples to meet him there. (10)

That same night he seeks to escape from Jerusalem and meets two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. (11) He conceals his identity from them (12) until he betrays himself by his peculiar manner of breaking the bread. (13) The moment he finds he is recognized, he escapes from them and hurries back to Jerusalem, (14) perhaps into the house of a dear friend. But there he finds his Apostles who can hardly believe his presence for joy. Conscious that he is safe among these, he eats with them and exhorts them. After dinner he walks out of Jerusalem in the deep night towards Bethany. (15) There he bids his beloved disciples a solemn farewell and disappears. (16) Whither? Perhaps into Galilee, (17) where John and Peter see him again. Perhaps into Arabia, and thence over the great mountains into Thibet. At any rate he is never again heard of. And, naturally, those whom he left behind, lapsed into bewildered legends, wonderful stories, marvels of all sorts.

That is one explanation. It covers all the facts, and it is one which I am myself inclined to accept after several years thought and consideration of the objections.

There is, however, another possibility, with which I propose to deal in a later article.

(1) Matt. XVIII, 1; Mark XVI, 2; John XX, 1. (2) Mark XV, 6-15, etc. (3) Mark XV, 46, etc. (4) Ibid. (5) Matt. XXVIII, 4. (6) Matt. XXVIII, 1, etc. (7) Matt. Ibid, verses 8 and 9. (8) John XX, 13-18. (9) Matt. XXVIII, 9. (10) Ibid, verse 10, etc. (11) Luke XXIV, 13, 15 sq. (12) Ibid, verse 16. (13) Ibid, verses 30-31. (14) Ibid, verse 36 sq. (15) Ibid, verse 50. (16) Ibid, verse 51. (17) Matt. XXVIII, 16; John XXI, 1 sq.

HEINE (1797-1856)

Heine, after all, was a poet. He is at his best in his verse. His melodies are as various as they are faultless. The cadences are now caressingly tender; now lulling, lingeringly mournful; now resonant as the blare of trumpets. The verse now rolls majestically, now dances airily, now rings like a peal of fairy bells, now sweeps along with the fury and clamour of a storm.

"O lyric voice, half angel and half bird,  
And all a wonder and a wild desire."

## This Believing World

A noble peer of the realm, Lord Selborne, wants to bring in a Bill to make newspapers accede to an out-and-out censorship—an outrageous proposition which even the *Daily Mail* has had to characterise as exhibiting “an intolerance, an itch to punish, an urge to make others dance to one’s own tune which have brought so much pain and cruelty to suffering mankind.” Lord Selborne wants every newspaper to conform to *The Times* standard of May, 1956! This itch for a drastic censorship has ever been the prerogative of thoroughly Christian minds which hate free thought or speech or writing like poison. And we are glad to see that Lord Selborne is a bit too much even for the pious *Daily Mail*.

★

If Lord Selborne had his way there would be an end to any criticism of Christianity. There would be a resurgence of the Blasphemy Laws—which, it is necessary to emphasise, have never been abolished. The Bill he wants to pass, says the *Daily Mail*, would “make the gods laugh—if they do not weep afresh at human stupidity.” We can only hope that the other noble lords will throw it out if it gets so far, with the contempt it deserves. The world has had enough of totalitarian censorship, religious and secular.

★

We are again pleased to note that some of our provincial journals are not afraid of a correspondence in which the most sacred tenets of Christianity are attacked. In the *Barnsley Chronicle*, for instance, Mr. H. Irving has been having a riotous time routing Christians who can only feebly respond by hurling Bible texts around—one very religious gentleman claiming that the Holy Bible is a greater authority than the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and therefore it must be right! Bless his heart—is he not aware that this is only a variation of one of the crushing “answers” to infidelity 70 years ago—“Do you mean to say you know more than Mr. Gladstone?” Christian replies often add to the gaiety of nations.

★

The London City Mission is not having quite the success it thinks God deserves, so in its yearly report it denounces London as a wicked city, and London dockers as “materialistic and godless.” Even its work among street traders is “spiritually barren.” London, in fact, to the dismay of the City Mission, is drifting to “paganism”, which for Christians is truly awful. Somehow or other, we seem to have heard these lugubrious weepings and wailings before. Christians have always—*always*—complained that if people did not accept their Gods, Miracles and Devils, it was because they were “drifting to paganism.” As if that were not better than the conglomeration of stupid beliefs enshrined in Christianity!

★

Poor Prince Albert, the Consort of Queen Victoria, was often bitterly attacked during his short lifetime for being, among other things, so very, very good that he is now remembered as Prince Albert the Good. But with the Lord’s Day Observance Society and the Protestant Alliance going for the Duke of Edinburgh for all they are worth, we wonder what Prince Philip will be called? The Duke likes a game of polo or cricket—as well as any high-spirited young man—even on a Sunday, and he appears to be convulsing the reverent religiosity of many other genuine Christians besides the members of the two Societies named. They are outraged that he should thus “desecrate” the Lord’s Day—and even more particularly the feelings of

pious people. We can only hope that he will long continue the good work!

★

A six foot fence has been erected around a Roman Catholic hall at Mitchum in Surrey to keep out hooligans trying to damage it. But who are these hooligans? They are the products of our education system which puts religion as a compulsory subject. In other words, the hooligans are *Christians*, and all would scorn being anything else. What good has teaching them the Bible and religion done for them?

## Education and Economics

By JOHN A. LEE (NEW ZEALAND)

IN MONTGOMERY, the capital of Alabama, U.S.A., negroes are resisting the efforts of another group of people who aspire to be a master race, to keep them permanently as inferiors. The Southern white insists that the negro occupy an inferior position in the public transport system. The negro says “No”, and the system edges towards bankruptcy. The white racialists are alarmed. If negroes boycott a segregated bus service they will soon boycott the businesses of the white supremacists. The whites, who control the law by denying the negroes a vote, prosecute negroes for refusing to ride in a bus system which insists on inferiority. Open violence may grow out of “legal intimidation”.

The world is looking on. The Democrat Liberals in the Northern States owe many a victory to reactionary Democrats in the South. The Democrats funk the issue; the Republicans show little taste for action. But neither in the North can avoid the issues much longer. The way to end white racialism is to pass a Federal Right to Vote law which will enable negroes excluded by intimidation to poll votes. Power would pass from the white racialists in quick time. The negro can no longer be kept to a slave status in Africa or in America.

Fascists in South Africa disfranchise the coloured man and refuse political rights to dark-skinned people, while great dark-skinned democracies emerge on the Gold Coast, in Nigeria and elsewhere. The white supremacists are throwing their slops against the wind. Black and yellow, red and white peoples cannot be kept from the 20th century, not even in the dirty Catholic Fascist States of Portugal and Spain. In the U.S.A. the Roman Catholic Church is declaring for no segregation in Church or education, while many Protestants back the racialists.

I look upon the present effort of the negro to break out of slave containment as the great current political struggle. The future of Africans in Africa and elsewhere means far more to our world than the conflicts between Israelite and Arab which dominate the news.

Economically our rulers are making the same errors made after World War I, aided by university economists who believe that the only non-inflationary expenditure is an increase in professorial salaries. There is no science of economics except where it relates to a study of past history; economists’ prophecies are metaphysical; they relate to textbooks and economic indoctrination and not to observance of facts.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE IMPOSTURE  
OF LOURDES

by H. CUTNER

# 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.

WORTHING FREETHINKERS.—Please support the current pressure to get *The Freethinker* into the Worthing Library.  
W. S. TODD.—American Presidents who have been publicly unfavourable to Christian doctrine include Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Lincoln, Grant and Garfield.

## 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.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and C. McCALL.  
Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound) Sunday July 29th, 7.30 p.m. HAROLD DAY (Bradford), a lecture.  
Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: E. MILLS.  
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.  
Platt 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. POWELL.  
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).—Sunday, July 22nd, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street), Sunday July 29th, 7.30 p.m. R. POWE (Nottingham), "Do we understand Determinism".  
Gloucester (Raikes Memorial Hall, Brunswick Road,) Friday, July 27th 7.45 p.m.: Debate: - "That the Billy Graham Crusade, was a failure as a producer of Converts". Affirmative: C. McCall (Sec. N.S.S.) Negative: C. Potter (Sec. Workers Christian Fellowship).

## Notes and News

It is extremely gratifying to note that since the closing of the Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund, a steady stream of subscriptions has continued to come in for *The Freethinker* Sustentation Fund without any major appeal having been launched. This shows that readers quietly realise the ever-pressing anxiety of maintaining a journal which has to struggle for a hearing, and, though we do not say "thank you" every week, we sincerely appreciate this continued support and encouragement.

MOST readers will have noticed that the centenary of the birth of Bernard Shaw is being celebrated this week—but what is generally withheld is that he often publicly proclaimed his Atheism in the days when he was making a reputation as one of the keenest musical and dramatic critics of his day. He often appeared on the platform of the N.S.S. at the old Hall of Science.

OUR lists of World Freethought periodicals have drawn from several readers suggestions of others which might be considered worthy of inclusion. It is clear that once we go outside the W.U.F. with its member-organizations and their organs it becomes possible to admit dozens of journals with some anti-clerical, or even more specifically freethought, leaning. Our contributor Mr. Dave Shipper is at present busily engaged in tracing minor bulletins in various European countries, of relevance to freethought, and also some major publications in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. Mention of some of these will be made later.

★

INCIDENTALLY, we are glad to note that Mr. D. Shipper is nicely recovering from his recent misadventure in a car crash, when his shooting-brake tried conclusions with a huge Bedford van, the alternative being a 300-foot drop from a hazardous road in the Welsh mountains. His personal injuries were inconvenient rather than serious.

★

THE American Institute of Management (New York), a non-profit organization formed to evaluate the efficiency of business corporations, has recently been putting its yardstick across The Vatican, according to an interesting and statistically detailed report in *Time*. The general conclusion was that the Vatican could teach businessmen a thing or two. The spirit in which the A.I.M.'s analysis was undertaken was not unfriendly to Rome by any means, and even indicated that American business might in return teach the Vatican something.

★

IN a fascinating *Time* Chart the "Ups and Downs of Rome" are depicted graphically from the first century to the twentieth, along three streams, Zeal, Efficiency and Temporal Power. Zeal begins high and gradually declines, reaching a low level at the end of a steep drop from the 8th to the 10th century. A revival of Zeal follows for two centuries and then a headlong decline to the 18th, after which there is a revival, bringing the present state up to the level of the 15th century.

★

THE Efficiency of Rome reaches its earlier peak in the 6th century and then declines until the Crusades. These are followed by a drop, which is arrested in the 16th century, since when the graph is continuously upward, slowly at first, but very steep in the last two centuries and doubtless with the foot, as it were, still on the accelerator. To-day's is a new high level.

★

TEMPORAL POWER was nil for three centuries of course, and very low until the 6th. The inauguration of the Holy Roman Empire brings an abrupt steep climb in the 9th century and continues steep until the maximum (100%) is attained in the 12th century. Then the decline is continuous down to the present time, which is barely higher than the 4th century. The picture to-day, therefore, is that Efficiency is vastly in excess of Zeal, and Zeal vastly in excess of Temporal Power.

★

WE recently announced the re-establishment of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Secular Society, under the Secretaryship of Mr. William Cronan. The President of the Bradford Branch, Mr. Harold Day, then told us that he would be spending the weekend in Edinburgh and would be willing to lecture during his stay. Arrangements have been made: the date is Sunday next, 29th July, the time 7.30 p.m.; the place, The Mound; the result—we predict—a stimulating evening.

# A Catholic Field-Day

By H. CUTNER

ALTHOUGH the BBC shrinks with horror from such a horrid word as "atheism" — it does now and then stage a "discussion" on religion in which, as far as possible, the religious defender is allowed to "win". Some years ago, Canon Cockin (as he was then) staged a wonderful debate between an all-believing Christian and a "hard-headed" British working-man who was also an out-and-out unbeliever. He was not put forward as an atheist but as an "unbeliever", and the Christian, grudgingly admitting that some of the unbeliever's arguments had at least some validity, proceeded to polish them off as easily as an Einstein tackling a simple algebraical problem. Only later did we learn that the worthy Canon had written the whole of the script himself, the magnificent defence of Christianity as well as the more or less "valid" arguments of the defeated "working-man".

I was reminded of this great victory when looking at the TV's staging of a discussion between Father A. Andrew, the Roman Catholic adviser on the BBC religious department, and a group of Fleet Street journalists. There were six of them, including a lady, and they were introduced to us as *complete* unbelievers in religion. Out of them it was easy to see that one knew a little more about "unbelief" than the others, but all their unbelief was soon shown to be nothing more than an inability to see how a good God created a depraved mankind, and how it was impossible to believe that Jesus Christ was God Almighty. Oh, yes, they all agreed he was a good "man", a very good man, exactly as described in the Gospels, the authenticity and credibility of which were gallantly and freely admitted by all the unbelieving disputants, including the lady — who, if she really was an unbeliever, knew even less than her comrades, and who twice interrupted the proceedings with utterly irrelevant remarks.

When you get an instructed Roman Catholic priest on theology, he is in his element; and Fr. Andrew never had a easier task than dealing with the "problem of evil" and similar "heretical" objections — objections indeed which have been raised against the God idea for centuries, and which, granting his premises, any priest can make mince-meat of. These unbelieving journalists actually thought that the "arguments" they used against religion could never have been thought of before! It was almost unbelievable.

They allowed Fr. Andrew to get away with "Creation", and how God Almighty "created" man, and endowed him with Freewill, and so on. Not one of the six appeared ever to have heard of Evolution; and as for any discussion on the Gospels I felt that I was listening to a 19th century Protestant arguing with a Catholic. The unbelievers and the priest never questioned one comma of the Gospels. Jesus Christ acted in Palestine exactly as described in them, and if the unbelievers believed (as they did) that the Gospels were packed with Gospel truths — how could they, argued Fr. Andrew, discount the miracles, and still believe in Jesus walking about "doing good"? The "evidence" for one was as strong as for the other, and all the unbelievers could lamely reply was that they didn't believe he was God Almighty.

What had these unbelievers ever read? Had they ever seen a copy of THE FREETHINKER? Had they never heard of Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*? Why were they put forward for us by the BBC as "unbelievers"? Unbelievers in what? As far as I was able to judge, they did not believe that Jesus was God, and they had a hazy

notion that he never performed any miracle. They never, of course, defined what they meant by "God" or "miracle". They just didn't believe this little thing or that. How could a good God create a world full of sin? They — the unbelievers — would never have done that, and so on.

It was a veritable field day for the genial Fr. Andrew. He had them eating out of the palm of his hand like good little schoolboys. And in the end, he gave us a fine description of the Church — *the* Church — founded by Christ Jesus, and in spite of all its faults, still the Holy Church, the only Church which dispensed the Truth as Jesus commanded.

What a childish picture of sheer ignorance and incompetence the show provided of "unbelief". And for me, it was just another exhibition of very reverent Rationalism and of no more use in combating Christianity, and particularly the R.C. brand, than a plum cake. Fr. Andrew got away with miracles, with God Almighty, with Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Church. He couldn't have wished for more.

## Journey's End

by R. READER

THE AFFAIRS of mankind are now, quite obviously, drawing to their close. Stupendous problems utterly dwarf contemporary world mentality, even supposing world leaders could be roused from irrelevancy and grandiose delirium: and the jaded, irritable, and hate-ridden crowds, persuaded, as ever, that some benevolent force, human or divine, is directing and co-ordinating their activities, rush wildly to snatch as much as possible from life in the little time remaining. It is the last fatal struggle to achieve survival conditions, the last macabre dance of the condemned before eternal night. It is the end.

The end was probably inevitable. Life evolved until a now-unreproducible combination of sunlight, temperature, humidity, cosmic radiation, vegetation, diet, and a million other factors produced human brain tissue. That tissue formed, retained, recalled, and compared impressions of the external world; linked causes and effects; and used the past and present as guides to the future. This — and the observable mortality of his fellows — led a man to speculate about his own personal end. But here the chain of cause and effect broke down completely, it being impossible to imagine after-death in terms of any but before-death experiences — of which experiences death itself is the very negation.

However, there were also dreams in which dead people appeared — and if death presented obstacles to reason it presented none to the imagination. The idea of immortality suggested itself with overwhelming strength to the primitive mind — and formed mankind's first step on the road to martyrdom.

For amidst this universal anxiety in which no one knew, certain individuals pretended to know by describing after-life in terms of familiar immediate things, and asserting that it was conditioned by earthly conduct. These people thus obtained respect, privileges, and the partial control of others' lives — all of which things assisted them to forget their own anxieties and inevitable end. In other words, a minority procured the illusion of immortality through the attitudes and services of the duped majority — which majority also obtained compensations by transferring its

desires to a hereafter. The stage was thus set for the abandonment of order and reason, and all human life soon became a crazy fight for food, pastures, slaves, offspring, flattering admiration, domination — anything and everything which tended to produce oblivion, however temporary, of final death.

Successive centuries of primitive dogma produced no biological repercussions, but brought into being some remarkable monuments as evidence of the lengths to which a single individual's religious neurosis could go (e.g. the Giza Pyramids). Eventually, however, priestly blunders, and the painfully slow but persistent advance of exact material knowledge made sticks, stones, and totem poles manifestly inadequate. Something more ethereal and ambiguous was required — and here the ravings and delirium of certain itinerant madmen was an obvious choice. Madness inspires an awe that is, itself, almost religious; its incoherence and contradiction enable it to be used to any end; and demented persons will often venture heedlessly into dangerous situations for their masters — and as often get away with it. Hence the gods, demi-gods, men-gods, and sons-of-gods that next appeared. Nearly all these wretched creatures met violent, hideous deaths, but their overweening conceit, pride, and force of suggestion (things observable in comparable mental degenerates today) infected mankind with all manner of biological errors, the greatest of which is the assumption that humanity, by divine edict, is entitled, and able to, take complete precedence over all other forms of life and natural phenomena, and that man is not limited by the laws governing the rest of the animal creation.

Centuries passed, during which this universal *folie de grandeur* was restrained by the very biological laws mankind feigned to ignore. And then, like a clap of thunder, came the 19th century. Now, as never before, humanity could luxuriate in illusion. The buying and selling of slaves, sacks of gold, pyramids, castles, medieval priestly domination, and the like went out; and economic slavery, bank balances, stocks and shares and the domination of entire "undeveloped" countries, first with alcohol, and then with religious neurosis, came in. Weapons (the defences of illusion) correspondingly developed: these neurotic defences of one country inflamed the neurotic anxiety of its neighbours — and caused it to fall back on primitive trust in the safety of numbers. An orgy of procreation began. By 1950, despite the warning signposts of 1914-18 and 1939-45, world population had passed 2,000 millions, of whom 1,500 millions somehow survived, and 499.99 millions frittered their time away in bickering and trying vainly to emulate the odd 10,000.

And so to these last days of 1956. Religious neurosis holds almost undisputed sway. The link between war and economics is everywhere openly discussed: that between economics and religion rarely mentioned. Still the overwhelming majority of mankind lives by emotional illusion and is utterly unable even to conceive of any other form of existence. Indeed, so thoroughly has humanity been conditioned, it would be unhappy without the strife, struggle, wild hopes, and catastrophes of the bear garden. And today, as 2,000 years ago, the itinerant madmen travel to and fro, infecting the masses with their ravings and delirium.

With the immense inertias of 40,000 years of tradition urging it on, mankind rides up to the precipice. "We will populate the moon. Change the planetary orbits. Turn Mars into a built-up area. Bring religious neurosis to Neptune . . ."

The exultant delirium rises ever higher — and suddenly changes to a scream of frantic horror. Struggling on the

brink, utterly in the power of forces it has released but cannot control, mankind stares for one frightful moment at Reality — and not even a madman's promise of eternal life can conjure Reality away. A kaleidoscope of the past flashes by; the corruption of young, candid minds and bodies; the systematic extermination of all that is beautiful and spontaneous on the earth to conform to the foul imagination of poisoned degenerate bloodstreams; the lies, humbug, shams, pretences, tortures, murders, burnings, hangings, used to achieve these ends. . . . And a brief poignant vision of what *might* have been. . . .

And then, slowly at first, but seen ever more rapidly, the struggling mass passes on into everlasting night. It is the end. *Our* end.

## Science Front—12

### ASTRONOMY *versus* BIBLIOLATRY

THE MOST GROTESQUE VIEWS about the earth and the solar system were held by the Christian Fathers, views based, not on knowledge, but on dogma.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, declared that there could be no Antipodes because the Bible said nothing about that part of the world. If people really dwelt in those impossible regions, a previous Atonement would have been necessary, and on that vital point the Bible was silent. A further difficulty arose: how would people "down under" be able to see the Saviour's return in glory? The Christian Father, Lactantius, was even more emphatic. "Is there," he asks, "anyone so senseless as to believe that there are men whose footsteps are higher than their heads? . . . that the crops and trees grow downward? . . . that the rains and snow and hail fall upward? . . . I am at a loss what to say of those who, when they have once erred, steadily persevere in their folly and defend one vain thing by another." The Christian world received with docility this kind of wisdom for more than a thousand years, and even long after the voyage of Magellan had proved the rotundity of the earth the illusion was still maintained. These good people were not fools. They merely knew nothing about the subject on which they so vigorously dogmatized.

The father of modern astronomy was Copernicus (1473-1543), who discovered that the earth was not stationary but had a daily revolution on its axis and an annual revolution round the sun. This does seem an improvement on the idea which represented, according to an old map, the hand of God holding up the earth by a rope and spinning it round and round with thumb and fingers. In those days God was thought to have a body, so one need not object to the hand or even the rope. Copernicus arrived at his great discovery in 1500, but, fearing opposition, delayed its publication for 43 years, receiving the first printed copy on his deathbed. The formal condemnation by the Church of Galileo's researches is too well known to need repetition, but even after his time the orthodox theory of the earth continued to be taught by eminent ecclesiastics.

Melancthon declared that the earth was undoubtedly the centre of the universe. Calvin asked: "Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?" Luther was more vigorous when he said: "This fool Copernicus wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth." At Wittenberg University Professors of Astronomy were forbidden to expound the Copernican system, while others were allowed to denounce it as "absurd and unfit to be introduced into the schools". A similar prohibition existed in the Universities of Spain, and the publication of works in favour of it was not permitted till 1822. The book in

which Copernicus explained his views was honoured by being placed on the Index Expurgatorius, but in 1835 the Church began to think there might be something in it, and the ban with withdrawn. Rome, however, had committed itself by its official condemnation in 1664 of all books teaching the movement of the earth and the stability of the sun.

It is impossible in our own days to realise the frantic alarm formerly caused by the appearance of those harmless objects known as comets. In 1556 the Emperor Charles V resigned his vast power and retired to a monastery, mainly out of fear of the comet of that year. A similar phenomenon is pictured in the Bayeux tapestry, of which a copy is in the South Kensington Museum, London. It is not surprising that Europe was terrified when comets were looked upon as threatening portents flung about by a deity enraged with human sin. Even when found by experience to be harmless, the fear of comets long persisted.

G. H. TAYLOR

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FREETHOUGHT JOURNALS

I am very interested in the international aspects of the Freethought movement and, because of this, found G. H. Taylor's recent list of foreign Freethought publications very interesting. May I add two further publications to his list of German Freethought journals? They are *Monateschau* (Berlin), the organ of the Freilistige Gemeinschaft (Berlin), pamphlet-style, 12 pages, and *Freigeistiges Mitteilungsblatt* (Bremen), after the *Manchester Bulletin* style.

D. SHIPPER.

### VICTORIAN VIRULENCE

Re Mr. Cutner's reference to the religious attitude to "Malthusianism" in Bradlaugh's time, the following may be of interest. It is from *William Morris, Romantic and Revolutionary* by E. P. Thompson. He has been talking of typical Victorian attitudes and points out that these were valiant fighters on the other side and instances "the militant secularist agitation in the face of Mrs. Grundy. The courage of Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant in publishing facts about birth control can only be estimated if we recall the virulence of the christian tracts and handbills called forth by their action", and he gives this example:-

"What are they offering to us? Sensuality, free love and a foul system by which animated nature can be destroyed, and increase of population prevented, thus offering the way for universal prostitution. . . . This is the beastliness that is held up to the youth of our land, under the misleading names of Freethought, Agnosticism, Atheism and Secularism, but which is in reality bold rampant, God defying, Christ despising, Blaspheming Infidelity. Beware. Be sure your sins will find you out". The book was published last year and is a very interesting account of Morris's career, particularly in his realtions with Socialism. (Lawrence & Wishart 900 pages 50/-)

A. W. DAVIS.

### THE BBC AND ATHEISM

Colin McCall ought to have sent its miserable five and tainted guineas back to the B.B.C. and repudiated his assignment of copyright, immediately after the television broadcast from which his affirmation of atheism had been excised. He should have then reconstructed the statement he made, as fully and accurately as memory permitted, and this should have been published as a front-page article in *The Freethinker*, with a challenge to the B.B.C. to take action for infringement of copyright. Instead, a querulous letter to the press asked when would the B.B.C. give unbelievers a square deal. I ask where are the boldness and leadership that once inspired the freethought movement.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

### THE ETHICS OF HUNTING

Mr. A. N. Eze's letter in your issue of April 6th regarding ethics of hunting and the "fox-blood sprinkling" rite in England should not be allowed to go unchallenged. If Mr. Eze is a Nigerian, no one should know better than he that the vast rain forest areas of Southern Nigeria are the home of the most primitive animistic religion, and likely to be for many generations. Libation pouring, of blood or gin, are still universal at major and minor ceremonies of the bush peoples, and juju and fetish articles can be bought on stalls at any of the native markets if one looks for them, including occasionally dried human hands, as the writer has seen.

A. R. ANDERSON.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

I imagine that most people who have had charge of a small boy will smile at the idea of treating all delinquents as sick persons, and their objection applies equally to adults. May I put another objection to the abolition of C.P., a material one, but none the less cogent. It is the expense of keeping in prison a person who is too dangerous to be allowed at large. I can see no reason why the community should be put to this expense. It seems reasonable that the penalties for different degrees of murder should be different; but some people are so useless and dangerous that they should be put to death; and in this category I would put people who have been convicted several times of theft.

One other point: it is apparently true that countries that have abolished C.P. show no increase in the crime of murder; but I suspect that other causes are at work to diminish the frequency of this crime. There seems no doubt that C.P. is the greatest deterrent to crime. It is proved by the fact that nearly all criminals condemned to death put in an appeal, although they know that the only alternative is a life sentence.

HENRY MEULEN

### WISDOM WELL

To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.—HAZLITT.

Religion bred the first fratricide, and since then it has borne on its forehead the sign of blood.—HEINE.

As for your eternal life in Heaven, do you think I want a *pour-boire* (tip) for supporting my aged mother?—HEGEL.

If there is one lesson which history forces upon us it is this: Keep your children away from the priest or he will make them the enemies of mankind.—PROF. W. K. CLIFFORD.

Enlightenment and education as a rule go hand in hand with a decrease of the clergy in relative numbers and influence.—F. A. LANGE.

Science is simply common sense at its best; that is, rigidly accurate in observation, and merciless to fallacy in logic.—T. H. HUXLEY.

### OBITUARY

The cremation took place on June 30th of Mrs. J. S. Reynolds (74) of Ripley, Derbyshire, at the new crematorium, Markeaton Park, Derby. She is survived by her husband and son to whom our sympathies are extended. The family have long been supporters of free thought and a secular service was conducted by Mr. T. Mosley, secretary of the Nottingham Branch of the NSS.

### AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY.

A survey of positions by Chapman Cohen.

Price 1/6; postage 3d.

### CHALLENGE TO RELIGION.

A re-issue of four lectures by Chapman Cohen.

Price 1/6; postage 3d.

### MARRIAGE SACERDOTAL OR SECULAR?

By C. G. L. Du Cann.

Price 1/-; postage 3d.

### MATERIALISM RESTATED

(Third edition). By Chapman Cohen.

Price 5/6; postage 6d.

### PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.

18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker.

Price 5/6; postage 6d.

Or at 2d. each, postage 2d. Comprising: Did Jesus Christ Exist? Morality without God. What is the use of Prayer? Woman and Christianity. Must we have a Religion? The Devil, What is Freethought? Gods and their Makers. Giving 'em Hell. The Church's Fight for the Child. Deity and Design. What is the use of a future Life? Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to Live. Freethought and the Child. Agnosticism or...? Atheism. Christianity and Slavery. Christianity and Ethics.

### WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD?

By C. G. L. Du Cann.

Price 1/-; postage 2d.

FRIENDLY informal international house. Plentiful food, company. Moderate terms.—Chris & Stella Rankin, 43 West Park, Eltham, S.E.9. Tel.: ELT 1761.