

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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NOTHING in Christianity has brought in converts quite as much as the picture of Jesus Christ dying on the Cross. It has been a Godsend for priests. As the Rev. S. Phipps of ITV said one Sunday, crucifying God Almighty himself in this way was the most terrible crime in world history, and he ought to know.

Mr. Phipps and his like believe that every word, nay, every comma, in the Sacred Record (in English) is absolutely true. Criticism of the Gospel Story is brushed aside not merely with impatience but with anger. Here we are told how God's Son (that is, God Himself) was tried by Pontius Pilate, was sentenced to death and crucified in the most appalling way, and being God, He rose in three days and appeared unto many as alive as He ever was. The story is literally true and must be true — the Holy Roman Catholic Church says so and, like Mr. Phipps, it ought to know. Moreover, the Jews did it, and it is no wonder that such stubborn infidels are being punished for their dreadful sin.

It is true, of course, that we are always told that God Almighty — or His Son — deliberately died to save Mankind, and that therefore his death was "predestined". So what? The Jews are entirely responsible, predestined or not, and at Easter when the horrible crime took place, they should plainly be told what they did. Naturally, if Jesus hadn't died, the world would not have been saved — but you can always go for the Jews.

The Crucifixion in Art

Easter is the time when our Christian clergy let themselves go much in this way. The early Church, not always able to get to the people with sermons, used to commission contemporary artists to paint the Crucifixion in all its "gory" for a picture can be remembered and the terrible details of the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross were certain to infuse all good Christians with Hate in its vilest form, and thus help spread the Gospel — the Good News. No wonder that the greatest and most permanent stock-in-trade of the Christian business is its Jesus on the Cross.

It is only when one comes away from the baneful influence of Christianity and delves into history that the first shock comes. For the death of God Almighty — in various forms — at Easter time was a commonplace of the religions of antiquity.

Naturally, he wasn't always called God Almighty. He had dozens of names, but it was always the same God; though in various countries and under the impact of various cultures he had many differences.

We find this in our own country. When the Bible was first translated, the English Jesus spoke was a special kind, very reverent, and completely unlike either the English of the Elizabethans or our modern speech. The new translations which now appear with regularity have gradually transformed the English of the AV into more of a modern idiom, and soon no doubt we shall have Jesus speaking ex-

actly like a Texan or perhaps even like a Scot. Moreover, Jesus going about cursing the Pharisees, or telling people to hate their parents, is frowned upon these days. The true Jesus was gentle and kind and so good-hearted that even if he wasn't like three Lord Shaftesburys (as Matthew Arnold insisted) he was certainly like a fine Sunday-School Headmaster. So we must not expect that the Gods of antiquity always looked and spoke alike.

Spring Rejoicings

Easter has always been a time of rejoicing with most Northern nations, for it is Springtime when the life begins anew—the cold, dark winter has gone, and the

Sun, either a Babe without power, or almost dead, is "resurrected", and Nature is happy and smiling again. How splendidly did the Greeks paint the return in Spring of Persephone to her Mother Ceres after being a prisoner so long in the Dark Underworld.

The great "symbol" of the period was the Egg — the symbol of fertility; and as Aries was the sign of the Zodiac when so many of the stories of the Gods were invented, the Lamb was another symbol. So were born the various Lambs of God, Adonis, Jesus and the rest. In fact, the Lamb became, as Lundy points out in his *Monumental Christianity*, "the symbol of all truth, mercy, and goodness to mankind; the light, and life, and joy of the world". The Jews made it their symbol when they invented the "crossing" over, (or the Passover) of the Red Sea, and they still have a "paschal" lamb symbol at this time.

No other time but Easter could have been chosen by the Gospel writers for the Resurrection of Jesus, for they were merely relating in a new way the story of the Sun as Dupuis showed so clearly in his *Origin of All Worships*. And as they were relating the death of the Sun just before his glorious resurrection at Springtime, they had to follow the stories of other Gods.

A Lamb or a Fish

Now it is a fact that apart from the Gospels, the early Christians might not have known that Jesus was "crucified". They represented him in early paintings and monuments either as a Lamb or a Fish; but for something like 600 years the Crucifixion was not realistically shown. That it was an inheritance from Paganism there cannot now be the slightest doubt. So was the idea of a "Saviour" God as any study of the subject will prove.

For example, there is the God called Tammuz in the Old Testament whose death caused the women to weep. Tammuz is another name for Adonis, and he was not only virgin-born, but he was also called the "Saviour". This is admitted by the very orthodox Dr. Parkhurst who in his *Hebrew Lexicon*, says:—

I find myself obliged to refer to Tammuz to that class of idols which were originally designed to represent the promised Saviour, the Desire of all nations. His other name, Adonis, is almost the very Hebrew Adoni or Lord, a well known title of Christ.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Easter Crucifixion

By H. CUTNER

Adonis was not "crucified" as far as we know, but Prometheus certainly was "nailed to the rocks on Mt. Caucasus with arms extended". We must not expect exactly the same details in the case of other Gods we get with Jesus. Besides, even from the Gospels there is no evidence that Jesus was crucified on a *Cross* as depicted by most artists. The word in Greek translated Cross is "stauros" which is certainly not a cross but a stake.

In the great work of Dupuis will be found his authorities for Bacchus, not only as a Saviour but also as the "Only Begotten Son", the "Slain One", and the "Redeemer". Hercules was also called the "Saviour", he also was the "Only Begotten". Aesculapius was another Saviour, and his Temple in the city of Athens was called "The Temple of the Saviour". Serapis, Mithras, were both called the "Saviour" — in fact, Mithras was also called the "Logos."

The Cross of Paganism.

The Cross is actually a phallic symbol, and was so used by Pagans on their standards. Godfrey Higgins, in his very scarce book, *Anacalypsis* — his pious son destroyed all the copies he could buy — had no doubt whatever that there was a "crucified man before Christ". But it cannot be too strongly urged that there is no evidence whatever that there

was a *real* crucifixion; it was always merely symbolical.

For example, Krishna, the Hindu Saviour, is reported to have died through being shot in the foot by an arrow; but there are other accounts and pictures, certainly pre-Jesus, which describe him as dying on a *tree* to which he was nailed by an arrow. And the very orthodox Lundy in his *Monumental Christianity*, knowing perfectly well the Pagan origin of the Cross and the Crucifix says, "I object to the crucifix because it is an image, and liable to gross abuse, just as the old Hindu crucifix was an idol."

As for Buddha, like Jesus, he was called "the Saviour of the World", the "Anointed" and the "Messiah". If we asked a Mongol or a Tibetan, says the Abbé Huc, "Who is Buddha?" he would immediately reply "The Saviour of Men".

There never was a real Crucifixion of a real God — the whole idea is purely symbolic. The story of Jesus is a rewrite of the stories of Pagan Gods. There is not a scrap of historical evidence for any part of it, and certainly not for the Crucifixion. But it will never be given up by Christians. And it would hurt them to deny them the yearly emotional outburst of Good Friday and Easter Sunday to say nothing of Hot Cross Buns and Coloured Eggs. Just like the Pagans, in fact.

Old Mrs. Facing-both-Ways

By C. G. L. Du CANN

THE CASE of the Lord Jesus Christ *versus* the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury was heard in the House of Lords recently when the Homicide Bill of the present Government was being debated. A highly interesting and edifying occasion it was for all of us.

But, warmly attached as I am to my Holy Mother the Church of England, it is my painful duty as her candid, but scandalised son, to record that too often she behaves like a gin-sodden old harridan rather than as the Bride of Christ. On this occasion she showed herself not for the first time — as, for example, when torn between Catholicism and Protestantism — as a real old Mrs. Facing-Both-Ways. For her Primate of Canterbury was a retentionist and her Primate of York an abolitionist.

Well, the case of Jesus Christ was simple and direct. It was the short Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill."

Nothing could be clearer, more uncompromising, more mandatory. In these plain words, there is no exemption for any man or woman or for any number of men and women, dignifying themselves with the abstract name of the nation or the State. Not even a politician, a diplomat, a lawyer, or an ecclesiastic, could put a gloss upon those words, so stark are they. Even a child could understand.

Hitherto, ironically enough, the chief advocate for the case of Jesus has been a non-Christian, the Jewish Mr. Sidney Silverman, M.P. I suppose this is because the rule of Jesus is also the rule of his predecessor Moses, who promulgated that law as being from God Himself. Not being a Lord but only an ordinary person, Mr. Silverman could not take the brief for Jesus in the Upper House. But Viscount Templewood and the rationalistic Lord Chorley did — without mentioning their distinguished client. Indeed, nobody mentioned the name of God or Jesus in the Lords for that would have been hitting below the belt and in very bad taste, this being a Christian country — well, more or less Christian, chiefly less.

The case for the Archbishop put by His Grace was far from simple or direct. Indeed, it was pretty complex and as oblique as you might expect from an ecclesiastical politician, educated to compromise and all the other arts of

group-manipulation. Let me give that case in the Archbishop's own words (for otherwise who would credit it?):

"The doctrine of the Church was that the State had a right, in the name of God and of Society, to impose the death penalty. . . . The choice for or against abolition of the death penalty did not rest on any absolute principles, but was a matter of weighing the total moral effect on the country whether one line or another was taken."

Reflect upon that. You see at once how wrong God and Jesus were, and are, in laying down their "absolute principle" of non-killing. By so doing they have caused an ex-headmaster like Dr. Fisher to have the trouble of correcting their infantile error. No doubt in ancient times the High Priest Caiaphas (another eminent and very experienced ecclesiastical-politician), in deciding upon the crucifixion of Christ, considered that death penalty as a matter for "weighing the total moral effect on the country."

Perhaps, however, Caiaphas plainly expressed it to himself as "To kill or not to kill — that is the question," instead of using the turgid and pompous phrases of the Archbishop. (Why is it that advocates of State-killing never use words like "kill" or "hang," but invariably talk of "capital punishment" and "imposing the death penalty"?) A foul thing stinks by whatever name you call it; and killing is indeed a foul thing.

Continuing our examination of the archiepiscopal case, it surely is blasphemous for Dr. Fisher to want us to hang men and women in the name of God. It is bad enough that at present we use the Queen's name. It seems hard on the credulity of a hangman that he should hang his victim not only in the cause of Christ and His Church but be forced to proclaim as he does his dirty work: "In the name of God who has forbidden me to kill, I kill you on the authority of his Archbishop." Decency surely bids the believer in God's Commandment to keep his name out of it, and certainly not to marry that name with the name of Society. It is medieval *grotesquerie*, nauseating to modern English folk, believers and unbelievers alike, to hang "in the name of God" surely.

(To be concluded)

Why be Militant?

By G. I. BENNETT

MEMBERS of our National Secular Society, and others who have received correspondence from it, will have noticed that its current letter paper bears a pale blue freethought emblem with the superscription, "The Organisation for Militant Freethought". (On the older letter paper these explanatory words appeared under the title.) And anyone who reads the pages of THE FREETHINKER is sooner rather than later made aware that the type of freethought it officially champions is militant. Now why? This is a question I have more than once asked myself. I can understand and sympathise with our Society's choosing to be militant in its early and stormy days, when the intellectual climate was such that it had veritably to fight for its existence, and when, in fact, the battle for freedom of thought — particularly in religious matters — was a battle still unwon.

I consider the National Secular Society to be one of the pioneering societies to which we owe a greater debt than we possibly realise or shall ever be able to repay. But while I for one am more than glad our Society survives today as a healthy and vigorous movement, I sometimes wish that it were a little more genial and a little less strident, rather more good-humouredly tolerant and rather less dourly on the war-path. I wish, generally, that it would see a way to discarding its militancy without sacrificing its essential principles.

Why be militant? What do we in this day and generation hope to gain from militancy? It may be said that, the more emphatic and aggressive in tone you are, the greater is the impression you make upon others. Perhaps. But if the impression is unfavourable upon those whom you wish to reach, what does it avail? I do not know whether freethought will ever be in any sense a popular movement, because of the superficiality of interests, the shallowness of intellectual outlook, of the majority of men. But if there is such a thing as persuasiveness of argument and conviction (and I believe there is), then I hold that militancy in a settled, well-ordered community is tactically wrong. I say "in a settled, well-ordered community", because in violent and tempestuous times moderate assertion and reflective thought cannot get a hearing.

It may be thought that, generally speaking, the more forceful and downright you are in stating your case the surer you are of it — and, what is more, the surer others will think you are of it. But does it necessarily follow? My own reaction to a too positive assertion of viewpoint to which I have not yet been won over is to suspect that it may be a one-sided presentation. At any rate, we freethinkers of all mortals should know that history teems with instances of personal certainty that has subsequently proved false; and that conviction in itself, no matter how passionately held and vigorously proclaimed, does not necessarily indicate the apprehension of truth.

Speaking for myself, I have my own settled views on issues of ultimate concern; but they are tempered by a consciousness of the fact that we none of us possess absolute knowledge, and even he who knows most knows, in fact, very little of what he might know. Science has done much, and will doubtless do much more in the future, to extend and deepen our understanding of the universe. But it is unlikely — go as far as we may — that we shall ever come to understand all. To understand all would mean being as the fabled Olympians, not men. The more we know the more we perceive there is still to know — not simply within the range of the currently ascertainable and predictable,

but that which as yet lies beyond that range. Our scientific ideas about things are always in a state of flux, subject to minor and to far-reaching modification; and disturbing — indeed, unpalatable — though this is to the dogmatist, it is a condition of progress, a prerequisite of scientific inquiry, that the mind be kept ever open to anything and everything worthy of serious consideration, or of further intellectual exploration.

Ultimately, every question of religion turns of belief in God. Saviours and soothsayers, religious sects and societies, come and go. But integral to the very fabric of higher religious faith is monotheism. And monotheism is perhaps the only defensible position the Church can occupy today — although a time may come when even that position will no longer be tenable. But if ever that does happen, it seems likely it will be in the far future. We may predicate that Deity does not exist, that there is in the cosmos no intelligent force or power, no supernatural source of spiritual energy, no consciously creative or directive activity whatever. This may well be our conviction; but how can we demonstrate the truth of it? To do so presupposes the possession of final scientifically established facts of the evolution of the universe and all that is in it. This is a condition of knowledge that will probably never be realised by humanity. And in the absence of our being able to prove anything in respect of final and fundamental truth, we can do no more than draw our own conclusions from such knowledge and presumptive evidence as we have.

Now I believe that the growth of human knowledge, generation after generation has been a steady reinforcement of the freethought position. Conversely, centuries of painstaking inquiry by minds of no mean order have failed to produce any material shedding even a glimmer of light on the reality and nature of the hypothetical Author of our being. Indeed, there is much to suggest that this idea is chimerical, born of man's desire to find a humanly satisfying *raison d'être* for the universe. That desire is natural enough, really; yet is there not a certain impiety in seeking — nay, presuming — to comprehend the all of the cosmos without having been given to see or know the all? There are, of course, some whose credulity takes them beyond the quest for an "explanation of things", and they are quite sure that truth, final and sufficient, has been revealed to them by the mere fact of belief in God. With them it is useless to trouble; but as for the others, what I think those who advocate militancy in tackling religion often forget is that effectiveness of criticism and cogency of argument rarely depend on what I would call shock tactics. The informed, persuasive, quietly reasoned approach of the Rationalist Press Association won me over to the freethought cause while I was still a lad in my 'teens. The Association in those days, under the guiding hand of Charles A. Watts, was (as I fear it is no longer today) an emancipating educative force of great value; and I sometimes wonder whether I should have been a freethinker even now but for the splendid new world of the mind it opened to me . . .

I end as I began by asking, Why does our National Secular Society still retain its early militant character? For my own part, I want freedom to think and freedom to express my ideas and I will readily concede the same freedom to others — mindful as I am that religious institutions in their heyday did not grant that freedom to us heretics, and would not today but for the work of pioneer movements like ours.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Loughborough cinemas — and no doubt other cinemas — will be allowed to open on Good Friday but only with "U" films and newsreels. There would, no doubt, be anger in Heaven were "A" films shown on such a Holy Day. And no doubt also the powers that be who grant these favours are all God-fearing men and they have a duty towards other citizens — to see that they are kept pure as God Almighty is pure. And how can purity on Good Friday be guarded if "A" films are shown?

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The one thing that the BBC cannot harmonise in their broadcasts to schools is teaching religion at the same time as teaching evolution. In its religious broadcasts, everything was created by God in the way detailed in Genesis, which is all absolutely true. But in broadcasting "How Things Began," for instance, the speakers nearly all talk as convinced Evolutionists. Never a hint about Noah and his flood killing off everybody on earth except eight people and a comparatively few animals in B.C. 2349. We often wonder whether the Religious Director complains to the Schools Broadcasting Director about it, and what then happens?

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But in spite of the call to religion being more stridently made than the call to anything else by the BBC, the Press, and the Churches, there appear to be crowds of people who haven't the ghost of an idea what is "Faith." One of them recently asked the Padre in a Leicester newspaper what it was, and after the usual welter of words he decided that it was "contact with the Divine"; the "conscious and deliberate grasping of the outstretched hand of God." We prefer the definition—more or less attributed to Huxley—"the ability to declare that you believe something which you know to be quite incredible." Like the outstretched hand of God, for example.

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Canon Pike, who is the Chaplain General of the Forces, is very disturbed. He has found out that ninety out of every hundred of the young men entering them "are out of touch with the Church." This seems incredible considering the way religion is forced on to all children at school, and how the BBC carries on the good work with dozens of religious broadcasts every week. All the same, it appears that there is hope—for the Church. Candidates for Confirmation are steadily rising in numbers, and finally the worthy Canon gave out the glad news that the Army "ought to be the greatest missionary force the world has ever seen." Well, it certainly was a million miles from that when we were in the Army.

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Our contemporary, the "Sunday Pictorial," reports a clash between the Fundamentalist Doctor C. R. Woodard and the Bishop of Chelmsford. As becomes a Bishop, Dr. Allison believes the only "miracle" cures ever performed came from Christ; while Dr. Woodard, who is, if anything, even more of a believer than the Bishop, is quite certain that miracle cures can be performed by other people providing there is enough "faith" hanging about. He wants to bring in an Italian healer, Padre Mio, to cure a paralysed millionaire, and the Bishop thinks this "savours of magic." We have an idea that if the Bishop were as sick as the millionaire, he wouldn't mind trying any cure, magic or not.

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And talking about cures, we note that the *Daily Mail* has recently done its best to put Lourdes on the map with five "miracle" cures there, told with a wealth of detail by

Miss Rhona Churchill. On the face of it, no one can deny that these five people were cured of almost, if not quite, incurable ailments by the waters at Lourdes. Unfortunately, similar detailed cures have been recounted by Catholic doctors with all the paraphernalia of evidence given us by Miss Churchill, and these accounts cannot stand the test of careful analysis. Considering the hundreds of millions of sick people who went to Lourdes to be cured and never were—a few cures were bound to turn up somehow.

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One of the cases was that of a little boy who at the age of three was struck down by meningitis and rendered completely blind and paralysed. He was dipped twice in the baths, and immediately recognised a motor-car and its red colour, and began to walk. But it was not until *nearly ten years later*, in 1947, that the evidence was examined, for it appeared to be "one of the most famous cases in Lourdes's history." But surely there must be lots of children similarly afflicted who got better with ordinary medical treatment? The verdict, we are told, of "the canonical commission," was that "the cure is humanly inexplicable"—but what other verdict could we expect? In actual fact, ordinary medical records of cures are full of many also "humanly inexplicable."

\$5,000 Reward

IN FEBRUARY, Ludwig C. Alt, one of the Friendship Liberal League (Philadelphia, U.S.A.) leaders, published an unusual offer in *The Liberal*. The offer was one of \$2,000 to any faith-healer who could effect a cure in the case of two friends of Mr. Alt.

The invalids, both sincere Christians, are perfectly willing to co-operate, everything known to medical science having failed. One suffers from cancer, the other is a paralytic.

As the original offer failed to attract a single faith-healer, Christian Scientist (there are about 300 C.S. practitioners listed in the Philadelphia area) or kindred spirit, Mr. Alt, on the front page of the *March Liberal*, raises his offer to \$5,000, or \$2,500 for a single cure. As this presents a simply wonderful opportunity for some miracle worker to convince the sceptical Freethinkers of their healing powers, we shall be interested to see if the Alt reward is claimed by one of these gentry. Considering the vast amount of publicity obtained and the fantastic claims made by these people, if not even *one* applicant is forthcoming it will certainly be surprising.

D.S.

WHY BE MILITANT?

(Concluded from page 123)

I trust I shall always condemn forthrightly what I conceive to be evil — especially any wanton curtailment of human life, liberty, and happiness — but I shall not be greatly perturbed about others holding views opposite to mine, whether or not they are in the majority. So long, that is, as they do not try to enforce my conformity. This is my only proviso. If I can influence my fellows to see the world as an honest freethinker sees it, I shall be glad. But I shall be undismayed if, in spite of all, they remain of the same opinion still.

—NEXT WEEK—

**RITUAL MURDERS AND
THE HOLY SACRAMENT**

By DR. EDWARD ROUX

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

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.

CONSTANCE FRAZER.—The term Freethought has a historical significance going back to the 18th century in Western Europe. A plea of toleration is not identifiable with the whole story of Freethought. Unitarians and others have also fought for toleration.

J. D. HASLOP.—The contention that Christ was about fifty years of age when teaching, was made by the Christian Father, St. Irenæus.

A. HARVEY.—Thanks for interesting reminiscences, passed on to Mr. Cutner.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: W. CRONAN.

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.

INDOOR

Manchester Branch, N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street).—Tuesday, April 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: A Debate.

Notes and News

DR. G. BROCK CHISHOLM, the first Director of the World Health Organisation, Major-General in the Canadian Forces, first Canadian Minister of Health, in accepting Membership of the Committee of Honour, sends this message:

"In this new kind of world, where the very conditions of human survival have become different from anything known to, or imaginable by our ancestors, complete freedom to think independently of any of their faiths or prejudices is essential to our continuing existence. Never before has any generation held a veto power over the future evolution of the human race. In order to deal successfully with world problems, we must first free ourselves of the prejudices inherent in each of our cultures and systems of faith, and then learn to feel, think and act as citizens of the world.
(Signed) G. BROCK CHISHOLM."

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £212-0-8; A. Hancock, 1s. 0d.; T. H. Lee, 10s. 0d.; Total to Date, April 12th 1957 £212 11s. 8d.

FROM Accra, on the Gold Coast, came the news that a kindly American Government sent a large quantity of butter, milk and cheese for distribution to the poor and needy of the Gold Coast. The American R.C. Church Mission in the Gold Coast informed the Accra *Daily Graphic* that the gift was surplus food which had been made available by the U.S. Government for distribution through the American R.C. Church. The goods were distributed "under the careful supervision of Reverend Fathers of the Catholic Church mainly to Catholic Mission Schools and Clinics." (Accra *Daily Graphic*.)

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WHEN the Inter-American Press Association met in Havana, Cuba, six countries were severely criticised for having virtually no press freedom. The six countries were Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Colombia—all, naturally, faithful followers of international Catholic politico-ecclesiastical policy.

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CARDINAL GERLIER, Archbishop of Lyons, recovering from bronchitis, has been sent to the *Riviera* for his convalescence. Hasn't the Archbishop heard about Lourdes? Another sad case of lack of faith comes from St. Peter's, Rome, where buildings in the Vatican City are to be fitted with radio-active lightning conductors. This should considerably augment the protection already extended by God.

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Nepakarat, Hungarian trade union paper, reports that three boys were hung up by their scarves on pegs in a Mosonmagyabovar school. Apparently they were unpopular because they did not attend religious instruction classes. On 5/2/57 *Nepszabadsag* reported that in another school some pupils were "half-strangled and shut in a cupboard by schoolmates for refusing to attend religious classes" and censured the Church for not condemning such conduct, asking: "Is it possible that silently it tolerates the crime of abuses committed in the name of religion?"

★

THE Rome correspondent of London's *Daily Telegraph* stated that the British Government is soon to "re-examine the question of inviting the Holy See to establish a diplomatic mission in London." The following day, the paper's columnist "Peterborough" said this appointment was "probably inevitable."

QUIZ

1. Nominally a Mohammedan, Kemal Ataturk was guilty of a most serious heresy against the Koran. What was it?
2. "Remove that bauble!" What was the bauble and who was the speaker?
3. What contemporary mammal lays eggs yet suckles its young?
4. Are these statements true or untrue?
 - (a) The bacteriophage is a kind of halfway house between living and non-living matter.
 - (b) All primitive races have a religion.
 - (c) The chemical element carbon is present wherever life is.
5. In which century was the Bible first printed in English?
(Answers on page 128)

The Unity of Materialism with Science

By THOS. W. HOGAN

THE DOCTRINES of materialism have always been closely interwoven with any scientific attempt to understand the world in which we live, for all investigations of natural processes have been efforts to reduce phenomena to causal laws and utilise, for domestic purposes, cyclic repetition. The word materialism has unfortunately acquired an emotive significance and is more commonly identified with sensual pleasures than with a fertile scientific technique. The policy has been to record personal distaste rather than scientific detachment, with mind as something 'high,' matter as something 'low.' The logical distinction of emotionally coloured language and neutral terms only captures the attention of those with a philosophical turn of mind; consequently the average mind is unwittingly conscripted for the campaign against materialism. The success of physical science occasions a criterion for its basal roots, philosophical materialism. To prove this contention we must illustrate the unity of materialism with science.

Empiricism requires that (1) sense knowledge, as opposed to introspection, is the only method of discovering the structure of the world, i.e. facts; (2) all knowledge is subject to verification or falsification; (3) the human mind is not equipped to transcend experience; therefore the "sciences" of metaphysics, mysticism, and theology are violations of this psychic limit; (4) the self is born of experience; and (5) there are no *a priori* ideas, i.e. no innate knowledge. All these claims are borne out by the ordered body of knowledge we call science. The perceptual nature of fact was first elucidated by the eighteenth century historian, David Hume. Although this technique was implicit in the newly established sciences, Hume supplied its philosophical, as distinct from its pragmatic, justifications. His predecessors (he expressly mentions Spinoza) believed the unaided powers of reason were sufficient for the acquisition of natural knowledge. This policy, according to Hume, was wrong, not only in practice but in principle. The universe is a composition of facts, which is available only to empirical method: "Let an object be presented to a man with ever so strong natural reason and abilities, if that object be entirely new to him, he will not be able, by the most accurate examination of its sensible qualities, to discover any of its causes or effects."

Adam, though his rational faculties be supposed, at the very first, entirely perfect, could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water, that it would suffocate him, or from the light and warmth of fire, that it would consume him. I shall venture to affirm, as a general proposition which admits of no exception, that the knowledge of this relation (matter of fact) is not, in any instance, attained by reasonings *a priori*, but arises entirely from experience.¹ This is, in form and substance, the cornerstone of contemporary science and philosophy. The tendency is not to attack reason but to define its scope, and as such is not to be confused with irrationalism. The value of empiricism was conveniently illustrated when the seventeenth century scientist, Galileo, questioned the teachings of Aristotle, who maintained what appears to be a reasonable assumption, that the rate which bodies fell was proportional to their mass; if, for instance, two stones were dropped, one weighing ten times heavier than the other, the larger would fall ten times faster. The consequences of Galileo's experiments are now a matter of history, but perhaps less well known is the elimination of *a priori* technologies from physical science. We have noted that the concepts of observation and experiment are capable of a

philosophical as well as a pragmatic justification. It must be remembered that results are more important than consistency between theories.² The second tenet mentioned concerns the subsistence of "sacred and eternal truths," often gaining reference in textbooks on metaphysics and theology; scholars who advocate this are generally favourable to the existence of a "Divine Being" and are, in the writer's experience, inclined to hold their beliefs as a prop for mysticism. It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the class of statements which give this belief some credence (the reader is referred to the chapter on mathematics in *Language, Truth and Logic*, by A.J. Ayer). We shall confine our attention to empirical propositions; that is, to descriptions of experience. The validity of empirical statements rests upon the "correspondence theory of truth," that is to say, a proposition is true if it "corresponds" to the facts; the proposition "there is a red light to be seen at the next crossroads" is entirely dependent upon experience, and is thus to be distinguished from statements whose truth is a matter of convention.

The task of science is to incorporate these propositions into their respective categories and to explain their significance in terms of precedent conditions, coupled with inductive generalisation. This procedure is the core of scientific investigation, for if the growth of scientific knowledge can be attributed to one device, it is to the application of induction, which consists of examining the incidence wherein phenomena display a specific uniformity and stating this uniformity in a general law. It is evident from the proceeding remarks that knowledge derived from inductive sources is provisional and may have to be modified, to justify inclusion into a progressive phase of knowledge. A long term policy such as this can also be justified by recalling the impact of Darwin's revolutionary theories on the Christian religions. As Christianity was sworn to basic dogmas, the publication of *The Origin of Species* imposed two untenable alternatives on Christian shoulders; either the denunciation of human evolution, or the distortion of the evidences to fit into a preconceived Hebrew framework. As agnosticism is a necessary feature of Hume's epistemology, the success of empiricism has promoted the growth of secular ideologies. Purely speculative metaphysics, which was fashionable in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has consequently fallen into disrepute. The philosophical movement known as Logical Positivism, deriving its impetus from verification, from science, has dissolved metaphysical questions on the grounds that they are devoid of factual content and arise from the misuse of language. Psychic phenomena have traditionally been considered sufficiently complex a subject to discredit materialism, i.e. materialism as an epistemology for science has been vitiated by the existence of mind, therefore supernaturalism must succeed where naturalism fails. This is, I think, a brief but fair statement of the climate of thought that existed prior to the initiation of modern psychology. It would be a serious misrepresentation of fact to maintain that this science has achieved the success which has attended physics,⁴ nevertheless, my contention that science has discarded the idea of a transcendental self is to be found in its approach to psychical problems.

A priori concepts such as "soul," etc., have been purged from the domain of psychology, and replaced by theories endorsed by experience and analysis, theories explaining the unknown via the known and not *vice versa*.⁵ To maintain that the average mind is equipped with a basic know-

ledge of reality, God, right and wrong, etc., is, as we have seen, contrary to scientific practice. The science of anthropology has also shown the differing notions of right and wrong which are known to exist among primitive peoples, thus undermining the theory of an "inner sense." The constituents of our thinking are derived from experience; even the bizarre experiences of nightmares are reducible, as every student of psychology knows, to simple impressions. "Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, to the utmost limits of the universe, we can never really advance

a step beyond ourselves, nor can we conceive of any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appeared in that narrow compass." (Hume.)⁶ This is the most cogent argument for the experiential nature of mind, for to conceive otherwise is to conceive of a sound we have never heard, or a colour we have never seen.

¹*Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*. D. Hume. Sect. IV.

²*The Task of Science*, contained in work, *Psych. and Phil.* Ed. Joad.

³*Language Truth and Logic*. A. J. Ayer. p. 45.

⁴*Can Materialism explain Mind?* G. H. Taylor. p. 16.

⁶*Treatise of Human Nature*. D. Hume. Pt. II. Sect. VI.

Christian Credulity

By A. YATES

How MANY who call themselves Christians really understand their religion? The following are a few of its doctrines which serve to exercise their credulity. Let us begin with the so-called "Fall" or man's original sin.

The Christian believes that the alleged Founder of his religion, Jesus, is the incarnation of God Himself, and that He came on earth to redeem mankind, who would otherwise, according to divine justice, have been damned to Hell for the disobedience of their primal progenitor, Adam.

The Book of Genesis says God created Adam and Eve after His own likeness, and placed them in the Garden of Eden with the special injunction not to eat of the tree of Good and Evil. We are to suppose that before eating of the forbidden fruit Adam and Eve did not know what was good and evil. This is an impossible state of existence. We cannot know what is good without knowing what is evil and *vice versa*. Each opposite reveals the other. Our will is governed by motives and inducements which form part of our intellectual character, and which we did not make ourselves. Before eating of the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve did not know they were naked, and therefore had no sexual knowledge or desire. The propagation of their kind was the only way that they could replenish the earth, as they were commanded, but to do so was to incur the primal curse. This leads to a difficulty which had addled the heads of Theologians in all ages. Free-will and that predestination which is implicit in omniscient omnipotence is therefore inconsistent. If God is all-wise he must have known beforehand that they would disobey Him. The story of the "Fall" is thus psychologically absurd, and a product of the ignorance of those among whom it originated.

We now come to the fundamental doctrine of Christianity — the Atonement, or the vicarious death of Jesus in expiation of the inherited guilt of Adam's sin. The question arises, What merit is there in the innocent dying for the guilty? Is it in accordance with justice? Would a benevolent all-wise Being require such a sacrifice? Yet, belief in the doctrine penetrated the Christian superstition, and has inspired such butcherly disgusting doggerel as "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins," and "Washed in the blood of the Lamb," etc. Throughout the Gospels we are told that faith in Christ as the Redemer is an indispensable condition of salvation. "He that believeth in Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God." (John 3. 8.)

Do Christians ever ask themselves: What of those who lived before Christianity was known and consequently had no chance of the salvation that comes through faith in Christ? What of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and

other nations scattered over the face of the earth? It would seem that Heaven was possible only to those fortunate enough to have lived at a certain historical time, and in a certain geographical position. Why, if the knowledge of Christ's teaching was necessary for salvation, was it so long deferred for the benefit of an obscure nation of Jews? When we consider how much depended on its acceptance why was it not delivered with that august authority which we would expect from a divine revelation, and which would make doubt or denial rationally impossible? Instead of this strength of assurance what do we find? Vague stories among the ignorant superstitious population of Judaea and Galilee of a wonder-working Messiah named Jesus. There is not a scrap of evidence that such a person ever existed. The present Gospels were not written till late in the second century, and are a compilation of earlier narratives founded on tradition. As might be expected from their source, they are full of omissions, discrepancies and contradictions which no exegesis can reconcile.

As Christianity spread, its advance was marked by doctrinal discord. Numerous sects sprang up whose differences gave rise to a rancour of hatred and contention only to be sated by mutual slaughter. The Church asserted its authority by atrocious acts of persecution and suppression, of which the Spanish Inquisition and the extermination of the Albigenses are outstanding examples. The schism of the Reformation intensified the spirit of bigotry and intolerance, and resulted in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the cruelties which followed the Spanish invasion of Holland by the infamous Duke of Alva, the fires of Smithfield and the long religious wars between the Catholic and Protestant States of Europe. In short, the religion which we are told was heralded by angels singing "Peace on earth and good will to men," has been the prolific cause of some of the worst actions that have disgraced humanity. Can a Being whose attributes are beneficence, wisdom and power be the author of a system productive of so much evil as Christianity?

If Christians deny the truth of these charges, let them examine the record of history, and ask themselves whether these evils could have happened if Christianity had been unknown.

Dangerous Science

VATICAN newspaper *Osservatore Romano*, praising Italian and foreign Catholic journalists, reminded them that in "his recommendation, Pope Pius XI implicitly urged Catholic newspapermen to study lay sciences," but warned, using the words of the late Pope, "Science is very dangerous when it operates without humility and charity" (i.e., when it contradicts Catholic teachings, dogmas or doctrine).

CORRESPONDENCE

ATHEISM IN THE U.S.S.R.

I was interested to read Mr. Burgess' letter and your editorial note in your issue of March 15th. I feel that in view of your editorial note, the point should be elaborated, since in the Soviet Union it is the principles of *dialectical materialism* which are taught and not a purely negative "Atheism," which you yourself counterpose to "Theism."

The teaching of dialectical materialism implies the teaching of a scientific approach on the part of every young person, not only to the traditional sciences but equally to social phenomena, including the study of history, political economy and so on. It would probably be correct to say that if everybody accepted this dialectical materialist approach, there would then be no Theism and no talk of Atheism either. It is well known, however, that in the U.S.S.R. today there are large religious communities of various types, and that therefore children can come up against quite a lot of Theism in their family circle. Insofar as Theism is still a widely held view in the Soviet Union, Atheism equally has a place in Soviet ideological discussions at the present time.

Your editorial note suggesting that you first have to "teach Theism" in order to "teach Atheism" appears to be quite unsound. Surely there is a reason for Atheists to "teach Atheism" in any place where theistic views still abound, even if not officially taught.

In the U.S.S.R. today there is a certain competition going on between the theistic and materialist views, and whatever may have been the imaginings of a past generation, it is quite clear that neither the one nor the other has won the whole population to its side.

PAT SLOAN

(General Secretary, British Soviet Friendship Society).

[How can you tell a child what Atheism is until he has first been told about the belief in God? One might as well talk about a prohibitionist movement in a land where there is no drink. We therefore adhere to our comment that in order to "teach Atheism" in schools the children would first have to be taught Theism (not as true, of course, but as a belief held by some). This is actually conceded by our correspondent in paragraph 3, second sentence, where he admits that the teaching of Atheism logically follows the propagation of Theism. He also tries to saddle us with "negative Atheism." Does he not realise that the negation of Theism clears the decks for a positive philosophy? The Atheist destroys the Theist's world; the Materialist rebuilds an Atheist one. And can Mr. Sloan show us where "dialectical Materialism" has solved some problem of science which scientific method failed to solve without its aid?—Ed.]

A REPLY TO MR. ROY

My primary aim in my previous letter was to suggest that the problem of the Hungarian refugees should be viewed with a certain degree of calmness. Since Mr. Roy is good enough to cite two American journals for my benefit, may I cite an English one for his, *The Observer* of March 10th, in which George Mikes writes an illuminating letter on the Hungarian refugees under the appropriate title, "Are they Heroes or Scoundrels?" His answer, essentially, is that for the most part they are neither, but that they are human beings.

May I add that *The National Guardian* is noted for its faithful adherence to the Communist Party line, so that whatever its other virtues may be, an impartial viewpoint on the Hungarian Revolution is unlikely to be one of them.

What does strike one as ironic is that the same periodicals which tortuously attempted to explain away obvious evidence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union in the time of Stalin—a fact since publicly admitted by Khrushchev—now exploit every shred of evidence for anti-Semitism in Hungary. Mr. Roy implied in his original article that Cardinal Mindszenty, upon his release, inspired such anti-Semitism; since no facts are produced to support this conclusion, presumably there are none. Whatever may have been the case during the Middle Ages, it is hardly possible to hold the Roman Catholic Church solely responsible for this recurrent problem in the twentieth century.

W. L. ARNSTEIN.

MALTHUS WAS A MALTHUSIAN

If Mr. Dickinson had really known something about Malthus and what he taught, he would not have written a lot of rubbish. Malthusianism is *not* birth control, but the economic doctrine that "Population tends to grow faster than the means of subsistence." Malthus did *not* shift the misery and want in the world "to the Creator," but to the ignorance and fertility of man refusing to be taught. Malthus did *not* teach "moral restraint" altogether—this is the Roman Catholic doctrine. His *remedy* for overpopulation was "late marriage," and it was the bulk of his followers—Neo-Malthusians—who taught early marriage and artificial contracep-

tion—that is, birth control, now more elegantly expressed as "Family Planning." What Mr. Dickinson means by "read in the light of his other works it is difficult to see how his *Essay* supports the view of modern Malthusians," I haven't the ghost of an idea. What other works? As for *disproving* Malthus, this has been done as often as disproving Paine—I think the number is 9,834 times. Never mind about this lot—but will Mr. Dickinson name *one* book which refutes Malthus? A NEO-M.

NEW RULES

Soon there will be the annual conference of the N.S.S., one of the main items being to consider that hardy trouble maker called new rules and regulations. Each time this trouble comes up every effort is made to tie a tighter noose round the members, to give greater permanence to officer holders, and to forget the object in view.

An association of free members, advocating Freethinking, hardly seems to require rules and regulations, which are, of course, an anomaly for such an assembly. The time and energy used for the purpose of binding those whom one cannot bind is prodigious, chiefly because those concerned are far too intelligent to require such bonds.

One of the desires of the rulers and regulators is to expel those whom they do not like. Here we might take a lesson from our cruel and wicked enemy, the Catholic Church; as I understand it they never expel anyone. Certainly, many arguments are put forward to justify expulsion, but never a valid one.

I meet my fellow Freethinkers, first to encourage Freethinking on subjects without prejudice and inhibitions; secondly, to point out the absurdity of believing on the mere affirmation without proof about one or another of the various religions.

Now, this does not require any rules or regulations, nor is it necessary to make ourselves a corporate body; this is merely an inhibited idea, encouraged by power seekers.

Neither do I look upon my freethinking associates otherwise than as honourable people trying to spread accuracy of thought, kindness and happiness. Organisations littered up with rules and regulations can be captured by enemies, wilfully misused by infiltration, and the ordinary member reduced to impotence. Each year these rules and regulations can occupy all the time of the annual conference, and the real objects of the Society lost in useless discussion. There are 16 rules for argument. If 10 minutes are used on an average for each rule, then nearly all the time will be used up. What about it?

P. TURNER.

THE FREETHINKER

As Professor J. D. Bernal said in the 75th year Commemoration Number, "the work of the Freethinker is needed now as never before." I am therefore pleased to note the response to the Sustentation Fund has been considerable and note with particular pleasure that donations were given by readers in S. Rhodesia. I suggest that the Sustentation Fund be a permanency with the directors of the journal, and that an invitation be extended, through the columns of THE FREETHINKER, for bequests from readers in Great Britain and abroad. It is of great importance that THE FREETHINKER should go forward and obtain a wider circle of readers.

ARTHUR O'HALLORAN (New Zealand).

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. He had the Koran translated into Turkish: the Word of Allah must not be thus violated.
2. The Mace. Cromwell.
3. The duckbill platypus.
4. (a) true, (b) untrue, (c) true,
5. 15th (1455).

G.H.T.

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