

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ONE OF THE MOST sensational discoveries in recent years is represented by the accidental finding, near the Palestinian Dead Sea, of a number of religious documents buried, perhaps deliberately, amid the ruins of an ancient building. Most of the authorities who have investigated these "Dead Sea Scrolls"—to give them the title by which they are usually described—regard them as the original products of a Jewish sect, which formerly inhabited the building, now in ruins, where the scrolls were first found. The general consensus of opinion appears now to be that the excavated documents themselves date from a period shortly before the beginnings of the Christian era; and that their authors adhered to an heretical Jewish sect of Essenes, a sect mentioned in some detail by the Jewish historian, Josephus (c. 80 A.D.), who had, it appears, actually lived amongst them; as well as by the Roman geographer, Pliny, and other contemporary writers. However, there were other heretical sects on the fringe of Judaism, and it cannot be stated for certain from which precise sect the scrolls actually originated. That is, assuming that they do, in reality, date from this era.

The BBC and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Both from its place and from its nature, the discovery of the scrolls has excited widespread international interest; and quite a small library could already be compiled regarding them. Up to the present time the Christian Churches have rather tended to steer clear of discussions regarding them, though a few more or less independent scholars have drawn rather daring conclusions—conclusions which appear to be undeniably disconcerting to orthodox Christian scholarship. So much so, in fact, that whilst the actual discoveries date from as far back as 1947, it is only just now that the British Broadcasting Corporation has seriously got down to commenting at length and in detail on the momentous discoveries.

In three successive programmes delivered on January 27th, February 3rd and February 10th, the Home Service described in considerable detail the background, contents, and theological reactions in connection with the Dead Sea Scrolls. So far, however, neither the BBC nor—as far as we are aware—anyone else, has considered them *primarily* with the object of throwing light upon Christian origins; though, of course, casual references were made even on the very orthodox BBC, to their possible influence in this connection.

The Library of a Sect

As and when taken together, the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to have formed part of the library of the sect which formerly occupied Qumran, as the present site is called. Whether that sect was that of the Essenes or some other, we may assume that the dates accepted by the BBC, along with most contemporary scholars, are at least approximately correct, and in any case, such Jewish sects as the Essenes

do not seem to have long survived the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, A.D. 70. What we actually have is a library, an exclusively theological library, as was later to be the case in the Christian monasteries of the Middle Ages, which, besides giving us our oldest extant manuscripts of the Jewish Bible—our Old Testament—also comments upon them from the point of view of the writers' own era. It is obvious from the contents themselves that

the unknown authors were writing in a period of "storm and stress," in which the "people of God," viz., Israel, were fighting desperately against powerful foreign invaders, and in which the writers' own sect had recently been subjected to severe persecution. In the

stormy era which began with the rise of the Maccabees in revolt against the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, and which lasted until the final suppression of the last Jewish revolt of the Messiah, Bar-Cockba—c. 165 B.C.-135 A.D., a period of some three centuries in all—such foreign wars and domestic persecutions were frequent and recurrent phenomena; and our documents could be congruously fitted in almost anywhere during this stormy three hundred years. The documents themselves appear to contain obvious references to contemporary personalities, both good and bad. No doubt, it would be quite easy to decipher them if we had, say, a straightforward narrative like that of Josephus before us. But in the Dead Sea Scrolls we are not dealing with historical, but with theological, literature, and with the esoteric theology expressed in appropriately cryptic language of a persecuted sect on, apparently, the fringe of Judaism.

[Footnote: The Essenes appear to have been regarded as Jews, of a sort. According to Josephus, some of their tenets were, however, quite foreign to Judaism: he says that they adored the sun! Their ultimate fate is unknown. Were they exterminated by Rome, or absorbed eventually by Christianity?]

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocalypse

The enigmatic language, interspersed with allegorical metaphors, with which our scrolls refer to the contemporary enemies and persecutions of the writers' co-religionists, reminds us of a perhaps nearly contemporary writing, which appears to have been composed under rather similar circumstances: none other than the New Testament Apocalypse, our Book of Revelation. "John's nightmare" belongs to the same period of Jewish wars and persecutions at the hands of foreign invaders; though, as the references in John are certainly to Rome, the actual date of his mysterious composition is probably rather later—A.D. and not B.C. But the generally cryptic style is similar, to be sure, John's fantastic allegories have caused innumerable headaches amongst theological commentators; and his fabulous beast has been the cause of more cases of mistaken identity than, perhaps, any other character in extant literature! The strangely-named persecutors in the Dead Sea Scrolls

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The BBC and the Dead Sea Scrolls

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

remain, similarly enigmatic; though, as also in Revelation, commentators have appeared to detect clues to the identity of the "Antichrist." In the Apocalypse, Nero has been accepted by serious scholars; whilst the BBC commentator noted reference in our scrolls to a disaster suffered by the Jews on the "Day of Atonement," which *could* refer to 63 B.C., when the Roman legions under Pompey surprised Jerusalem unguarded on the Holy Day. But all such identifications are obviously conjectural, sometimes very much so indeed!

The "Teacher of Righteousness" and the Messiah

The probably Essene writer was principally concerned with the recently martyred prophet held by the sect in special veneration, and referred to as the "Teacher," or "Master," "of Righteousness." Who was this mysterious individual, who is stated to have been arbitrarily killed by a "Wicked Priest," dubiously identified with one of the later Maccabean kings (first century B.C.)? Though we do not know whether it was the Maccabean king, Alexander Jannæus, who crucified many Pharisees (about 88 B.C.) or his son, Aristobulus, who reigned at the fall of Jerusalem (63 B.C.). The story of the martyred teacher bears obvious resemblances to that of John the Baptist — whose Baptist sect was perhaps an offshoot of the Essenes — or to that of the Jesus of the Gospels himself; whence the obvious reluctance of the modern theologians to discuss the newly excavated narratives, some of whom (e.g., Professor Driver of Oxford) attempt to date the scrolls to post-Christian

times. At least, the Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that nothing supernatural is required to explain the Gospel stories; such ideas and people were familiar at the time! The traditional baptism of Jesus by John was actually located only a few miles from the scene of our excavations.

The Jesus of the Gospels — a Composite Figure?

The revealed contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls appear rather to support the idea that Jesus, the Jesus of the Gospels, was a *composite* figure. That is, the Gospel story represented the *final* form taken by the Messianic story. In it are to be found, besides myths and prophecies galore, a number of actual reminiscences of, not one Messiah but several, amongst whom we may, perhaps, include the Essene "Master of Righteousness" and the "Jesus Ben-Pandira" of the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu*, alongside such more historical figures as John the Baptist, John of Gischala (the defender of the Temple, 70 A.D.) and perhaps even Bar-Cockba, who seems to be referred to in the Gospel of John (John V. 43)? We shall await with much interest any further discoveries on neighbouring sites, which may perhaps strengthen the evidence for this supposition. But, if so, will the BBC be in a hurry to admit it?

[Readers in the Manchester area may like to make a note of an illustrated lecture on the Dead Sea Scrolls to be given by Mr. John Allegro, M.A., of the University of Manchester, on Sunday, March 10th, at 7 p.m. in the Lesser Free Trade Hall. The meeting has been arranged jointly by the Manchester Branch N.S.S. and the Manchester Humanist Fellowship. Reserved seat tickets may be obtained from Mrs. H. M. Rogals, 25 Derby Road, Manchester, 20, at 1s. each.—ED.]

The Religion of Abraham Lincoln

CONTINUING her now completely non-stop public controversies on religion and morals, one of Mrs. Margaret Knight's latest fields of activity is in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, in which she is quite evidently held in high esteem. The prophet, we are told, is without honour on his home ground, a Biblical utterance which is falsified by the present case at Aberdeen!

Mrs. Knight adduced strong evidence from Lincoln's biographers and associates to show that he was not a Christian. For the other side of the scale, her opponents could find no more than a couple of pinches of gossippy fluff bearing the sign of having come straight from the Christian lie factory.

The following are from Mrs. Knight's sources of reference used in the controversy:

Lincoln's first legal partner, Stuart, said "He went farther against Christian beliefs and doctrines and principles than any man I ever heard" (Emil Ludwig, *Lincoln*, pp. 170-1).

Jesse W. Fell, a Quaker who knew Lincoln well, said Lincoln's expressed views on such matters as the divinity of Jesus, the Atonement and the after life "were such as, in the estimation of most believers, would place him entirely outside the Christian pale." (quoted by Christopher Hollis, *The Tablet*, March 26, 1955).

In the same article Hollis says Lincoln "combined a profound belief in God with a total disbelief in Christ." Yet Herndon, Lincoln's later partner and lifelong friend, said: "The continued use by him late in life of the word God must not be interpreted to mean that he believed in a personal God. In 1854 he asked me to erase the word God from a speech which I . . . read to him for criticism, because my language indicated a personal God, whereas he insisted no such person ever existed". (Emil Ludwig, *op. cit.*, p.171).

In face of such overwhelming testimonies Mrs. Knight was confronted with the following:

"A friend during an interview with Mr. Lincoln long after he had been inaugurated President asked him if he

loved Jesus. The President buried his face in his handkerchief and wept and sobbed. He then said amid his tears: 'When I went to Gettysburg and looked upon the graves of our dead who had fallen in the defence of their country, I then and there committed myself to Christ. I do love Jesus. The spectacle of that Crucified One which is before my eyes is more that sublime: it is Divine.'" (Henry Pickering, *Twice Born Men*).

This sort of thing is, of course, quite familiar to freethinkers, particularly, perhaps, the older ones, for such Christian lies are now dying out, having been found out. In vain did Mrs. Knight ask for the quotation to be substantiated. All the well known elements are there: an *unnamed* friend, a remark by this anonymous person given without any source reference and utterly out of keeping with Lincoln's remarks which *have* source reference, and included in a propaganda booklet by an evangelist with an axe to grind.

Mrs. Knight consulted six standard biographies of Lincoln and none of the six had any mention of this alleged conversion with comic effects to boot. The story, she concludes, "belongs to the same category as the legends about the death-bed conversions of Bradlaugh and Paine." The united testimony of Lincoln's wife, friends and colleagues cannot be upset from such "sources."

As the biographer Ludwig — certainly no friend of anti-Christian interests — says: "With one voice his friends declare that neither at 20, nor yet at 50, nor even later, despite the religious tenor of some of his speeches, was Lincoln a Christian in the orthodox sense of the term." (p.170, *op. cit.*).

Quite apart from having a good case to defend, Mrs. Knight has proved herself, time and again, a debater of considerable skill. One of her opponents wrote some indifferently verse in which The Lord is made to say "No-one cares what Lincoln thinks". The very fact of the present controversy, observed Mrs. Knight, suggests that The Lord is mistaken!

G. H. TAYLOR.

In Praise of Divorce

By C. G. L. DU CANN

AS IN EVERYTHING ELSE, there are *ersatz* fashions in Christianity.

One modern, and not very respectable, fashion is to talk of a (non-existent) "Christian marriage" as though it were a kind superior to any other decent sort of marriage. And to listen to English ecclesiastics, especially those of the Anglo-Catholic persuasion, you might believe that the Old Testament Jehovah detested polygamy; that he and His Son Jesus Christ invented monogamy and rigidly forbade divorce; and that, but for the Christian Church, all mankind would be polygamous and all womankind, polyandrous.

England, especially, would be sunk in sexual promiscuity. Adultery would be as common as shopping or television-watching or newspaper-reading but for the good example and warning voices of our Bishops, echoed by the minor clergy. As to divorce, we should be drowned in it, but for Church sermons and parish magazines denouncing fornication and all other deadly sins of a related kind.

It is all nonsense, of course. But nonsense repeated often enough gets mistaken by the unthinking for truth. To talk sense, divorce is one of the most necessary and praiseworthy institutions, bestowed by mankind upon itself. It is quite impossible to praise it too much.

For one thing, divorce is a deterrent to marital murder. It is incontestable that some marriages are so utterly intolerable that if the bondage could not be broken except by murder, that expedient would be resorted to. What else could chained and hating yoke-fellows do, but plot and counter-plot and contrive escape from each other by "the only way" of killing, if there were no beneficent divorce to release them from their damnable servitude worse than Dartmoor or Siberia?

In the light of current clerical chatter, it is odd to reflect that divorce is the very reverse of un-Christian. (Seldom do Christians know the tenets of their professed religion.) That eminent Christian Englishman and poet, John Milton, argued unanswerably, with a wealth of theological scholarship, that it was approved by the God of the Old Testament and not disapproved by the Christ of the New Testament. He had followers in his own day, known as "Miltonists or Divorcers." But in appealing to his fellow Christians, he was, as he said, "casting pearls to hogs." Modern English Christians should read his tractates. Such reading would improve their Christianity, their reasoning powers and their prose-style equally.

There is nothing wrong with divorce. In the civilised setting of Scandinavia legal divorce is proclaimed to be "a remedy for marital misfortune and not a crime." But there is everything wrong with the English divorce law and its divorce attitude, which are hangovers from the ancient Church jurisdiction, and barbarous to the last degree. Still, a bad divorce is better than no divorce at all; for the absence of divorce is unendurable in any community, and even English folk who will tolerate the almost intolerable, such as their rating and taxation and their Governments, will not tolerate being without divorce.

The best kind of divorce is a collusive divorce by the free consent of both parties. But collusive divorce is forbidden in England. What the lunatic English divorce law desires is that the parties should be at enmity, filled with Christian hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness for each other, and casting odium and opprobrium upon their marriage. This is a grievous and horrible thing. It is only miti-

gated by the fact that thanks largely to Sir Alan Herbert's work, this shocking state of affairs can be by-passed in some cases, by a three years desertion. But, by and large, hostility, real or pretended, is requisite.

From this evil requirement more evil flows, as you would expect. Urged to hatred and combat by convention, husband and wife play the rôles expected of them by their audience. They fight over cash. They fight over the children. And their friends and relations, their lawyers and their lawyers' clerks, their judges, and sometimes the readers of the less reputable newspapers thoroughly enjoy the battle.

A good time is had by all — at first. Later, much poorer in cash and self-respect, the victims are not so pleased. By that time, however, the mischief is done. But if English law and convention were reformed on the Scandinavian model, there would be no hatred, no fight, no indecent exposure, no publicity, and little pickings for the outsider. Then the true nature of divorce as a benefit would be apparent.

At the back of this "English way of life" lies the impudent assumption that your marriage and mine exists for State and Church purposes. But marriage is for man, not man for marriage. The true purpose of marriage is not State-licensed fornication; its true purpose is solace and help, partnership and affection, a unity of compatibility. When those purposes do not exist or have been destroyed, the marriage itself should be destroyed for the evil thing that it is.

The obstinate stranglehold of the Church upon marriage ought to be broken. For in Milton's trenchant words, too many of his fellow Christians set the institution of marriage above their God and their charity, "which is the doctrine of devils." Those strong and harsh words should be heeded by Christians. They should ask themselves whether our English divorce courts are not "Courts of Concupiscence wherein fleshly appetite is heard before right reason." Many a marriage bed is nothing else but "an old haunt of lust and malice mixed together," where there is neither love nor loyalty nor goodness. Yet our excellent clergy, in their holiness, would keep such a disgusting horror in existence by denying the remedy of divorce.

They pretend, falsely, that "God hath joined" saint with reprobate, fool with scoundrel, the diseased with the drunken, and worse with worse — and that such unions are divine! Let not man — even in mercy and decency — put such blessed conjunctions asunder. Even a scruffy Registrar, having "married" a couple of pagans in his dirty little State office, becomes a God-agent, apparently, in their talk, and must not have his blind routine undone by a divorce.

Notice how in ecclesiastical speeches on this subject no marital home is a hell from which children ought to be rescued for their good. Their story is that "broken homes" are an absolute evil; and you would think from them that no childless marriages existed. A "broken home" may, of course, be an evil. But there are worse evils, for not all homes are "home sweet home". Where divorced folk remain friendly, two good homes for the children (instead of one discordant one) are often provided, especially in upper-class circles, stage-milieu, and other sections where the Church has little or no influence.

For my part I say: "Those whom folly, mistake, or
(Concluded on page 69)

This Believing World

We felt quite sorry for the Bishop of Bristol having to explain in a broadcast to schools what exactly is the Trinity. Needless to emphasise, he was quite unable to do so, and he kept on apologising for his failure to overcome the superhuman difficulties of explaining the "incomprehensible" — his own term. When he managed to get God in sideways (so to speak) he soon proved that he had an astonishing acquaintance with the Almighty, and what the Lord was thinking all the time. Of course, Three Persons in One God, he admitted, doesn't mean a thing — much better say "three characters," for in God can be found the characters of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

★

A pity that Dr. Cockin did not make this clearer. In exactly the same way, any mortal man can have in him the characters of a grandfather, a father, a husband, a lover, a brother, and a cousin — and even of a bricklayer, or a carpenter, if one of these is his job. But the unfortunate Bishop knew that he was talking a lot of pious nonsense, for, whether the Holy Trinity is or is not One Incomprehensible in Three Incomprehensibles, it is a particularly silly dogma in a more than silly religion. We would bet that any child who heard the broadcast would find Rock 'n' Roll far more comprehensible.

★

Congratulations to Dr. Wand, writing on "Immortality," for telling us in the *Sunday Times* that the "Christian doctrine of life after death is not based upon the discoveries of science or upon the conclusions of philosophy." It is based on "revelation" — which is contained in the Bible. "Ultimately," he adds, it is based on "the teaching and experience of Jesus Christ." Well, everybody to his trade; and even a theologian like Dr. Wand must drag in Jesus — just as a Christian Scientist has to drag in Mrs. Eddy, or a Nazi that great Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler. No doubt whatever that Jesus promised his followers plenty of "pie in the sky" after they were dead, and people like Dr. Wand thoroughly believe it will be there for them. But there is no "scientific" demonstration of survival — only Faith, and it requires a lot of Faith to have and believe in that Faith.

More religious moans, groans and laments. It appears that our "choir boys" are steadily disappearing. Their angelic, cherubic, charms in white frocks accompanied with heavenly chants to God, Jesus, and the Angels, may one day disappear altogether from our churches — and all due, we are told, to television and homework. Such mortal, secular diversions to which may be added Scout activities and other worldly games are causing heart-searching in religious circles. Perhaps one day, some of the boys will even learn a little about blatant unbelief! It is a heart-breaking thought, and made worse because there is also a shortage of priests and parsons. Still, the Churches have the unswerving devotion of the BBC, TV and ITV — so why should they worry?

★

Should the Churches advertise has been a question before them for over thirty years and, in view of the great success of advertising of the Roman Church, the Church of England has chosen the Rev. R. Tatlock to lead the "counter attack" as he is "one of radio's leading religious experts", the *Sunday Express* tells us. Mr. Tatlock has no quarrel with the Church of Rome, but only wants people to know "the truth"; and he strongly objects to the Roman Church calling itself "Catholic", for the Church of England is

"Catholic", too. We shall look with more than ordinary interest to the way "Love ye one another" and "Turn the other cheek" teachings are interpreted by these pious rivals for God's Grace.

★

We have always encouraged missionary activity in England — not from Christian missionaries, but from Buddhists and Mohammedans. And we are not surprised that Ceylon Buddhists are coming in force to Europe convinced that Christianity has failed. Already one million rupees have been collected for the grand work of converting our heathen Christians — though in actual fact it ought to be easy. After all, what is the difference between grovelling in front of a Cardinal and kissing his ring, and grovelling before a statue of Buddha? Christ and Buddha are both Saviours anyway, and the promises of both are equally valid. But above all there's the money in it — one million rupees!

The Rising Generation

XVIII — JESUS OR PAUL?

ALMOST any Christian who is well instructed in his Faith will admit that the Christian religion, as we now have it, was not originated by Jesus, but by Paul. That is, what we call *theology* comes almost entirely from Paul — very little indeed from Jesus.

Any parson will "expound" to you the religion of Jesus quite easily, but he would think twice before venturing on Paul and his Epistles. You have to be very well read to understand Paul — even if he can be understood, which is very doubtful.

Converts from Judaism in Palestine in the early days of Christianity were still called Jews; for it was not until Paul (or Saul) was in Antioch with Barnabas that the disciples were *first called* Christians. You will find that in Acts 2, 26. Saul had, of course, been "converted" first, but the accounts of this conversion are very contradictory. In Acts 9, 7 it says that "the men which journeyed with him stood speechless". In Acts 26, 14, it says, "We were all fallen to the earth." Acts also says that the men, while standing speechless, also *heard* "a voice" but saw no man. In Acts 22, 9 it says "they heard *not* the voice." Acts also says that immediately after Paul's conversion, "he preached Christ in the synagogues" in Damascus, and the Jews tried to kill him; but he escaped to Jerusalem with Barnabas. This is utterly denied by *Paul himself* who says that he didn't go to Jerusalem, but went to Arabia and Damascus where he stayed for *three years* before going to Jerusalem. You will find this in Galatians.

In Romans, Paul declares that his mission was to the *Gentiles* (11, 13). But according to Acts from the ninth chapter to the twenty-eighth, he preached only to the *Jews*. Paul also said that it was Peter who had to preach to the Jews. This is completely *denied* by Peter who said, "that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel".

The truth is, we have no evidence whatever that there was a Peter or a Paul outside the New Testament. Josephus, who wrote a most detailed history of the Jews of the precise time when both Peter and Paul were supposed to preach in Jerusalem, knows *nothing whatever* about them. There is not a scrap of historical contemporary evidence for the story of the Apostles in Acts, or that Saul ever changed his name to Paul, or that he wrote a single Epistle in the New Testament. Just as in the Old Testament nearly every character is a myth, so they are in the New Testament.

H.C.

THE FREETHINKER

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All Articles and Correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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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.

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.

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

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: F. L. AGAR, "The Fount of Happiness."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 3rd, 7.15 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM (Secretary, Ethical Union), "Atheism or Humanism?"

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 5th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Vatican in World Politics."

Head Office N.S.S. 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Friday, March 1st, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The History of Civilisation" (third of six Study Classes). Subject this week: "The Dead Sea Scrolls." (Admission 1/-.)

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: 76th Anniversary—Musical Items. Guest Speaker: F. A. RIDLEY (President N.S.S.).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Liverpool).—Sunday, March 3rd, 7.15 p.m.: H. CUTNER, "Combating Spiritualism."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 3rd, 2.30 p.m.: L. J. MUSGROVE (Protestant Truth Society), "Freedom's Foe—the Vatican."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 3rd, 11 a.m.: Mrs. DOROTHY PICKLES, M.A., "Recent Achievements in Social Policy in France."

IN PRAISE OF DIVORCE (Concluded from page 67)

inexperience have joined together, let goodness, decency and charity put assunder—and let it be done as quickly, cleanly and quietly as possible. Here is the true doctrine of divorce. And every soldier in the army of Humanity desirous of seeing the world a better and saner place should fight for it.

In this fight, if a slogan be needed for this battle of good against evil masquerading as good, I know none better than John Milton's trumpet-call on this question: "Let not England forget her precedence of teaching the nations how to live". Too long have we followed our modern precedent of teaching the nations how to die by being blasted to bits by bomb-explosions which the Church has neither the honesty nor the courage to denounce as more criminal than the Crucifixion of its thousand-fold betrayed Master.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £191 2s. 3d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; Anon, 10s.; R. Brownlee, £1; H. Howard, 5s.; T. H. Grimley, 2s. 6d.; J. P. Wilson (U.S.A.), 13s. 5d.—Total to date, February 22nd, 1957, £193 14s. 2d.

Notes and News

THE social evening organised by the Humanist Council, which comprises the Ethical Union, South Place Ethical Society, the Rationalist Press Association, and the National Secular Society, will provide an excellent opportunity for friends and members of these societies to become acquainted. Entertainment and refreshments will be provided. Tickets, 2s. each, can be obtained from the N.S.S. at 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.

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THE attitude of Christian journals towards Dr. Schweitzer appears to be undergoing a change, as we remarked recently in quoting evidence of this from a religious journal. We have seen the time when Christians were almost falling over themselves to clasp him to their hearts and claim him as a Christian, and not, as one might suppose from his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, a Rationalist. A recent heavily featured article in the national press is headed, "Is Dr. Schweitzer really so saintly?" and makes mention of unpleasant reports from the neighbourhood of Lambarene, reports of squalor not due to irremovable causes, but to the Doctor's word (his bellowing and browbeating, in fact, to judge from reports) being law. "The Doctor says No" would seem to be depriving the hospital of certain vital needs, even such an elementary and easily obtainable need as a telephone. We are told he "strides among his native workers . . . driving them to harder work" on 6½d. a week and seven large bananas a day, telling visitors "the native is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority." Well, he is not the first to say that. But we think he *is* the first to say it and be acclaimed as a great Humanitarian. We seem to recall that the late Dr. Joad also passed through the stage of popularity to that of a discarded hero.

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OUR contributor C. T. Salisbury, who wrote a refutation of the claims made that "the Bible was Right," has been doing some further research into Keller's credentials and finds that, to quote Mr. Salisbury, "far from being a curious 'combination of scientist and historian,' he is nothing more than a German journalist. Moreover, he is not a doctor of anything, simply a plain 'Mister.' I have also had an opportunity of studying his book and find that it is even worse than the articles; there are no cross references and although an impressive bibliography is given at the end of the book, it is quite obvious that Mr. Keller has not read many of the works, otherwise he would not have written such trash."

★

THE Lord's Day Observance Society sent the following letter to the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan: "Bearing in mind how essential it is in these critical times for us as a nation to be in harmony with God's will and in obedience to His Divine word, we are grieved to note that you sought an audience with Her Majesty the Queen on Sunday last in order to present to her the names of the members of the new Cabinet. We note that this necessitated Her Majesty travelling from Sandringham to London on Sunday." It is not generally known that the L.D.O.S. frown on Sunday travel and that no member who passes away on the Sabbath will commence his journey heavenwards until early Monday morning.

Free Men Arise

By ANDRÉ LORULOT

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[Translator's note: This article by the famous French Freethinker appeared in *La Raison* in November, 1956, but retains its interest since it reviews the events in Hungary from the standpoint of clerical intervention, an angle virtually ignored by all shades of opinion in this country. For greater convenience, I have included the author's original footnotes in the text.—F.A.R.]

THIS MORNING my attention was drawn to a multitude of yellow posters affixed to the walls of the capital [that is Paris—F.A.R.]. I have formed the habit of reading posters, though they do not always enlighten one! This particular set bore a striking title: "*Free Men, Arise!*" Excellent, I thought to myself, imagining that there was an appeal launched by some radical group, and I went closer to the wall in order to get a better view.

The announcement was that of a big public meeting to be held on the next day in support of the "rebels" of Hungary. But in the list of speakers, one name, in particular, attracted my attention: it was that of Sauge.

Could that be the identical Sauge who has so often opposed me by the most questionable methods? For Mr. Sauge is usually followed about by a group of youths who loudly applaud him when he gets up in opposition, after frequently interrupting the speaker in the course of his address. And when the speaker, after patiently listening to Mr. Sauge's interjections, tries to reply, bedlam breaks out! A bear garden, which reaches its height when Sauge orders his followers to strike up a chorus—usually "I am a Christian"—to drown the voice of the speaker! The young Catholics then leave the hall in an uproar. What they are most afraid of is any reasoned reply to the Catholic absurdities.

Naturally, I was astonished. Alongside the name of Mr. Sauge was that of Mr. De Fabregues of *La France Catholique*, and of Mr. Poimboeuf (another of my critics, an embittered champion of the so-called "Christian Trade Unions," etc.).

The call to "Free Men" emanated from Jesuitical circles. It was the lackeys of the Vatican who called on me to arise! A rather unexpected invitation—and a trifle disconcerting!

A criterion (that has never yet failed me!) is *Distrust everything that comes from Rome!* [My italics—F.A.R.]

Distrust everything which goes along with Rome; which suggests that the struggle against Rome is out of date; whilst it is still actually the most vital and urgent of current necessities.

From the precise moment when the Catholics took up the case of Hungary, there could be no doubt that trickery and treason were at work.

Many people have not grasped this fact. Obedient to sentiments of Liberalism and of Humanity, which I salute (even when I do not consider them practicable) many sincere people have taken part in these demonstrations, expressing their indignation at seeing a martyred people reasserting its independence, etc.

But how can we take seriously this burning sympathy with the Hungarians on the part of people who said nothing on behalf of the people of Viet Nam (whom the Church actually tried to exterminate in pursuance of its own political strategy) or of the Moroccans, the Algerians, or the natives of Madagascar?

When 60,000 people were butchered in Madagascar, some years ago, by the French police and army, *Catholic*

Action organised no meetings of protest, nor any collection of blankets and medicine. The silence of the press was complete, and the bulk of the population knew absolutely nothing about this shocking business.

We find the same "conspiracy of silence" nowadays with regard to events in Algeria. The people who lynched policemen in Budapest were admirable heroes, whilst those who, in defence of the same love of country, are fighting for their national independence in the mountains and plains of Algeria are nothing but rebels and bandits.

Truth here! Error there! The formula is almost as naïve as that: I nearly say, as cynical!

In the next few days I thought things over, and my convictions only became more firmly rooted. Examining the facts published by the whole press, and looking at the whole question with complete impartiality, and without partisan prejudice of any kind, I have come to these conclusions.

The Hungarian people lived under very difficult conditions. What are the causes of this depression and poverty? I cannot go into them here but I readily concede that the "socialist" régime inaugurated there after the Liberation [in 1945—F.A.R.] has not wrought miracles in this country, which is as backward as are most of its neighbours (for example, Rumania, Poland, etc., etc.).

What is certain is that this discontent has been exploited by clerical and reactionary elements. The Hungarians are strongly influenced by the most reactionary type of Catholicism; they have preserved, at least in a substantial section of the poorer classes, the old reverence for priests and for feudal lords.

Some years ago, at the time of the trial of Cardinal Mindszenty, I showed how the Vatican was then deploying all its forces in order to effect the restoration of the Habsburg monarchy.

One must be singularly ignorant of history not to remember that the Austro-Hungarian monarchy had been the most faithful defenders of the "Holy See"—which repayed them in kind. For example, in 1914, Rome encouraged the Emperor Francis Joseph to attack Serbia.

The ultimate collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire represented a severe setback for the Vatican. Mindszenty was untiring in his efforts to restore the *ancien régime*, and, for this purpose, intrigued incessantly with Archduke Otto. People must be singularly naïve to suppose that the Budapest "rebels" worked on behalf of Democracy. (I mean, of course, a *genuine* democracy.)

Perhaps these courageous dupes really did believe just that. How I deplore their useless sacrifice. They imagined that they were saving Liberty whilst they actually faced a hail of bullets in order to restore the Pope!

To fight for Liberty and to grovel before Bishops! Can one imagine anything more childish?

What followed a few days later is very significant. What a confirmation of our suspicions! What a justification for my own scepticism!

I refer to the recent demonstrations in favour of a socialist "revolution" directed by Pinay, Bidault, Laniel, Tixier-Vignancourt and the whole bunch of survivors of the *Croix-de-Feu* [pre-war French Fascist Group—F.A.R.] and of the Vichy régime of Marshal Petain. All opportunities must be taken, whether it be the Stavisky Affair [pre-war financial scandal—F.A.R.] or that of Hungary. It was

this self-same crew who were behind the General Boulanger and Dreyfus business.

Truly these people are well qualified to denounce the Budapest massacre, who themselves are the grandsons of the Versailles Government of Bloody Week — when thirty thousand citizens of Paris were shot down either in the streets or in their own houses. [An allusion to the Paris Commune of 1871.—F.A.R.]

And we allow ourselves to be taken in by this treacherous manoeuvre!

Let us sum up: there was undoubtedly great popular discontent in Hungary; it broke out more or less spontaneously. We are badly informed on the details, but there is no doubt that the Hungarian reactionaries quickly got control of the movement.

That could only happen through the intervention of the

Church.

That remains as the most powerful political and social force in Hungary, and also the one most opposed to the socialistic objectives.

La Croix has recently quoted *Le Figaro*: "Hungary is a Christian land. For the Hungarians, Freedom does not mean a return to Feudalism, but to the *Catholic Faith*."

The Bishops will have little difficulty in arousing so fanatical a nation.

We know what will follow: a resumption of the White Terror of 1920 [after the brief Communist régime of Bela Kun—F.A.R.], which we have recorded elsewhere. In 1793 did not the Catholic leaders, equally, seek to take advantage of foreign invasion to stab our Republic in the back by rousing the Catholic peasantry of Brittany and La Vendée against it?

The 51st Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society February 16th 1957

THE SOCIETY'S INNOVATION this year was the substitution of dancing for the usual entertainment, and the members and guests at our happy and unconventional Dinner this year made the most of this very enjoyable change. Not only did it give everybody the opportunity to dance old and new steps to the accompaniment of the music of Mr. Fred

very ably outlined the Humanist views — it was a good thing to have different points of view, and different policies and programmes. To merge all our societies — the R.P.A., the N.S.S. and the Ethical Societies — into one would destroy their original identities. Mr. Blackham remarked that he was as much of an unbeliever as any of us; but there was no doubt that Christians looked upon Humanists as antagonists to their religion. Both the Union of Ethical Societies and the World Union of Freethinkers had their part to play, and nothing could be better than their co-operation. He then proposed the toast to the National Secular Society, which was enthusiastically received.

Mr. G. A. Kirk, President of the oldest Secular Society in England, that of Leicester, in response, declared how happy he was to find Mr. Blackham inspiring such real fellowship, which meant so much to our movement. He had no objection to the term Humanism, and was pleased to acknowledge a mutual purpose which must, in the ultimate, become irresistible.

The toast to "Our Guests" was proposed by Mr. A. R. Williams, of Worcester, who was glad to find that, though Londoners were inclined to stay in their own districts — unlike provincials like himself — they were most tolerant; and he extended a hearty welcome to visitors. Again the



The Secretary and the Treasurer of the N.S.S., Colin McCall and W. Griffiths, with Avro Manhattan and Guest of Honour, H. J. Blackham.

Weaver and his band, but for those who preferred a quiet chat, it provided also the occasion for meeting old friends and making new ones. The N.S.S. Dinners have always been a social occasion for Freethinkers who so often come from afar to get together and exchange views. Among the guests were members and friends from Spain, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia and the United States.

The Dinner itself, provided by the Mecca Restaurant, was thoroughly enjoyed and most efficiently served, and everybody was in the best of moods to listen to the speeches of the evening. The Chairman, Mr. F. A. Ridley, introduced the Guest, Mr. H. J. Blackham, who is so well known as the Secretary of the Ethical Union and who, as Mr. Ridley pointed out, represented a somewhat different point of attack from ours.

Though Mr. Blackham disclaimed being an orator, he



A group of American visitors — David Tulman, Mrs. Arnstein and W. L. Arnstein, with L. Hall (Leicester), centre, and E.C. member, Harry Cleaver (right).

toast was loudly cheered; and responded to by Mr. Adrian Pigott, whose book, *Freedom's Foe*, is selling well. Mr. Williams had referred to him as an American but he was a Yorkshireman and was obviously pleased at the reception his book was receiving. It was now being translated into Spanish for the Mexican market. He did not think religion in general could do much harm — but he excepted Roman Catholicism. He wished prosperity to the N.S.S. and double the circulation for THE FREETHINKER. Mr. Pigott's little speech was heartily endorsed.

For the rest, we noticed among the guests Mr. and Mrs. Dowman, of the R.P.A., Mr. Avro Manhattan, and Mr. and Mrs. Fairhall, of Conway Hall, besides other well-known Freethinkers.

A word must be said in recognition and thanks for the splendid "service" of Mrs. Seibert, Mr. Colin McCall, and Mr. W. Griffiths, and all those who helped to make this enjoyable evening so notable a success. H.C.

CORRESPONDENCE

THEOSOPHY

Just a line of encouragement in your work of "Liberation." I think the theosophy of H. P. Blavatsky is even better than mere "materialism," but in your paper it is delightful to see the bubbles of sentimentality, emotionalism, ignorance and misinformation and supposition being so effectively and humorously exploded! Good success to you. PETER STODDARD.

[Several theosophists among our readers have contended that theosophy is not to be numbered among the supernatural religions, but is a scientific way of life.—ED.]

ROYALISM

Mr. W. Morris' letter on *Royalism* reminds me that John Burns, a forthright-speaking labour leader of the old days, was a very keen critic of royalty. According to William Kent's biography, John Burns publicly stated that "he would pension off Queen Victoria with £5 a week, and make it high treason for her to take any of her savings out of the country. He would pack off all foreign royalties or make them teach in the language departments in the Board Schools." Burns, however, failed to tell us how he would replace Queen Victoria, or produce an equivalent.

Later, when John Burns became a Cabinet Minister he slipped up by acquiring a Court dress. What a chance he missed then! When the war of 1914 broke out Burns resigned his very lucrative appointment as he disagreed with the war. He was "Honest John," although somewhat wayward in his career. ALFRED D. CORRICK.

I should like to welcome the letter of C. H. Norman on the modern cult of royalism. The adulation of the monarchy has become one of the significant signs of the times, with the result that the Royal Family are able to have an indirect but reactionary effect upon the evolution of public opinion. Any student of Bradlaugh's career cannot be other than impressed by the part which republicanism played in his teaching and propaganda. Within any democratic or working-class movement, it is difficult to see how any other outlook could be possible. Yet, at the present time, this outlook has all but faded away and it might be contended that secularism itself has declined as it has become less political. I, for one, would be delighted to see a revival of the old republican movement in a manner within which both old-fashioned radicals and modern socialists might find a place. JOHN HASTINGS.

I have been interested in the various letters on the above topic. May I mention an aspect that seems to be especially absurd, that people wait for hours, sometimes in rain, to see the Queen pass. In her quieter moments, the Queen must surely realise that she is no better than thousands of other women. I noticed that a useful shelter at a busy bus stop had been removed, and on inquiry was informed that it was to make way for the crowds who wanted to see the Queen, and nearly a whole year passed before it was reinstated. But is it not almost criminal for schools to make the children wait in rain and biting winds? OCTOGENARIAN.

A CHALLENGE

I am keenly interested in a letter from S. W. Brooks in the January 25th issue. Where does he get his information from?

A mere assertion that he has "seen," "found," "heard" (direct or

by phone?) "the Lord," "Jehovah," "the Lord our God," or what not won't do. I must have some irrefutable proof.

As I want to be helpful, I will give an instance: If your correspondent can set right a physical disability of which I am conscious I shall only be too glad if he will then remove the "anthropomorphic," "fundamentalist" or other mental defect in my atheistic or agnostic conception of religion that he finds objectionable, and of which I am not conscious. E. NEWBOLD.

HUNGARY

I found Mr. P. G. Roy's article, "A Mindszentimental Aspect," disturbing on several counts:

1. He objects to the release of Cardinal Mindszenty from prison by an "unauthorised mob." Since when are revolutions "authorised" by anyone? The underlying premise of his article, moreover, would appear to be that it is quite justifiable to subject men to arbitrary arrest and punishment provided that they are Catholic clergymen. Such men may well be liable to criticism, but Mr. Roy seems to believe in a double standard of justice, unfortunate when found in anyone, but especially in a freethinker.

2. It may well be true that not all Hungarian refugees are heroes; they are doubtless for the most part ordinary human beings, with the customary mixture of virtues and vices. Many of them did, however, exhibit considerable courage in escaping from their native land, often for long stretches on foot, with the perpetual danger of being shot, leaving all their possessions behind, even if their ultimate aim was merely one of self-betterment. If the Hungarian refugees should not be objects of veneration, neither ought they to be despised en masse. I note that Mr. Roy carefully leaves the phrase "genuine refugees" (which supposedly made up but 12% of the total) undefined.

3. Anti-semitism may on occasion be found in many countries, in democratic England (where it is rare), in Communist Russia (where it is, unfortunately, less rare), and in Hungary. It is to be deplored wherever it occurs. I fail to see its relevance to the rest of the article. WALTER L. ARNSTEIN.

OBITUARY

MARY PARRY, for many years a reader of this paper, and widow of a life-long Freethinker, died recently in London at the age of 85. Eighty-five years is a good span, especially when lived to the full, with little illness, but the loss of our dear ones is always a sad occasion and we send our condolences to Mrs. Parry's daughter, Mrs. Simmons, and to her other relatives. A Secular Service was conducted by the General Secretary, N.S.S., on Mrs. Parry's birthday, February 14th, at Norwood Crematorium.

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