

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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THE SPANISH CONQUEST of South America in the 16th century is usually associated with the violent subjugation, respectively by Cortes and Pizarro, of the "Indian" empires of Mexico and Peru. The historian W. H. Prescott has indelibly imprinted these dramatic events on the Anglo-Saxon mentality in his two celebrated histories, masterpieces of American literature. Later critical scholarship, effectively combined with archaeological investigation, has no doubt corrected some errors in Prescott's pioneer work, besides removing a certain Anglo-Saxon self-righteousness, since Spanish imperialism, though bad enough in its way, was not worse than other contemporary imperialisms, including those of the Protestant conquerors of India and North America!

Mexico and Peru

The two leading aboriginal "Indian" civilizations of the New World were those of Mexico and Peru: both the Aztec empire of Mexico and the Peruvian empire of the Incas represent military despotisms of comparatively recent origin. Both were built on the basis of more ancient culture which, however, both manipulated with remarkable ingenuity. Neither aboriginal Peru nor Mexico were acquainted with horses or iron tools. Both empires met with a similar end, succumbing rapidly and catastrophically to the onslaughts of the white invaders. Within, however, the common framework provided by their technical basis, there were great differences in culture and organization between the Aztecs and the Incas. In Mexico economic activity was conducted for profit by powerful guilds of merchants akin to those of Europe during the Middle Ages, whilst the Peruvian state represents perhaps the most complete example of a collectivist state in which the land and the means of production and exchange were under the omnipotent supervision of the State polity of the Incas. Moreover, while both were theocracies in which religious concepts were all-powerful and pervasive, Mexico was polytheistic whereas Peru was monotheistic, or at least effectively so. And whilst human sacrifice represented the basic practice of Aztec religion, such sanguinary rites played little part in Peruvian sun-worship. From the standpoint of culture, as between the two empires, Mexican culture was superior in mathematics and astronomy, in which, indeed, their Maya predecessors had excelled, and still more in their possession of a complex script of picture writing to which the Peruvians could supply no parallel. But both the highways of the Incas, unequalled since the iron-using Romans, and their still surviving Cyclopean buildings, unsurpassed since the ancient Egyptians, had no parallel in either the Old World or the New.

The Incas of Peru

At the time of the Spanish conquest in 1533 the Inca regime had lasted for probably some two centuries; also a similar period to that of the Aztecs of Mexico. According to their own accounts, which modern scholarship seems inclined to

accept, the Incas emerged from Lake Titicaca, "the lake of the wild cat", on the Bolivian plateau which seems to have cradled the Inca dynasty. Under a perhaps historical founder, Manco, the Incas descended into what is now Peru about 1300: during the next two centuries they built up a huge empire which at the time of the Spanish con-

quest stretched for about 2,000 miles north to south and by an approximate computation included the modern republics of Peru and Ecuador with parts of Chile, Bolivia and even Argentina. This vast empire was administered concurrently with an ability which has even been

compared with that of the Romans in the Old World. The Inca Empire was cemented by highways which can only be termed miraculous considering that the "Indians" who constructed them had neither iron tools nor large pack animals. Equally remarkable were the public buildings, chiefly temples and forts, constructed or repaired from pre-existing models by the Inca conquerors. The empire was fundamentally socialistic in that the last word in both political and economic matters lay in the hands of the all-powerful State, represented by the "benevolent despotism" of the Incas. If benevolent, however, it was quite unsentimental in its administrative decrees; having conquered a new area it ruthlessly transported the population *en bloc* often to distant parts of its far-flung empire. Some authorities have held that the secret both of Inca rule and of the apparently remarkable success it achieved lay in its superimposed system of "Fabian" bureaucracy upon the immemorably ancient "clan-system". However, what a recent French authority has described as "the Socialist Empire of the Incas" was perhaps the most autocratic of all totalitarian regimes prior to the industrial era: whatever its other merits may have been it was certainly not a social democracy! (*c.f. L'Empire Socialiste des Inka* by Louis Baudin.)

"The Children of the Sun"

Like all empires of the archaic (Bronze) age, that of the Incas was a theocracy; the great god of the Incas was the Sun. The Incas came down from the cool plateaux of Bolivia as "The Children of the Sun", the life-giving sun of the northern heights. It was in the name of the Sun that the Incas established their empire, and in the name of the Sun that the great Inca rulers led their armies in a hundred now forgotten battles. A magnificent Temple of the Sun in Cuzco crowned the theocratic empire of the Incas, whilst the worship of the great luminary, officially represented throughout the ever growing empire by an officially endowed priesthood, represented the indissoluble union of Church and State. The Incas, like the Japanese Mikados, were the descendants and earthly representatives of the Sun. A modern sceptic may, however, note with interest that the impressive fabric of Peruvian sun-worship was occasionally disturbed by both theological doubts and geographical difficulties. One of the Incas is reported to have asked the pertinent question, "Who makes the sun go round? Is he

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Children of the Sun

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

merely a tethered beast?" (And perhaps that other child of the Sun, the Mikado, is now asking similar questions of the Japanese sun-goddess!) But geography produced even greater difficulties for the solar theocracy. In the mountains where the Incas originated their solar cult the heat of the sun represented a life-giving force. But it was very different when the conquering Incas sought to impose sun worship on the inhabitants of the stifling equatorial lowlands of Peru and Ecuador; there the sun represented a malevolent destroyer, an interesting example of the interaction of geography and religion.

The dramatic collapse and obliteration of the Inca empire

is common knowledge. Like their Aztec cousins a few years earlier the Incas with their Bronze Age culture could not stand up against the European strategy of the Spanish "conquistadores" based on the complex of firearms, iron, horses—and objective reasoning. In Peru, as previously in Mexico, contingent causes helped in the conquest. But neither cruelty nor accident was its main cause. The stagnant societies of the Bronze Age could not withstand the dynamic impact of modern Europe. The Spaniards were the first to boast that the sun never set over their empire. The Incas were less fortunate. It had already set in Peru.

Embracing Christ

By *WONIAD* (South Africa)

ON A RECENT Saturday morning the Rev. J. B. Webb — writing in the *Rand Daily Mail* — referred to the unrest pervading the world today. He called attention to the misunderstandings between man and man and nation and nation, regretted that the leading peoples of this earth were arming themselves with atom bombs likely to destroy humanity and bemoaned in most eloquent fashion the lack of faith in spiritual guidance.

Finally he offered a kindly solution for all this danger and oncoming doom. The peoples of the world, he indicated, must make up their minds and hearts to "embrace". When that ideal had been reached, peace and contentment would reign upon the face of the earth.

I presume that he holds himself to be fair-minded and just. I wonder, though, if he realises that only a part of humanity are adherents of the Christian faith. What of the 600,000,000 Chinese in the two China republics? The peoples therein seem to have acquired a philosophy, culture and decency of thought and living which have lasted them for thousands of years and which still sustain them. What of the 400,000,000 folk living in India, Pakistan and surrounding lands? Have they not had a culture and a philosophy which, in some respects, are superior and more idealistic than those possessed by the so-called civilized nations of the West? What of the 90,000,000 Japanese? And the 20,000,000 Turks? Have not these peoples high senses of morality and behaviour which have kept them alert towards life in their own fashion some thousands of years?

And what of the black races of the world? Are they just savages who must be saved from their own destruction?

Why must all these various peoples desert the faiths and customs of their ancestors in order to "embrace Christ"? Filled as they may be with a reliance upon the supernatural and mystical, and happy as they may be with numerous gods and the worship of idols, how can it possibly benefit them if they throw away all they know and believe in, in order to "embrace" another set of supernatural beliefs offered generously by a gradually deteriorating Christianity?

Does not the devout Rev. J. B. Webb know that many enlightened Christians throughout the world are doubting the miracles recorded in the Bible? Is he not aware of a weakening of belief in the story of Adam and Eve and the snake, involved as they appear to have been with an imaginary Garden of Eden? Christian adherents are asking for historic proofs of the stories of Noah and the flood and of the erection of the Tower of Babel.

Our religious preacher should know that there are Christians who are openly favouring the elimination of the harsh sentiments, curses and stories of shocking cruelties found in the Bible. There are others, too, who are not so sure that the so-called Creator of the Universe (who must

also have created the millions of other worlds) would involve himself with a human on earth in an association which has led to a legendary immaculate conception. Nor can some modern Christians quite entertain the belief in a Son having been so born to save the world from the manner in which His Divine Father had created it.

Millions of churchgoers are puzzled today, due to the remarkable advances made by science. They see the nations of the world preparing to obliterate each other. Some of the worshippers remember that during the last two world wars, padres prayed to God for victory of their own armed forces made up of Christians embattled against other Christians in bloody conflict. Has not the Rev. J. B. Webb heard of the increasing number of scholars who are doubting the historicity of Jesus, or of the movements towards "de-mything" Christ?

It is obvious, therefore, that it cannot be a further hold of religious superstitions and belief in the supernatural that is likely to improve the relations between man and man and nation and nation. What is hopeful is the gradual falling away of reliance on the mystical and miraculous and the coming closer into the realms of reason and common sense.

Does not the Rev. J. B. Webb know that there are today ethical movements in which a belief in a God is not the central pivot, but whose earnest aim is for truth, purity and decency? The ideal of humanism is entering the hearts of many who are tired of the mumbo-jumbo of Christianity.

If this spirit were to prevail in the minds and hearts of a few hundred million people, there might come contentment and peace upon this earth.

Mencken on Fraud

TO BELIEVE IN FRAUDS, it seems to me, is incompatible with any sort of dignity. It may be held, by the sorry standards which prevail in certain quarters, to be virtuous, but it is plainly not dignified. Is it a fact that the authors of the New Testament were inspired by God? That they compiled a record that is innocent of error? It is *not* a fact. They were ignorant and credulous men, and they put together a narrative that is discordant and preposterous. Is it a fact that to believe that narrative is an act of merit and that its reward is deliverance from Hell and entrance upon an eternity of bliss? It is not a fact. More, it is not even an innocent fiction. For its necessary implication is that the test of a proposition is something unrelated to its truth, that lying is virtuous so long as it brings a reward.

—H. L. MENCKEN: *Forum* (American quarterly, September, 1930).

A Candid Racist

By COLIN McCALL

THE December 1956 issue of the *American Truth Seeker* contained an interesting controversy between the editor, Mr. Charles Smith, and Dr. Edward Roux of the Department of Botany, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, arising out of the former's recent two volumes entitled *Sensism*. I have not yet done more than glance at this formidable work, but it is by all accounts noteworthy. Indeed, Dr. Roux considers that "Parts of it rise to great heights of wisdom." As a professional biologist, he agrees with Mr. Smith's criticism of teleology and Lysenkoism and with his Malthusianism. What he does not like is the anti-semitism and "support of the Nordic myth." But, as my views (as a layman, of course) are similar to those expressed by Dr. Roux, it is with some of Mr. Smith's replies that I am concerned here.

"The plea of the anti-racist, 'Judge each individual by his own performance', is a verbal confusion", he writes. "After performance it is too late to judge." Surely this is not so: if it were it would render all tests of scholarship valueless. Is Mr. Smith prepared to run an educational system on the basis of guesswork; if not, how can he avoid judging by performance? His analogy: "When a man lifts and carries an object weighing several hundred pounds, one does not judge that he is strong; one knows that he is so", is not a true one. There is often (though not always) a correlation between physical appearance and physical strength; there is no similar one between physical appearance (colour) and mental ability. True, "a sportsman in selecting stock for his stables does not ignore transmissible intrinsic physical qualities . . . he keeps tables not of pasturage or training but of ancestry." Here however, we are dealing with selective breeding for special—and mainly physical—purposes, e.g. speed and stamina. Man presents a different case from that of the domesticated horse: there has been no comparable selective breeding, and the qualities required are much more complex. Even if our aim were relatively simple (say, again, speed and/or stamina) it would not be possible to gain the best results if one or more of the so-called "races" were excluded. To take a simple illustration: Jesse Owens was a phenomenal sprinter, but all negroes are not good sprinters, and all the best sprinters are not negroes.

If our breeding aim were purely intelligence (and I assume that much more would be required to make the "perfect" man) it would be complex enough, and "racial" grounds do not provide an adequate criterion for judgment of capability. "Environmental modifications", as Mr. Smith says, "are not transmitted". But they assuredly affect performance. Particularly do they affect mental development. I am not — any more than is Dr. Roux — suggesting that all men are born equal in capacity; I am insisting that environment can do much to develop or retard innate capacity — and, in fact, does. It might be added that it does so even in the case of the racehorse, otherwise trainers would not be necessary.

Mr. Smith talks of an "equalist myth diligently propagated by the Jews through Christians and Marxians", but Dr. Roux had already stated that "Intelligent political equalists do not necessarily believe that all men are equal intrinsically. They advocate equal rights and educational opportunities for all men. Equalize opportunity, and intrinsic differences will reveal themselves." This, it seems to me, is the only reasonable position. Mr. Smith demurs. "To test each individual of a large group is not possible,"

he argues; "Life is short". But this is evasive as well as unsound. The testing of each individual forms an essential part of any worth-while educational system; without it one cannot run an educational system. One may, of course, exclude certain individuals or groups from the system, but I believe this will create more difficulties than it solves and will prove to be impossible in the long run.

The logical result of Mr. Smith's racism is apartheid; and he candidly admits that he "agrees with the South African government." "Full equality" he says, "would lower South Africa culturally to the level of Haiti". I would ask Mr. Smith if he thinks that a policy of apartheid can be pursued indefinitely when "Bushmen, Hottentots, and Bantus outnumber the Whites four to one"? If not, with an increasing antagonism between the colour groups, the collapse of South African civilization seems a distinct possibility. Apartheid is, in other words, short-sighted, even from the white standpoint. The way to ensure the continuation and improvement of civilization in South Africa, no less than in America, involves equality of legal and educational opportunity. Obviously this will present enormous problems at first, but these will become progressively — and dangerously — greater, the longer the reform is delayed. The United States itself is at last realising the folly of segregation and South Africa will eventually have to do the same.

But "Equal legal rights for all men" is a "formula for the destruction of the White race" says Mr. Smith. "White men may save their souls by obeying this formula; their remote descendants will be coloured." Frankly, I have no dread of colour such as Mr. Smith evinces here. What if our descendants *are* darker than us? Perhaps they will be happier than us and that is what really counts.

Can they be genuinely happy in a world of colour bars? I do not think so. "The brotherhood of men and the fatherhood of God are related fictions", asserts Mr. Smith. "As there is not a common father in heaven, so all men are not brothers". Here, of course we are dealing with metaphors: all men are not "brothers" in the normal sense of that term. And a white Englishman is likely to have more common ancestors with another white Englishman than he has with, say, an Eskimo. But it is possible to defend the metaphorical use of the term "brotherhood of man", for we are all members of the same species and there is every conceivable gradation of physical characters between our most extreme types. In that metaphorical sense I am prepared to defend the idea and to contest Mr. Smith's practice of making the brotherhood of man consequentially dependent upon the fatherhood of God. As I view it, human brotherhood implies human fatherhood too.

Pagan or Christian?

WHEN the Master of South Notts Hunt (Captain T. D. Readett-Bayley) was buried at Scarrington Parish Church, near Nottingham, a huntsman and a kennelman, wearing pink coats, stood beside the grave. While one blew a hunting-horn, the other threw the severed tail of a fox on the coffin, whilst it was being lowered into the grave. The League Against Cruel Sports protested to the Acting Bishop of Southwell, saying this was "not far removed from the ancient barbaric immolation of a chieftain's victims on his funeral pyre," and that it was reminiscent of a beastly pagan rite of a bygone age."

This Believing World

Bishops, parsons, and priests, are extremely angry that such a highly respectable journal like the *Sunday Times* should have sullied its pages with awful unbelief. Week in and week out we get them writing on aspects of the one and only true religion — Christianity — and here, at one fell swoop so to speak, an out-and-out unbeliever in Immortality like Bertrand Russell is allowed to publish his awful, nay damnable, unbelief in the soul, and its survival as a spook as our Spiritualist friends would say. Belief in Christ means "Life Everlasting", and the *Sunday Times* has no right to upset Christian beliefs in this way.

★

Even some of our noble lords have joined in the fray, like Lord Amwell, who angrily denounces Bertrand Russell for using "his prestige" and his philosophy "to support the case against survival" — which, of course, Lord Amwell knows to be a fact. Not that he produces any spook to prove his case. All he does is to protest against "eighteenth century rationalism" in the good old Christian way. Lord Amwell himself does not appear to have yet emerged from the Billy Graham or General Booth type of mind.

★

Then there is the Abbot of Downside who tells us that "Heaven is ours to choose" — meaning, of course, that the only Heaven in existence is the Roman Catholic one, and the only way to "choose" it, is the Roman Catholic way. His article in the *Sunday Times* is exactly like millions of others which regularly come from all kinds of Christian believers, without a single original thought in the whole wordy mess. Yet the fact remains, however unpalatable, that when we die in this world our life for ever is ended. There is not and never can be Immortality.

★

Leicester recently has had many entertaining discussions in the Press on the Star of Bethlehem in which credulity and superstition played a distinguished part. But the most humorous letter came from a gentleman who learnedly pointed out that the Star was not one of the usual tiny piffing ones, round and twinkling, but a full-blooded eight-pointed Star combining an "upright cross" (as indeed it ought to on such an important occasion) and a "diagonal cross" without which no doubt it might have failed to localise the popular Manger. Why had the Star to have eight points? It was to "signify Salvation for the Jews" — who, alas, no more wanted this Divine Gift than they wanted even the Babe Himself. It is a sad, sad thought.

★

Continuing to instruct the schoolchildren in "philosophy and religion," the BBC recently dealt with the Gospels — of course as perfect historical documents and inspired by God himself. We were told how Mark wrote his Gospel for groups of very early Christians from taking down what he heard from Peter; while Luke, of course, did the same thing but his mentor — though he never saw Jesus "in the flesh" — was Paul. Every word of the broadcast was pure Fundamentalism, and no doubt the lecturer would rather die than tell his hearers that every statement he made has been more or less denied not only by unbelievers but also by *instructed* Christians. But the BBC still has to grapple with the shade of Lord Reith and his immaculate Fundamentalism.

★

Poor parson Sheppard is a sadly disappointed and beginning-to-get-angry man. He has suddenly discovered that there are people who insist that "our Lord" is a myth, and he very angrily heads his *Daily Mail* article, "That's a Lie!" In fact he almost shouts that "only ignorance can

make us say that Jesus never existed. It is a FACT." The truth is that Mr. Sheppard is discovering that there is a Freethought party in the world, that it is active, and that its object is to abolish the ignorance, the credulity, and superstition, which surround *every* religion.

★

Newcomers to the pulpit like Mr. Sheppard literally know nothing of Freethought, and what it has done. They appear never to have heard of even Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason* published over 160 years ago, and still being sold all over the world. They live in a world of fantasy, mouthing Christ Jesus as if that settled all the evils in our midst. We can even add that people like Mr. Sheppard do not know their own Bible but only selected bits. And of course, while always ready to challenge everybody, they take good care never to accept the challenger. Never in the history of Christianity have so many priests and parsons run away from Freethought as they do these days.

Review

A MARXIST interpretation of the development of the Labour Movement in this country has recently been published. (*The British Labour Movement*, by A. L. Morton and George Tait. Lawrence and Wishart. 15s.) History is one of the fields of study in which Marxist scholars are increasingly busy, and this book is well worth reading. Charles Bradlaugh and the National Secular Society are both mentioned. G. J. Holyoake, curiously enough, is ignored. This is all the more curious because he was the earliest of all Progressive leaders to insist upon the need for organisation of both people and ideas within forward looking movements.

A fine chapter in this book deals with Chartism: it achieves a synthesis from the many strands which went to make up Chartism, and analyses clearly why it failed in its objectives. Not sufficient weight, one feels, is given to the need for a free press to issue newspapers and pamphlets, although this may be due to the extraordinary amount of compression needed to contain all the material within a book of just over 300 pages.

The first chapter, "The Birth of a Class," is also excellent. The Industrial Revolution and its consequences are discussed trenchantly and briefly. Whether or not one agrees with the conclusions reached by the authors, this book is a serious historical essay.

V. E. NEUBURG.

HELL ON EARTH

AN EYE-CATCHING announcement is that a county planning commission has given its permission for a scrap yard to operate in Hell only on one condition: that is, that there will be no burning without permission from the country air pollution control board. This news, which might seem to suggest an unwarranted intrusion into the rights of Salvationists, and Catholics, to consign their opponents to the nether regions is not so alarming as it sounds. The commission in question is the Californian one and the Hell is not the theological Siberia of awful repute, but a small community in the state of California, not a state of eternal torment.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE JESUS BUILD-UP

By E. H. GROUT

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

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.

ARTHUR SCUDDER.—You ask, how does an individual Catholic learn that he must not read a certain book because it is on the *Index*? If he has doubts he should ask his priest. If he has no doubts, then presumably he is damned!

E. COOPER.—It is exactly 100 years since the Baconian theory was advanced to account for Shakespearian authorship (1857, by Delia Bacon—no relation to Francis Bacon, incidentally).

S. ROSCOE.—The lines—

"Vain are the thousand creeds
That mire men's hearts; unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main"

—are from Emily Brontë's *Last Lines*.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH, CORSAIR and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.15 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, and SMITH.

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) — Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE and R. MORRELL.

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

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, February 17th, 6.45 p.m.: A Lecture.

Bristol Rationalist Group (Hermes Room, Guildhall Chambers, 26 Broad Street).—Wednesday, February 20th, 7.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER, "International Freethought."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, February 17th, 7.15 p.m.: G. A. HERBERT, "Why I am a Catholic."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 19th, 7.15 p.m.: R. ST. BARBE BAKER, "Saving the Wonder Trees of the World." Illustrated. (In large hall.)

Glasgow Branch N.S.S. (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street).—Sunday, February 17th, 7 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Freethought and Communism."

Head Office N.S.S. (41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Friday, February 15th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The History of Civilisation" (first of six Study Classes). Subject this week: "The Philosophy of Civilisation." Admission 1/-.

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 17th, 6.30 p.m.: Mrs. DORA RUSSELL, "Women, Peace, and Progress."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, February 17th, 2.30 p.m.: G. E. MACPIERSON, "The Radical Outlook."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 17th, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, M.A., "Modern Theology and Natural Science."

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £186 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; A. H. Briancourt, 5s.; N. Cluett, 2s. 6d.; H. Bluett, 2s. 6d.; W. A. Morrison, 5s.; R. Muir, £1 7s.—Total to date, February 8th, 1957, £188 5s. 6d.

Notes and News

THIS is just a final note to remind readers and all those who wish to attend the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on February 16th that a few tickets are still available, and application should be made forthwith to the General Secretary at 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1. Tickets have gone remarkably well, and we hope to make this occasion one of the happiest and brightest of all our social functions.

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FOR the first time ever, a Catholic has become a member of a Conservative British Government. A number of Catholics have held office in Labour Governments in recent years; notably Lord Pakenham and R. R. Stokes. But no Catholic until now has held office under the Conservatives. Apparently the latter are at last learning some strategy from their opponents in this direction. Mr. Macmillan's choice, in breaking with this tradition, was the Earl of Perth, whom he has appointed to be Minister of State for the Colonies.

★

ANOTHER ministerial appointment which has been hailed with delight in Catholic circles is that of Lord Hailsham (Quintin Hogg) as Education Minister. He has Catholic connections, including a friendship with Bishop Beck of Salford, and has done reviews for a publication of the Jesuit Fathers in London. The utmost vigilance is needed now by all freethinkers and other progressives in the field of education, as Bishop Beck is Chairman of the Catholic Education Council. "Catholic education," of course, means Catholic indoctrination.

★

WHEN Mr. Tom Driberg (*New Statesman & Nation*, 12/1/57) complained of the B.B.C.'s error of taste in playing the current "hit" song, "The Garden of Eden", we thought he must be relating it to the illness of the former Prime Minister. Not so: Mr. Driberg considered it "objectionable not only to Fundamentalists but to those who dislike the vulgarisation of sublime folklore" because it "exploits the sensual charms of the woman you are walking with in the Garden of Eden, and encourages resistance to the 'Voice in the Garden' that 'tells you she is forbidden'." We wonder if Mr. Driberg would have similarly objected if the song had vulgarised sublime Pagan folklore.

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—Headline in THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

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Book

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The Bottomley Myth

By H. CUTNER

MR. JULIAN SYMONS'S biography of Horatio Bottomley (the Cresset Press, 1955) is almost as interesting as his brother's more famous *The Quest for Corvo*, which is, in its way, a minor masterpiece. If "Baron Corvo" was an eccentric figure, what are we to say of the once famous Editor of *John Bull*, who ended up a glorious (or inglorious) career as an ex-convict, a swindler who fully deserved all he got?

Horatio Bottomley came into the world as the son of George Jacob Holyoake's sister — though he had the consummate impudence to call himself on occasions the son of Bradlaugh on the strength of a more or less dubious likeness to that formidable Freethinker. Christians — the more pious brand — did their best to encourage this libel, adding that it was Annie Besant who was his mother. The question of dates in this connection never worried the perpetrators of such a thundering lie — for she was born in 1847, while Horatio was born in 1860. Actually Bradlaugh had never heard of her until 1874, when she went with Thomas Scott to hear him lecture, and admired him immediately; and for at least ten years was one of his most faithful followers as well as the sub-editor of the *National Reformer*. When she first became a Socialist, and then a Theosophist, no one was more surprised — and hurt — than Charles Bradlaugh.

One of Bottomley's first jobs as a youth was in the old office at Johnson's Court, where he met, no doubt, many of the prominent Freethinkers of the day — his uncle, George Jacob Holyoake, Charles Watts, and, of course, Bradlaugh — who, it is interesting to note, "is said to have expressed the opinion that he would come to no good end," as Mr. Symons tells us. This should be enough to quash the lie about Bradlaugh being his father.

But the humdrum life of a publisher's clerk (whatever that entailed) was not good enough for Horatio, who had visions, not of bigger things, but of bigger money; and it must be confessed that he certainly had plenty of confidence in his power at a very early age, for he got married at twenty, and at twenty-five was a publisher in his own right, with such success that two years later, he was invited to stand for Parliament as a Liberal — in true Freethought tradition. He did not get the seat but was successful enough nearly to halve a preceding majority.

It was about this time that he began to see how easy money was to be obtained in forming all sorts of companies, details of which Mr. Symons gives us in his entertaining style. They led him to wealth, and even to the courts, where, incredible as it may seem, Bottomley often managed to get away with swindle after swindle, fortune being on his side. For the truth is that, whatever else he was, the great Horatio was a most convincing lay lawyer, and appeared to get most people, but particularly those he swindled most, to want to lend him plenty of money.

When *John Bull* first appeared in 1906, Bottomley was a very well known figure, and his tremendous flare for publicity soon made that journal a huge success. There must be many readers of THE FREETHINKER who remember it — as I do. And perhaps they (or some of them) were completely taken in by the myth that Horatio was one of the straightest and truest gentlemen then living.

Week after week, we read how he exposed the other swindlers, the quacks, the liars, and many similar crooks of all sorts and conditions in every walk of life. What magnificent work he was doing!

I used avidly to read *John Bull*, to agree with almost every point of view it advocated, and to put Bottomley quite on a par with Robert Blatchford. A crook? Good heavens, could he be anything else but a Man with a Mission to destroy evil in all its forms? Besides, was he not a nephew of George Jacob Holyoake, and with him, an Agnostic at least?

When war came in 1914 and Bottomley began to speak for the Government all over England, those of us who followed *John Bull* were more and more convinced of his greatness. His articles in the *Sunday Pictorial* roused us fiercely against the hated enemy and thoroughly convinced us that at last England had found a Great Leader. He said so himself, and naturally we believed him. Mr. Symons makes great play with our gullibility, but then we had no means of knowing that Bottomley was getting paid by *John Bull* for his speeches; and for his articles in the *Sunday Pictorial* he received from £100 to £150 each. We know now that he made over £27,000 from his wartime activities in this way alone.

The fact is, he bamboozled everybody, including himself. Nothing was easier when the money simply flowed from so many sources to believe there was something in him. Over and over again, Mr. Symons shows us that Bottomley was gifted to an extraordinary degree with sensing what the public was ready to believe, and he supplied them with that commodity in abundance. But it was much more than that. Bottomley filched enormous sums of money from everybody who listened to him who had it. After the war, his Victory Bonds scheme brought him hundreds of thousands of pounds — perhaps millions. No one knows how much. The money poured in in such quantities that his staff were completely unable to cope with it. And the great Bottomley, who was then M.P. for Hackney, and who savagely attacked all other swindlers in his journal *John Bull*, proved himself the biggest and the most impudent swindler of them all. We, who had followed him and *John Bull* and the *Sunday Pictorial* were aghast. We were staggered. But Bottomley had to do seven years — and thoroughly deserved it.

During his long reign, there is no doubt that he was also free and generous with his money — he was not without some good qualities; and we must not forget that he was one of the few editors who asked G. W. Foote to write some articles for him. Though Foote was head and shoulders above many of his more noted contemporaries as a writer and critic, he was boycotted everywhere as far as it was possible to do so. But, of course, as the nephew of Holyoake, Bottomley knew Foote and what he could do so well.

It is probably true that Bottomley had as little religion in him as his famous uncle; but the way money poured into his lap made him wonder whether, after all, God Almighty was not on his side. As his weekly articles during the war in the *Sunday Pictorial* became more and more popular, so they became also more and more religious. It is easy to see that he could mouth God even more than he could mouth money. Mr. Symons does not tell us, but I wonder what he thought about God while he was serving his seven years hard? Was he put down as of "no religion" or as "Church of England" or what? Did he go to the prison's Divine Service?

Of course, his intimates knew that God was in the main
(Concluded on page 55)

A Mindszentimental Aspect

By P. G. ROY

HOWEVER justified popular indignation in Hungary was when the uprising started, every progressivist must have grown uneasy when an unauthorized mob was able to break into a prison and carry Mindszenty, the crypto-Fascist, in triumph back to his palace. When, a few days later, that same champion of feudalism had to seek sanctuary under the wings of the Dollar Eagle, the Pope in his Christmas message lamented "the great danger into which the essential values of man" have fallen in Hungary.

What are these human values? According to the famous encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* civilization was threatened unless there existed a class society, the division of ruling owners and obedient have-nots with the politico-economic power of finance oligarchy. Hence the Church has always been on the side of the Francos, Pétains and Hitlers. *Nous sommes la contre-révolution en marche!* exclaimed Count Albert de Mun, leader of the Catholic Movement. And the people who clamoured for and released Cardinal Mindszenty must have felt themselves to be Counter Revolutionaries. They did not, of course, demand immediately the restoration of absentee landlordism, but — as Pius XII called it in his message — "the restoration of European solidarity". His ideas are still those of the Holy German Empire, so much so that in Italy he is being nicknamed *Il Papa Tedesco* — German Pope. It was he who, as Cardinal Pacelli, signed the Hitlerite Concordat on 20th July, 1953; it was he again who, when installed in the Holy See, in his 1939 Christmas message called on Germany and the Allies alike to stop that "fratricide war and to join hands in an effort to annihilate the common enemy, Atheism". For "he who desires to partake of the Lord's Supper cannot sit down at the table of his enemies".

Who then are the host of Mindszentimental refugees to whom we are proffering far greater benefits and facilities than to other refugees? The Jewish and anti-Hitler refugees before the war were not allowed to take up work and were even interned. The Spanish Republicans and the remnants of the International Brigade, when coming into France early in 1939, had to camp in the open, in the morasse of Argelès and eventually in the Gurs encampment; they were kept in Vernet camp for the Nazis to pick out whoever they wanted to be killed, while the rest were deported to Corsica. Where then was the right of asylum?

Yet the Hungarian refugees were fêted in Paris by the ladies of high society, such as Mesdames de la Rochefoucauld; Del Duca, Deterding, who, for the "profit of Hungary" congregated in an hotel of the Champs-Élysées, under the chairmanship of Georges Bidault. Money was collected at the Golf Club and speeches were made in the salons of Baron de Rothschild in the presence of General Corniglion-Monilier (of "Paris Press"), General Catroux and Henri Bonnet. There was a reception committee headed by the Comte de Paris, with M. Mounik, ex-governor of the *Banque de France et des Pays-Bas* and Director General of the *Banque d'Indochine* (both institutes, by the way, controlled by the Vatican.)

No less were they fêted in England. Yet, as a Gallup Poll in Vienna showed, only 12% were genuine refugees. And the rest? 62% are "Inhibited Migrants", i.e. people who for a decade had wanted to join their relatives and friends abroad but had been prevented from leaving the country. Which tends to explain why rather than staying near their homeland border in expectation sooner or later to be able

to go back to their homesteads, they clamour for emigration to U.S.A. or our Dominions. And to make this possible, money was collected that could have been put to greater advantage for the benefit of decent toilers in this country and old-age pensioners.

Panic is contagious and a certain percentage of refugees are those who were seized with alarm and joined the trek of the migrants; they will no doubt return in time.

Stalinist misrule, social injustice, putsch Dollars and clerical ambitions were responsible for the uprising; the present régime also mentioned the gentry and old aristocracy. They, however, were not involved and left it to Mindszenty to do their business. Another very queer aspect of the tragic events is that a great part of the Hungarian populace — including Communist Party members — waited for the withdrawal of the Russians to start a huge pogrom. And it is by no means accidental that the *Jewish Chronicle* has begun to publish instances of crude anti-Semitism among our Hungarian visitors: it is the Mindszentimental aspect.

A Pamphlet of Poems

Phantasy Poets : Oswell Blakeston

HERE is a collection of twelve short poems varying from two lines to twelve lines, mostly rhymeless and very modern. Which means they are not everyone's cup of tea. Of several to whom I showed them one said, "I am not at home with the modern idiom"; another, "There are some striking lines in them"; and another, "They are brilliant. They *must* be because I don't understand half of them."

But these poems have three major virtues: they have humour, they have humanity, and they have freshness. They do not cloy with repetition. Obscurity? Occasionally perhaps; but there are some swift and effective impressions and the freethought outlook is explicit as often as implicit.

To buy or not to buy? Well, if you like this:

Faith moves a mountain so they say
Yet never say how far:
A millimetre is enough
For God to keep his word.

or this:

Do you like
Your coffin black or white?

then you can have the dozen for ninepence by sending to Better Books, 94 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.

G.H.T.

THE BOTTOMLEY MYTH

(Concluded from page 54)

specially dished up for the *Sunday Pictorial*, and often protested — "You know, governor," one of them said, "you trotted out the Old Man again yesterday . . . you ought to knock it off." And Bottomley replied, "Well, you can't deny that good old God sells the paper."

But, as Mr. Symons recalls, when "for the twentieth time, he found God" during the dark days after his release and failure to found another journal like *John Bull*, the Lord certainly deserted him; and his end was the end of a poor, broken, old man — almost forsaken by all his former friends.

Does crime pay? It certainly paid in Bottomley's case even though, during those last miserable days, it looked as if it did not. But then — thank Heaven! — there have never been many Horatio Bottomleys.

Science Front

The American Nuclear Research Society recently heard at a Washington meeting of an experiment in which miniature replicas of universes had been formed in the laboratory.

Dr. W. Bostick said he had devised a glass chamber suitable for examining the possibilities of harnessing the energy of an H-bomb for peaceful purposes. From a thimble-sized "atomic gun" he shot positive and negative electrified particles and subjected them to a magnetic field: the "stellar bodies" then began to form and patterns in the chamber looked like "island universes," including spiral nebulae such as our own Milky Way. He said the experiment suggested an explanation of the force by which the galaxies were being repelled from each other in the "expanding universe."

★

Another American scientist has noted a gigantic dust storm, 3,000 miles by 200 miles, which sprang up from the deserts of Mars last August and September. Observing Mars during the brief period when it was within 35 million miles of the earth, Dr. Kuiper of Chicago confirmed the conclusions of other scientists that there were no canals on Mars. There were, however, signs of a possible primitive plant life. Possibly due to the gigantic dust storm lowering the Martian temperature, there was a polar blizzard on September 14th (early Martian summer), an unusual event.

★

Albi, France, reports that an ancient temple of Mithra has been unearthed. Mithraism was ancient when Christianity began. Other Mithraic temples have been found in sections from Italy to London. When they were accused of having copied Mithra in their god Christ, the early Christians explained the great resemblance by saying the Devil had known Jesus was coming and set up Mithra to confuse matters.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Warner, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. The Chairman extended a welcome to Mr. Warner. New members were admitted to the Bradford, Fyzabad, Kingston, Manchester, Nottingham, Wales and Western, West London, and Parent Branches (18 in all). It was resolved to send three delegates to a No Conscription Council Conference (23/2/57). A Humanist Council social was announced for March 8th. Suggested questionnaire from Mr. H. Day would be further considered at next meeting. A donation to Austrian Freethinkers was approved. Mr. T. M. Mosley's resignation as Secretary of Nottingham Branch was noted with regret. A new series of Study Classes under Mr. F. A. Ridley was arranged and final arrangements for the Annual Dinner were given. The prospect of selling literature on Durdham Downs was again reviewed and local action was thought to be the only method likely to achieve any results. Co-operation with other bodies was suggested. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, March 20th, 1957.

CORRESPONDENCE

ROYALISM

I was very pleased to read Mr. Norman's letter on Royalism in Britain. He is correct in placing some of the blame on Ramsay Macdonald and some of the Labour leaders, who seem afraid to tackle this important matter and would rather attend a Buckingham Palace garden party. Seventy years ago Republicanism was much stronger. At that time there was a popular song about John Odger, a Labour agitator, in which the chorus had lines saying that Queen Victoria was taking in John Odger as a lodger. Dare any publisher put that on the market today? The power of the Court is behind the Church today, making our task still more difficult. W. MORRIS.

THE "TRAPPINGS" OF RELIGION

Mr. Brook's letter advises us to tolerate the "accidental trappings" of religion in order to appreciate the "essence."

The first-year student in electrical technology is taught his subject by means of analogies—water-tanks, weights, pendulums, springs, etc.—but, as he progresses, these are discarded as out-moded symbols that have served their purpose.

Christianity has, for nearly two thousand years, been teaching mankind by means of symbols—Moses, Pillars of Fire, Miracles, Daniel and his lions—but these are still given a *place of such importance* that it is difficult to discern the "essential message," if any, lurking behind the all-obscurating fog of fiction.

Perhaps Mr. Brooks can explain exactly what is meant by "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"? I cannot; to me it is the Essence of Nonsense.

If this is all that Christianity, when shorn of its trappings, has to teach us, then we might devote our time and energy more profitably in learning a little elementary science, in readiness for material emergencies!

H. A. ROGERSON.

DOES CHARITY BEGIN AT HOME?

Down the untidy gravel path outside Ladywell Nursery came a young woman, tears running down her face. She told me that her baby boy, 20 months old, was living in the nursery, and she had just returned him, having taken him out for his Saturday afternoon treat—tea with Mummy. Michael had clung to her sobbing at the parting. I asked his mother why he was in the nursery.

Anna is poor, and has to work. She is unable to find accommodation for herself and her child, within her price limit, in the entire borough where she lives. Landladies are all smiles when she enquires about rooms, but directly she mentions the word "baby," the door is closed. She had no choice but to put her baby into a home, and herself live alone in a room.

"These Hungarians make me sick," she said bitterly. I asked her what she meant.

In the borough where she lives hundreds of people have thrown open their homes to Hungarian refugees—and *their children*. Not only that, but the borough inspects each place that is offered, to ensure that the accommodation is of a good standard.

Now, everyone in this country realises, or should realise, the anguish and terror to which these refugees have been subjected. We owe them every kindness. But why do householders gladly give or rent any available rooms in their houses to Hungarians and their babies, while one poor English woman—and there are many thousands like her—cannot even find a dingy room in which to live with her child? One reason is that among the righteous snobs, there is a certain inverted prestige in having refugees in one's home. It is something to boast of to friends, and tangible evidence to the neighbours over the garden fence, of what thoroughly good people they are.

Another reason is sheer thoughtlessness. Faced with individual cases of need and desperation, we "pass the buck" to the person next door, and having done that, forget it. It takes something dramatic, like the Hungarian Revolution, to dramatise grief and shake us out of our apathy.

Anna and her little boy are undramatic, and therefore forgotten. But I can quite understand her bitterness, and I am sure that her unhappy plight could be avoided, if we all gave some thought to the needs of our own unfortunates, as well as to those of our heroes and friends from abroad. Charity, one is told, begins at home. Sometimes, in Britain, I wonder!

SHIRLEY ANDREWS.

THE NEW YORK ETHICAL SOCIETY

You may wish to correct the slip in "Notes and News," issue January 18th: In 1956 the New York Ethical Society celebrated its 80th—not its 18th—anniversary; founded in 1876 by Dr. Felix Adler, the Society, by its substantial contribution to the social, cultural, and religious life of the community, has made for itself an influential place in the City of New York, and has inspired the founding of Ethical Societies in many American cities.

J. HUTTON HYND.

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