

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVLL — No. 17

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

TOWARDS the middle of the 3rd Century of the Christian era, the learned Origen, perhaps the most erudite of the Fathers of the Christian Church, had his attention called by his disciple and patron, Ambrose, to a formidable critique of Christianity which had recently made its appearance or at least, come to his notice. Ambrose was evidently impressed by the anti-Christian polemic and sent it forthwith to Origen beseeching the famous Egyptian theologian to reply to its ruthless arguments against the new religion. Origen eventually did so, systematically following his Pagan opponent step by step and incidentally quoting his verbal text extensively. Origen's work was preserved as the controversial masterpiece of one of the most eminent, if not altogether orthodox Fathers of the Church. Origen's views were decidedly heterodox and some of them were later condemned by the Catholic Church. For which reason, the famous Christian scholar was never canonised.

Origen's *Contra Celsum* (Against Celsus) has been preserved by the Church. Its current survival is of interest to others besides Christians since, included in the Christian theological classic, is contained the greater part of the original critique of Celsus to which Origen was attempting to reply and which has otherwise completely perished. According to Prof. Rougier, nine-tenths of Celsus has been preserved by Origen (in substance; seven-tenths, word for word). For in the century after Origen the Church finally got control of the Roman Empire and then proceeded systematically to suppress the works of its Pagan critics. So effectively did it do this, that apart from the parts of the Book of Celsus preserved by Origen, only a few fragments have survived of what seems to have been an extensive anti-Christian literature.

Who was Celsus?

Who Celsus was, and when he actually wrote, has never been finally determined. Eminent Rationalist critics differ on the identity of the first anti-Christian writer of whom any record survives. The French critic, Professor Louis Rougier (of the "Cercle Ernest Renan") in his critical reconstruction of Celsus's original text, says that its date is "easy to determine" and dates it definitely from the Summer of 178 in the reign of the philosophical emperor, Marcus Aurelius (121-180). However, an earlier but even more eminent critic, Walter Cassels, the author of the famous *Supernatural Religion*, holds that this date is too early; the English critic would date it from the third century, when the danger to the empire and civilisation of Rome from the northern Barbarians with which Celsus was evidently preoccupied had become more urgent and threatening, for the full fury of the Barbarian invasions only began after the death of the philosophical emperor. Nor is it known for certain who Celsus was. Again, the orthodox critical view, also accepted by Prof. Rougier, is that Celsus was an Epicurean philosopher, a friend of the great satirist, Lucian of Samosata, to whom Lucian had dedicated one of his famous

satiric essays and himself the author of a book debunking some of the contemporary impostors with which the Graeco-Roman world swarmed at that period. But this identification again has been contested by other critics who point out that *our* Celsus is not a materialist — viz., an Epicurean — but writes from the idealistic standpoint of

Plato. It is true that he appears to reproduce verbally a passage from Lucian but then the latter was a famous writer no doubt quoted in many quarters. No other reference to Celsus survives in the Pagan or Christian literature: his remarkable work owes its survival

solely to the accident that Origen happened to reply to it. This fact constitutes an interesting comment on how ancient texts survived or failed to survive. All that can be said about Celsus is that he was a Pagan critic of Christianity of outstanding ability who wrote some time during the century between about 150 and 250 about when Origen composed his reply. Origen himself evidently knew nothing about his redoubtable opponent personally and even inquired whether Celsus had written anything else!

"The True Word"

Celsus entitled his anti-Christian polemic *The True Word* — *Logos Alethes* in his original Greek. A recent critic (Mr. A. Robertson) has suggested "*A Straight Talk to Christians*" as a free rendering of the author's title. It certainly was "a straight talk", for, taking the new oriental religion as he found it from apparently first-hand study, Celsus attacked all along the line. In so doing he utilised not only a first-class critical intellect, but first-hand knowledge of both Christian and Jewish sources: some of his most effective arguments are actually put into the mouth of a Jew. "Celsus", declares his French editor, "was not only the pioneer of scientific exegesis, but was the first effective critic of Jewish and Christian apologists". Celsus had noted the various forms of Christianity both orthodox and heretical. He seems also to have known the New Testament; and long before modern "Higher Criticism" was ever heard of, his keen critical eye had noted its composite character. The Christian Scriptures, he tells us, "have been written and rewritten not once, but twice, thrice, several times". They have in fact been edited and re-edited to meet the times. They have, in fact, been edited and re-edited to meet, not the claims of historical truth, but the ever-changing needs of the expanding Christian Church. Here, the first anti-Christian writer expresses an idea which represents the key to New Testament criticism. Mr. Robertson points out that Celsus nowhere calls the historical existence of Jesus into question. But that is hardly surprising: like the earlier Roman authors who refer to the new oriental cult of Christ which had arrived upon the scene, Celsus took over at second-hand the sects' own account of its origins and alleged founder. According to Celsus, Jesus was a wonder worker of a type only too familiar to the Rome of his day, who collected an illiterate rabble drawn from the lowest strata of the population: "weavers, wagoners, manual

VIEWS and OPINIONS

Christianity's First Critic

By F. A. RIDLEY

labourers", scornfully remarks Celsus. Only a hotch-potch of legends and myths could be expected from such a *milieu*, and that is what Christianity consists of. But Celsus was perfectly fair in his criticisms. He even noted approvingly the germs of a few genuinely philosophical ideas submerged beneath the growing pyramid of superstition: in particular, the Logos, or Word of God, presumably in the Gospel of John. This idea was one of Plato's leading ideas; and it is difficult to imagine that an Epicurean could have approved of it. Celsus also believed in the immortality of the soul, another of Plato's ideas, but *not* in the resurrection of the body. He was a Theist but maintained that the Christian idea, that the one incorruptible god could have been incarnated in a Jewish agitator, was monstrous. Incidentally, the Christianity of the day evidently differed in some ways from later Christianity. It is through Mary, *not* Joseph, that Jesus is descended from the national hero, David. Celsus knows, and puts into the mouth of his fictitious Jew, the story that Jesus was the offspring of an illicit love affair between Mary and a Roman soldier.

Christianity and the Roman Empire

Celsus was evidently a Roman patriot, a conservative who adhered to the traditional order; he was no revolutionary! He explicitly recognises both slavery and the absolute monarchy of the Caesars. One suspects that his actual interest in writing *The True Word* was even more practical than theoretical: the rapidly increasing oriental sect, which refused either to worship the Emperor or to support in arms the Empire of which he was a symbol, represented a great and growing danger to the decaying structure then on the

eve of its "Decline and Fall", according to Gibbon. M. Rougier remarks: "The fundamental preoccupation of Celsus was the safety of the Empire. With unrivalled prescience he predicts that the triumph of Christianity would destroy patriotic sentiment, and that its natural sequel would be the triumph of the Barbarians." Far-sighted patriots — of whom Celsus was one — could see the Dark Ages approaching with, as Gibbon was later to put it, were to witness "the triumph of barbarism and religion." Celsus's appeal for the civic co-operation of Christians fell on deaf ears: Origen could only reply that the Christians were of more use to the Empire praying for Caesar on their knees — a new idea for Celsus! No doubt, by the time of Marcus Aurelius, far-sighted Christians were already beginning to visualise the future triumph of their creed. Here, Origen was a better judge than his brilliant Pagan opponent when Celsus said that it would be impossible for all the diverse nations in the Roman Empire to worship the same god. Origen replied, in effect, that a single religion was precisely what the Empire needed. The Christian proved the more accurate prophet, aided, no doubt, by a factor which Celsus did not foresee: the *religious* persecution inaugurated when Christianity became the state-church with Constantine. By the year 449, when the Christian emperors banned the anti-Christian works "calculated to effect the ruin of souls and to rouse the wrath of God", the name of Celsus was not amongst the proscribed authors; his *True Word* had evidently been eliminated by Christian censorship. The first critic of Christianity had to wait for a more tolerant age to do justice to his remarkable pioneer work.

The Secret Boycott

by C. H. NORMAN

I WAS MUCH INTERESTED in Mr. Manhattan's account of the treatment his book, *The Dollar and the Vatican*, had received from Press reviewers in the shape of silence. It is not only books of religion which suffer in this way. The British Medical Association, some forty or fifty years ago published two books on the constituent elements of patent medicines under the title *Secret Remedies* and *More Secret Remedies* but they did not get a single notice although the books dealt with a subject of great public importance. About the same period, *Truth* printed a list of 4,000 rascally firms and individuals engaged in various forms of defrauding the public: this book was completely boycotted. The book, published anonymously in 1923 entitled *The Fertile Art of Exploiting Gullibility* (dealing with the frauds of Bottomley and Hooley) was completely boycotted. In 1946, *Usury in Britain*, a detailed account of the stranglehold which big finance has obtained on the whole of British economy (to quote the publisher's description) by R. Dallas Brett, was met with complete silence, the *Times Literary Supplement* not even acknowledging the copy sent to it. This book seemed to me so important and valuable to every citizen that I took some trouble in writing to Editors personally known to me, about the book when I saw the way it was being treated, but without effect. Determined that the boycott should not be complete, I wrote two commendatory notices of it, one in *The Railway Review* and the other in *The Post*.

Another way of dealing with books which those in control do not want the public to know too much about but which, owing to the standing of the publishers and the authors cannot be completely boycotted, is to print reviews which are quite incomprehensible or conceal the motif of the book. One example of this type of book is the dev-

astating analysis of the way England is really governed, written by K. H. Abslayen, entitled *Kings, Lords and Gentlemen*, subtitle Influence and Power of the English Upper Classes, published in 1939. Another book of great historical interest which was treated in the same way was, *The Nemesis of Nations*, by Romaine Paterson (1907). Yet another instance of boycott was Mr. Herbert Cescinsky's admirable book, *The Gentle Art of Faking Furniture* (1931).

These instances suffice to show how widespread and long standing this hidden censorship has been and is. I have often wondered how it was worked and I once asked a well-known Fleet Street journalist about it. He could not tell me much, but he said that all the newspaper combines had a list of persons whose names were not to be mentioned, and contributors from whom articles would never be accepted, however interesting their news or journalistic worth might be.

Religion in Greenland

SINCE the missionary Hans Egede landed in Greenland in 1721 the Danish Government has always strongly supported the indoctrination of the Greenlanders with Christianity, which has gradually transformed the old Eskimo culture.

Although there has been no illiteracy in Greenland since the end of the first World War it has never been possible to establish a university, although several Greenlanders have had scholarship grants to study in Denmark. No difficulty was found, however, in establishing a seminary in Gothaab, Greenland's capital, and the Christian influence may be gauged from the fact that at present, out of 275 teachers in Greenland, 142 received their education at the seminary, 72 are catechists (Eskimo teachers and ecclesiastical assistants) and the remaining 61 are readers with no special qualification.

Ritual Murders and the Holy Sacrament

By DR. EDWARD ROUX (S. AFRICA)

IT WAS recently reported that an African Negro returning to West Africa after serving for some time as a member of the French Chamber of Deputies was eaten by his constituents. Commenting on this occurrence the American Rationalist (Jan. 1957) says :

The absurd notion that you become like what you feed on is common to many primitive cultures, and the adult warrior delights in devouring the tough flesh of lions and other animals of fighting prestige. The acme of his ambitions is to kill and devour his outstanding human enemy or rival, especially the heart and gonads. Presumably our able deputy was so able in impressing his constituents with the glory of his achievements in Paris, that their ambition to become like him in the time-honoured way became irresistible.

Small wonder that a decadent mythology that does not scruple to grasp at any straw to maintain its hold on those whom it keeps in ignorance, clings firmly to an elaborately glorified version of the same silly myth. Whether called the 'Lord's Supper' or the "Mass", it means one obscene and cannibalistic thing to the primitive convert. It means a different and vaguely garbled thing to the fanatic missionary who achieves the 'miracle' of conversion.

I have often wondered whether it is mere coincidence that Basutoland is now notorious for its ritual murders and famous for the adherence of its royal house and most of its African Christians to the Roman Catholic Church. It is an interesting fact that a large proportion of those involved in ritual murders in that country have been Catholics and some of them leading lay members of that church. It is possible of course, that ritual murder is due to something quite unconnected with missionary activity but peculiarly rife in Basutoland. Ritual murders have occurred in other territories, notably in Swaziland, but in Basutoland they for a time reached epidemic proportions. If converted Basuto then indulge in cannibalistic practices, statistical considerations alone would account for a high proportion of them being Catholics. The only comment one would then offer would be that Catholic conversion was amazingly superficial.

However, in view of the specific doctrines taught by the Roman Church, the strong emphasis that is placed on the Holy Sacrament and the belief in transubstantiation, it is possible that something more than coincidence is involved. I am not suggesting that the Roman Catholic Church has not explicitly and consistently condemned ritual murder. My feeling is that Catholic mumbo-jumbo in connection with the eating of the body of the man-God coincides so closely with African traditional magical ideas that it has tended to re-inforce rather than to replace the latter.

The motives behind the Basutoland ritual murders have been varied, but some, especially those involving chiefs, have been connected with disputes about succession. A claimant to a chieftainship whose claims have been set aside in favour of another may, at the beginning spend considerable sums in obtaining the services of a good lawyer. Often the attitude revealed is that your claims, however poor, will succeed if your lawyer is powerful enough. A good lawyer possess "something" (anthropologists find it as "mana") which gives him his power.

When the lawsuit fails, in spite of the expensive lawyer, the claimant may turn to other ways of obtaining mana. The traditional way is to make a really powerful medicine, and the most powerful medicines are made from parts of living human bodies. The victims chosen are said preferably to be young and vigorous persons.

In November 1952, during riots in East London Location, a Catholic nun, a medical missionary, was killed

when her car was stoned and then burnt by the mob. As her body lay in the street, four Africans, two men and two women, cut off parts of the flesh and ate them. In sentencing the offenders, the East London magistrate referred to the barbarism revealed in the act and added "How can you uplift your race when you four have acted like a lot of animals." One might ponder further on this tragic happening and wonder how often that Catholic nun had partaken of the mass, eating not mere pieces of starch but that which had been converted into the actual body of Christ. The very holiness of the nun and the fact that she was regarded as belonging to a superior race were probably leading motives in the crime. Unfortunately the newspaper reports have not dealt with this aspect of the case.

Not only Catholics, but Protestant fundamentalists may find that their religious doctrines reinforce rather than counteract primitive tribal superstitions. Most South Africans have heard of the cattle-killing, led by the prophetess Nonggausa, which occurred among the Ama-Xhosa, in the Eastern Province in 1856-57. Few will have heard of the interview between the Native Commissioner, Charles Brownlee and the Gaika chief, Sandile, which was reported in the Grahamstown Journal (report dated August 5, 1856). Brownlee argues with Sandile in an effort to call off the cattle-killing. Much of the argument turns on the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection. Taking these ideas very literally and adapting them to the situation in which they found themselves, the Africans were preparing for their own Apocalypse, when the sun would stand still, the slaughtered cattle and all dead ancestors would spring to life and a vast wind would sweep the white oppressors into the sea. In the course of the interview, Brownlee admits his belief in the truth of the Christian resurrection but declares that it is "not yet", whereas the Xhosa resurrection is a superstition, as it is "opposed to the Word of God". In the sequel it appeared that Sandile was unconvinced and his people took part in the cattle-killing.

The South African Government has recently prepared an Anti-Witchcraft Bill which will be debated in the present session of Parliament. It is difficult to see how superstition can be legislated against. M.P.'s have already pointed out that witchcraft and similar ideas are not confined to the indigenous races in South Africa. Surely the only effective means of combating superstition is the spreading of modern scientific ideas concerning the structure of the universe as we know it. There has been no significant change in Christian dogma since the seventeenth century when witches were burned alive. It is the spread of scientific knowledge and the humanist "enlightenment" which have made such things unthinkable in modern civilised countries.

Attempting to drive out one superstition by another is a futile business and both legislators and missionaries should realise this, Gilbert Murray, a great modern humanist, has summed up the matter thus: "The mind of man cannot be enlightened permanently merely by teaching him to reject some particular set of superstitions. There is an infinite supply of other superstitions always at hand; and the mind that desires such things, that is, the mind that has not trained itself to the hard discipline of reasonableness and honesty, will, as soon as its devils are cast out, proceed to fill itself with their relations".

This Believing World

Some viewers of a recent TV "Brains Trust" will no doubt furiously object to the forthright declaration of Bertrand Russell and Marghanita Laski in answer to the question, "What is the purpose of life?" that there wasn't any. The other two members, Sir John Maud and Sir Richard Acland, both Christians, tried their best to be polite to such blatant Atheism, and of course pointed out that life from the Christian standpoint meant worshipping God and doing his will; but the unbelievers only smiled.

★

Another questioner claimed that this was not really a Christian country, for most of its inhabitants were either Atheists or Agnostics; and we were pleased to see that both Miss Laski and Earl Russell insisted that this was nonsense — merely to be indifferent to religion did not make anybody one or the other. They both felt that there were few people in the country who had the courage to call themselves outright Atheists or Agnostics, knowing what these terms meant. As a matter of fact, any Christian who claims that he once was an Atheist but found Heavenly Peace in Christ, should be asked to give a few atheistic arguments — and the crushing answers which converted him. It is astonishing how such a simple query makes these liars dumb.

★

Just as the BBC broadcast year in and year out at Easter "The Man Born to be King" by Miss Dorothy Sayers, so it is now telerecording "Jesus of Nazareth" by Miss Joy Harrington in the obviously vain hope of "converting" the indifferent and the apathetic to the "good news" of Christianity. It cannot hope to bring back any convinced unbeliever, so it has to concentrate on children brought up to believe that Christianity is true, and on those other convinced believers that, even if they don't go to church, there must be something in religion. And in this the BBC is ably backed by its rival, ITV. On Good Friday there was a "family service" in the morning, and another for "older children" in the afternoon. Then came "The Crucifixion" at 6 p.m., and at 10.15 "We the Guilty." Against such an avalanche of unreason, is it any wonder that the Churches are jubilant?

★

Like the proverbial question — which came first, the chicken or the egg — there now is the one Christians have to solve. Did the Church or the Scriptures come first? According to the Rev. W. Attwood-Evans, it was the Church which "came before the scriptures." As the late Dr. Joad used to say, it all depends on what you mean by the "scriptures." Certainly the *New Testament* was written after the Church had been formed — in fact, the Gospels cannot be dated before 150 A.D., and Paul's Epistles are all of the second century in the form we have them.

★

But as some at least of the so-called teachings of Jesus are based on the Old Testament, and as this still forms part of the Church's "Holy Bible," it can be argued that the Church did not actually come before the "scriptures." Mr. Attwood-Evans admits that "the Bible is the Church's handbook," and as such, can anyone doubt that it was artfully manipulated in favour of the mythical Jesus? In what other way can we account for the famous passage about a young woman having a child called Immanuel in Isaiah being made a "prophecy" of a "virgin" having a child called Jesus in Matthew, which was written about 900 years afterwards?

★

We must congratulate the Editor of the *Bournemouth Echo*

for allowing Protestants and Catholics to go so sweetly for one another in its columns. The controversy between them reads even more Victorian than a story by Pansy or Charlotte M. Yonge. On neither side appears the slightest awareness that the Bible and the Churches have been subject to the keenest criticism and have been overwhelmed by charges of ignorance, credulity, and gross superstition. Do these champions of Romanism and Protestantism really believe in Hell and Devils, in Heaven and Angels?

The Rising Generation

XIX — MIRACLES OF SPEECH

ONE OF THE most surprising incidents in the opening chapters of Genesis (which all children are taught as true at school) is the way a Serpent can speak Hebrew. Of course, the Bible you read at school is a translation and the Serpent, which talks to Eve and is severely rebuked by God Almighty, speaks the very "reverent" English with which the Bible is permeated. It is a kind of English nobody ever spoke, but it helps to keep the Bible as a "sacred" Book.

Exactly how the Serpent managed to learn a good vocabulary in Hebrew is never explained at school — or, if an attempt to explain it is made, then all children are fobbed off with the words, "It was a miracle". But if ever you see a serpent, ask yourself whether it was possible for one to speak perfect Hebrew — or English for that matter — miracle or not. To speak like a human being, one must have the vocal organs of a human being, the vocal chords, the palate, etc., and one has to learn words and phrases. Yet the average school teacher will read out the story of the Serpent in Genesis without turning a hair.

But if the Bible gives us a Talking Serpent, it also gives us a Talking Ass. I am sure this Ass is almost as famous at school as the Serpent. It all happened when the Israelites were going to fight the Moabites as described in the Book of Numbers — the Moabites being afraid. So their king sent for a famous Prophet called Balaam who was told to curse the Israelites, as only prophets in those days could do this with any sure results. Unfortunately, Balaam was quite helpless to do any cursing until he had a private talk with God Almighty — both, as in the case of the Serpent, speaking perfect Hebrew. And God told Balaam plainly that under no circumstances to curse the Israelites; and so was obliged to send this order to the Moabite King. He wanted eventually to say so himself to the king, and saddled his Ass to go, but an Angel of the Lord stood in the way with a sword in his hand, and frightened the poor Moke which saw him. Balaam did not see the Angel, and started to hit the Ass to make it go, with the result that, turning its head round, the Ass started to speak and reproachfully asked (again in perfect Hebrew), "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?" Balaam's reply was that if he had a sword he'd have killed the Ass — but he suddenly saw the Angel, and in the end he sided with the Israelites against his own people. This truly edifying story is well worth reading, though exactly for what reason I am not quite sure. But the picture of the poor Ass begging not to be beaten in a clearly understood speech in Hebrew, and, in turn, understanding every word in reply is as unique as the case of the Talking Serpent. But whatever they may say to children at school, do any of our Bishops really believe in a Talking Serpent or in a Talking Ass?

—NEXT WEEK—

REV. J. L. BROOM, M.A., criticises
SIR ARNOLD LUNN'S LATEST BOOK

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

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

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

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

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.

J.B.D.—We see no reason why we should take up any official position as regards gambling.

B. HODGSON.—The difference between teaching *how* to think and *what* to think is the difference between education and mere instruction.

NEIL M'CRAE.—Interesting, but we have no desire to make capital out of offences committed by the clergy against the law, beyond pointing out, as you say, that their belief in God failed to promote decency.

OCTOGEN.—When J. M. Robertson speaks of Richard Carile's "obscure services to human freedom" he obviously means they were inadequately known and appreciated, and not that they were of doubtful value. Carile's work was certainly not obscure in his own day.

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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, April 28th, 7 p.m.: C. H. SMITH, "Palomar Observatory."

Cardiff (Bute Town Community Centre).—Tuesday, April 30th, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Vatican and World Politics."

Hampstead (Rosslyn Hall, Willoughby Road, N.W.3).—Friday, April 26th, 8.15 p.m.: Public Discussion, "Will you Survive Death?" Yes: Rev. H. CRABTREE (Unitarian). No: COLIN MCCALL (N.S.S.). With D. J. FURLEY, M.A. (University College)

and Dr. D. J. WEST. Chairman: Rev. D. P. MAW.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 28th, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, "Our Debt to Byron."

CORRECTION

IN the first item of Notes and News last week, the message from Dr. G. Brock Chisholm was addressed to the *World Union of Freethinkers*, and was an acceptance of membership of the Committee of Honour of the Paris Congress to be held in September.

Notes and News

HALIFAX COUNCIL FINANCE Committee recently recommended a 25% reduction of rates on vicarages and presbyteries. On the other hand, Bradford defeated a proposal to exempt these buildings from rates by 42 votes to 31, this in spite of one councillor associating the "moral stability" of Bradford with its Church work.

★

THE ARTICLE "Free Men Arise" by Andre Lorulot, Vice-President of the World Union of Freethinkers (see our March 1st issue) has led to some controversy among leading freethinkers on the other side of the channel, where, as in this country, opinions are divided on the Hungarian question. Lorulot's article, which first appeared in *La Raison*, has been opposed in an article in the Belgian *Pensee* by Paul Braun, and we learn from another Vice-President, Maitre Jean Grenling of Luxemburg, that the *Pensee* article expresses also the point of view of the Luxemburg freethinkers. In a letter to the World Union President (Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner) M. Grenling writes: "Those freethinkers in Luxemburg and Belgium who learned through their own sufferings, which they will never be able to forget, what oppression by a dictatorial regime imposed by a foreign power means, are unanimous in their condemnation of the crime against liberty committed in Hungary". Incidentally, M. Grenling is now the Luxemburg representative at the Benelux meetings.

★

AMONG the local press controversies now running in which *Freethinker* readers are engaged we note that the Rev. J. L. Broom is active for our cause in the columns of the Edinburgh *Evening News* and also in the *Evening Dispatch* (recently) on the subject of Christianity's social record. An enthusiastic recruit, Mr. John Thomson, Jun., has set the ball rolling for freethought in the Dunoon local press, steps have been taken to find support for him, while at Barnsley, Mr. H. Irving is again locked in combat with the opposition, and here Mr. D. Shipper has also entered the columns.

★

OUR READER Mr. Henry Meulen, who is Hon. Sec. of the Personal Rights Association (founded 1871) informs us of a function being held at Highgate Cemetery on Saturday, June 15th, at 3 p.m. when admirers of Herbert Spencer will gather for the laying of a wreath on his tomb. The idea originated from another of our readers, the authoress, Ella Twynam. The wreath will be laid by Lord Boyd-Orr and he will be supported by Lord Grantchester. A reminder will be given in these columns in June so that London readers will have the opportunity of attending.

★

ANSWERING protests which followed the Polish Government's decision to reintroduce religious teaching in schools, Polish Premier Cyrankiewicz replied, "We consider that whether or not a child up to a certain age (unspecified) attends lessons of religious instruction ought to be decided by the parents of the child and later by the child itself. We consider that the *best educational results* will be attained if free choice exists in this matter." An agreement between Church and State, concluded in early December, provided for the revival of religious instruction in schools. The protests were from Communists already complaining of Catholic misuse of the new freedom. The shape of things to come?

Catholic Bigotry in Columbia

By D. SHIPPER

WHEN reports of the burning of Protestant churches in Catholic Colombia began to reach Britain, many people, including some Catholics, felt grave misgivings about whether elementary principles of human rights were permitted in this Papal Satellite.

The Colombian governmental authorities, a trifle dismayed by the many outbursts of indignation at this reprehensible bigotry, which followed world press publication, immediately commissioned Professor Eduardo Ospina of the Bogota National University (a Vice-President of the Committee for Faith-Defence) to write the book, *Las Sectas Protestantas En Colombia*, which was published by the National Press of Bogota in 1954. An English translation *The Protestant Denominations In Colombia* has now been issued.

Reading it, the Catholic seeking reassurance, or the gullible Protestant, may conclude that a tolerant Colombian government was greatly dismayed by the burning down of some fifty Protestant churches and reports of violent Protestant discrimination; that *bandits* are responsible for the events; that the Government believes the Protestants to be largely responsible for their own misfortunes by exhibiting *liberal* tendencies; and that, actually, in view of the evidence here presented of mischievous Protestant lying, blatant proselytizing and un-Christian anti-Catholicism, the Protestants might almost be said to have reaped a just reward.

On the other hand, the knowledgeable reader might reflect that these pious chapters of outraged indignation and injured innocence are quite typical of the warped inquisitorial mentality which has produced so many works of "attacking defence" through the years. Article 53 of the Colombian Constitution asserts that "The State guarantees Freedom of Conscience" etc., but this has been "interpreted in an extreme manner" — with this we can agree; the question is — By whom?

In January, 1952 the Colombian Press carried a public discussion querying whether Protestant propaganda was included in this article and also pointed out that this material contravened Public Law "since it goes against the Concordat of 31/12/1887". Catholic opinion seemed to be that the exercise rights in the church was one thing but outside propaganda (permissible to Catholics in Protestant countries) was another. On August 20th 1952 the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Carrizosa, stated in a broadcast: "Freedom of cult is entirely different from freedom of opinion expressed by means of public speech and of the press. In no way can we understand this natural faculty of man to invoke God freely, as the right to propagate all and any doctrine in any movement and by any means, outside temples and chapels." Furthermore, he reminded his listeners of the solemn obligations of the Government towards the Vatican. It should be noted that Article 10 of the 1887 Concordat states: "The Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Religion is that of Colombia; the public powers recognise it as an *essential* element of social order and they undertake the obligation of protecting it and *insuring respect* for it as well as for its ministers, and keeping it, as well, in the full enjoyment of its rights and prerogatives". With such *legal safeguards* one would think the Government need hardly employ "bandits" in any case!

Sr. Ospira complains bitterly that many of the Protestant converts are drawn from the lowest levels of Colombian society. These people are "ignorant and defenceless". Apparently he considers that Catholicism possesses the sole rights to this class! We agree that a majority of Catholics

fall into this category. The fact that the writer fears that they "claim the same rights and privileges as the Religion of the Colombians", is a clear admission that the "same rights and privileges" do not exist now. Ex-priests who have left the austerity of the Catholic Church for Protestantism have *their* weakness ruthlessly exposed — *Cherchez la femme!* Obviously the Catholic must not rely on the evidence of those with natural human urges!

Readers of newspapers as diverse as the Protestant *British Weekly*, and Socialist *Tribune*, the American *Christian Century* and *Presbyterian Life* are charged with lacking literary discrimination, whilst Colombian Protestant leaders are accused of trying to convert falsifications "into a weapon which appears to defend a religious cause, but in reality has a political objective". Remember their "Liberal" tendencies? It is hard to determine whether these ecclesiastical saboteurs are agents of the Kremlin or of His Satanic Majesty!

We are given an interesting picture of the evolution of the 1948 insurrectionists into, first, guerilla fighters and later *el Bandolerismo* ("the Banditry"). Although the 9th April 1948 saw a "gigantic social uprising" (in which it is fair to assume a varied cross-section of the public took part), the guerilla bands were composed, curiously, in great part by escaped criminals, and these were supplied with modern arms "introduced into the country secretly by *leftish* organisations." Thus it is alleged that the bandits, with *leftist* affiliations, burned down Protestant churches which were, according to the Catholic authorities, *symbolical of Liberal tendencies!* Peculiarly enough, no Catholic churches were damaged, although in the "gigantic social uprising" the "mobs" demonstrated their opinion of the religious stranglehold, by burning down the Archbishop's house, the Papal Nuncio's residence, part of the Catholic Javeriana University, the Justice (?) Department and the Catholic La Salle School.

The Catholics obviously believe that the much-maligned Protestants were not "playing the game" in publicising this matter. The victims are reminded that Our Saviour gave us that Divine saying: "Verily I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. (St. Matt., S. 44)." On this occasion the heretic Protestants have not practised the Gospel. "Even supposing that we *were* their persecutors they have not done us good".—Insufferable ingratitude! "They have done us a terrible evil in telling the world of horrible crimes of which they themselves as sane people were not certain" (It is often extremely difficult to ascertain whether or not a church *has* actually been burnt down). "The worst part is that this world dishonour has fallen, not only on some Catholics who, perhaps even during wartime could not be excused" (Oh, come! Don't let's be too severe on these merely high-spirited youths) "but on an entire innocent Nation and on a religious Society, which is also among us — thank God! — the Holy Catholic Church".

The unsporting Protestants forgot to turn the other cheek!

This collection of puerile excuses, justifications, charges, apologies and denials will be accepted only by the most naive. It is another example of twisted Catholic mentality.

WANTED

On 28/1/57 the ecclesiastical news agency *Fides* issued an urgent call for almost 14,000 priests to work in the Philippines. At present there are 3,200 priests and the agency says there should be approximately 50,000.

Old Mrs Facing-Both-Ways

By C. G. L. Du CANN
(Concluded from page 122)

Let us look further at some of the arguments with which the Primate of All England, but not of all Englishmen, supported his case against God and Christ. Here is one. "It (i.e. hanging) seemed to satisfy public opinion better than any other course would." That, again, is exactly true of the Crucifixion according to Caiaphas and Pilate. "It is expedient that one man die for the people." But do the Ten Commandments exist to satisfy public opinion? Judging by the popularity of adultery and covetousness in modern England, I imagine otherwise. Then, too, His Grace expressed the pharasaic hope "that this long and distressing controversy" (to hang or not to hang) "might be allowed to pass for a time into oblivion."

But shall we all tamely acquiesce in the State-murder of the infinitesimal number of persons the Government still declares it necessary to hang—in order to discourage the others, to adapt Voltaire's gibe? I doubt it. The war between good and evil never pauses for a second. Neither God nor Satan works the five-day week; and both seem to be what English people call "extremists." Neither seems to have been to a decent public school or to conduct his conduct to the other on principles of English fair play. Therefore the Archbishop's hope is unlikely to be realised.

For the credit of the Church, let us remember that the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Chichester did not agree with Canterbury. They thought human life sacred. It isn't. But it ought to be. They thought the Bill morally shocking. Most of the Bishops were absent, as they usually are when a fight between their God and their Satan is on; perhaps they are reluctant to take side, for you never know which will win. Lord Templewood truthfully called the Bill "an expedient to rescue the Government from a difficult position." It won't. Lord Pakenham, using psychiatric language (which is as near to bad language as a well-behaved peer ever gets in the House of Lords) called the Bill "a bastard Bill born out of arrested development by a split personality."

The Lord Chancellor said the Bill was a compromise; the Lord Archbishop said it wasn't. Our foudroyant Lord Chief Justice hoped the Bill would end a situation which was causing the judges considerable embarrassment. That situation was not the hangings; it was the absence of hangings after sentences of death had been passed. Well, Ireland once sang "They're hanging men and women for the wearing of the Green," and England used to hang them for theft; but must we really hang the man in the dock merely to save the man on the Bench from embarrassment? True, it seems farcical to don the Black Cap, to invoke the Deity, to tell the convicted, the audience and the newspapers that the culprit will be hanged—when he won't be. But the remedy seems to be a change in judicial procedure.

In the result, of course, God and Jesus and the Holy Ghost were defeated, as so often by their own side. Once more the Upper House rendered to Caesar the things which are God's, as they always do, with episcopal encouragement whenever the subject of hanging comes up. In Robert Browning's language for Christians it was "one more triumph for devils and sorrow for angels, one wrong more to man, one more insult to God." But to Atheists, Agnostics and Secularists, it was no less grievous. For it was a defeat for common sense, for civilised values; for right action; for the right of us all to live as against the State's impudent and monstrous claim to take the life of any man or woman; and for the mental and spiritual advance of mankind to a higher conception of justice.

But this is not the end. The hanging of criminals will go the way of witch-burning, and posterity will laugh at the judicial and episcopal Mrs. Partingtons with their mops who strove to stem the tide of abolition.

Science Front

The theory of Extra-Sensory Perception is making but little headway. In its extreme form it has been contended that physical objects at a distance (outside the range of physical action) can be controlled or even moved: this theory of "psychokinesis" is more suited to the atmosphere of the spiritualist seance than to any scientifically controlled experiment. E.S.P. in a more modest form claims the transference of thoughts or signals from one brain to another, and Dr. R. A. McConnell has replied that telepathy does not fit in with what is already known about brain-energy. If *all* the energy of the brain were broadcast, he declares, it could not possibly travel more than one millimetre from the skull!

★

The problem of how life originated from matter has been taken a step farther. Biochemists have converted inorganic chemicals into complex mixtures of organic chemicals, essential to life processes, by electrical discharges similar to those of lightning. The latter was certainly present in the atmosphere before life appeared on the earth.

★

A recent amazing conjecture about space travel comes from Dr. F. S. Crawford, of California University, who reckons that if the rocket ship was travelling at the speed of light, the travellers' span of life would be extended by perhaps as much as a thousand years. That is, time changes would be slowed down, including the chemical processes of the body. The body would age much more slowly, and on arrival at the destination the travellers would be not much older than when they set out. What Crawford does not clarify, however, is whether mental changes would also be slowed down. As these are ultimately rooted in body changes (in the brain) the travellers would *think* more slowly and thus not be aware of their extra life span until, presumably, they returned to earth and found themselves in the year 2957! But here we seem to have forsaken science and bordered upon science fiction.

★

Dr. R. D. Heath reported to the American Psychiatric Association that when the blood of schizophrenic people was injected into two normal people it produced a temporary psychosis. One subject had hallucinations and the other became "paranoid" and thought everyone was talking about him. The theory under test is that a genetically determined metabolic disturbance is the cause of schizophrenia; the protein responsible is being sought. What becomes of the religious theory of a "soul"—apparently at the mercy of body conditions?
G.H.T.

Secularism in Trinidad

MR. JOHN T. JULES of Delhi Road, Fyzabad, reports that his Branch's March meeting was most successful and added considerably to the prestige of the National Secular Society in Trinidad. The speaker was Dr. H. B. Wright of the Shell Hospital, Point Fortin (about 15 miles from Fyzabad) and his subject was "Birth Control in the World". The Unique Hall was florally decorated and was filled to capacity. Half-a-dozen Secularists had travelled 50 miles to be present.

Dr. Wright praised the Fyzabad Branch for being the first body openly to support his Birth Control Clinic, and he referred to the clerical opposition that he had encountered.

Secularists should be proud, he said; Charles Bradlaugh had been a worker for Birth Control and had published the Knowlton pamphlet as a test case. World Health Organisation figures were presented and the need for Birth Control emphasised. "Your destiny is in your hands," concluded the Doctor.

Mr. Jules and his friends are to be complimented on their initiative in arranging the meeting and for the hard work which helped to make it such a success. They are hoping that some press publicity will result but, in any case, they may justifiably be proud of what they have done. It is good to know that the N.S.S. is in the van in the West Indies, and it is gratifying that Dr. Wright has promised to keep in close contact with it.

Also encouraging, is the formation of a second branch of the Society in Trinidad. The San Juan Branch was founded on the 15th March through the co-operation of Mr. S. Gustavus Stephen and Mr. Felix F. Corbie. It already has twelve members and we look forward to its steady growth. Meanwhile we send our best wishes to our West Indian colleagues.

CORRESPONDENCE

J. M. ROBERTSON

J.M.R. went out to South Africa for the *Morning Leader* in the last phases of the Boer War and reported on the concentration camps and other aspects of martial law. *The Morning Leader* was one of the few leading London papers taking what was called the pro-Boer view. The weekly *New Age* was also strongly pro-Boer in its views. Mr. Norman may be confusing these things when he says that J.M.R. was the editor of the *New Age*. Memory plays us strange tricks at times.

I am sure nobody acquainted with J.M.R.'s writings and lectures during 'nineties, and up to the outbreak of war in 1914 (and up to his death, for that matter) can credit for a moment the picture of an hysterical and crazy warmonger that Mr. Norman portrays for us. J.M.R. was not an easy man to read; he required concentration, and I think he became more difficult as he got older. I remember my old friend, S. G. Green, remarking once, with a twinkling eye, "He never uses a short word if a long one will do." And he may, as Mr. Turney says, have lacked a sense of humour. He did not suffer fools gladly, and that may indicate a shortage of it.

A. W. DAVIS.

It is possible that both Mr. Norman and Mr. Cutner are right re *The New Age*. This periodical became my father's property as a bad debt, and was kept going for a few issues while Orage and Holbrook Jackson raised the money to buy it (in part from G. B. Shaw). The editorial work may very well have been done in part by Robertson, who was always ready to help my parents in any possible way; he was a most devoted friend. I do not think he was officially editor.

As Senior English Master in what are now known as Grammar Schools, I have had frequent occasion to make use of Robertson's Shakespeare studies; he was the best exponent of the theory of multiple authorship of the plays and set out a case which Mr. Norman seems incapable of judging, perhaps through ignorance. Robertson's literary standing has been overlooked; he had no academic qualifications (he scorned them).

Similarly hasty individuals, again probably through ignorance, condemn Robertson's scepticism of the historicity of Christ and may, as did a recent correspondent to the *Literary Guide* (now *The Humanist*), quite unaware of the recent work of Alfarc and Couchoud or of the Cahiers Rationalistes. These French students are convinced of the mythical origin of Jesus Christ.

I may be prejudiced in J.M.R.'s favour; I place him very high in Freethought's Pantheon.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

SHALL THE PEACEFUL PERISH?

Mr. Taylor's review of *The Search for Purpose* touches upon a matter of vital importance to mankind. The better a nation becomes, the less aggressive, the more pacific, devoting itself to the arts of peace and the comforts of its people, the more liable it is to be bashed out of existence by a power inferior in morals but superior in munitions and pugnacity. Is there any way out of this dilemma?

E. H. GROUT.

THE BIBLE IN BED

Mr. G. Caplan's letter, published under the caption "The Bible in Bed" (*THE FREETHINKER*, March 8) reminds me of British Railways' Bibles which can be found in the waiting rooms on many Welsh railway stations. Considering the waiting rooms are

usually below zero during the winter months, perhaps British Railways hope the intending passengers will keep themselves warm by reading about the fires of Hell.

The Transport Commission should not allow religion to be propagated on what is virtually public property. Printed slips, as Mr. Caplan has suggested, would be an excellent retaliation—small pamphlets, too, would be useful for those who wish to disseminate the principles of Freethought among the deluded masses. Christianity has a monopoly of the means of communication: television, radio and the Press all come under its domination. Let us, then, retaliate with a pamphlet war against the whole detestable system.

J. W. T. ANDERSON.

THE EGYPTIAN TRINITY

I read with interest Mr. Ridley's remarks on the Trinity, but, as to his views in regard to the Egyptian Trinity, Osiris, Isis, Horus; these to the Egyptians represented three separate persons and not "three in one, one in three," as in Christian doctrine.

ROBERT MORELL, F.A.E.S.

"BLOODING"

We recently read of two babies of five months and 18 months who were "blooded" by huntsmen of the Belvoir Hunt. Seeing the babies watching as the fox was killed, a huntsman wiped the bloodstained paws across both babies' cheeks and forehead, and presented the brush to their grandmother, apparently watching enthralled. Both mothers told reporters that "It gave me a thrill" and "We've always loved hunting." For how long will this sadistic and bloodthirsty savagery be tolerated in a country which prides itself on its kindness to animals?

D.S.

N.S.S. AND POLITICS

The N.S.S. Secretary continues to give his case away when he admits that his critics are not N.S.S. members. Exactly. That is the whole point. He would do well to ponder the implications of this admission.

The article of Justin's, to which he appeals, is interesting as a little piece of research, but gloriously irrelevant to the present case because (a) Bradlaugh was speaking as a politician, not as N.S.S. President, and (b) even then, part of his case was that in 1882 the Suez was not menaced.

N. FIELD.

HUNGARY

W. E. Huxley's letter on the "N.S.S. and Politics" contains excellent advice. After all, we know something of what the R.C. Church has been doing for years in Hungary and as nine-tenths of the Press are against anyone who dares to cast doubts on the truth of religion (see p. 107, *The Dollar and the Vatican*), some of the tales we have heard about Hungary should be taken with a large pinch of salt!

C. F. BAUSE.

CATHOLIC PROCESSION

On Sunday, April 7th, thousands of Roman Catholic men marched in silence "reciting the Rosary" from Hyde Park to Westminster Cathedral. This to demonstrate for "the help of persecuted Christians in Communist countries."

As a recent visitor to "Red" Yugo-Slavia, I can certify that there is complete religious freedom there—as there is also in Russia and China. (The only R.C.s who get "persecuted" are priests who will persist in dabbling in politics—and they thoroughly deserve their punishment.)

The 30,000 "poor mutts" of London who wasted their Sunday making a public exhibition of themselves would have been far better occupied in enjoying themselves in a normal manner—rather than obeying priests, who know perfectly well the true situation.

ADRIAN PIGOT I.

ANTI-VACCINATION PUBLIC MEETING

THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING of the NATIONAL ANTI-VACCINATION LEAGUE will be held from 2.30 to 4.20 p.m. at

ALLIANCE HALL
PALMER STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1
on THURSDAY MAY 9th

Speakers: DR. GORDON LATTO (if free), DR. BERTRAND ALLINSON, MR. C. R. HOBSON, M.P., and MISS L. LIND-AT-HAGBY.

ALL are welcome QUESTIONS invited

For further information write to:—
National Anti-Vaccination League,
2nd Floor, 26/28 Warwick Way,
London, S.W.1

BIRTH

To Mr. and Mrs. W. J. McIlroy, of 140A Hornsey Lane, London, N.6, on April 15th, a girl, Ruth Margaret.