

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

IT WAS Tennyson who gave the world the term "honest doubt," in his memorable lines, from *In Memoriam*:

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

—though some of us may be pardoned if we wonder what Tennyson meant by "faith" and "doubt." For me, the expression "honest doubt" has always had the flavour of a kind of pat on the back from believers who condone and sympathise with the unfortunate unbeliever assailed with such "honest doubts." A little more understanding, and he may be induced to shed them and come right over.

The nineteenth century appears to have had quite a number of those unlucky people who could only give up Christianity with groans and sighs, and who, even after they had done so, appear to admit that "true" Christianity, the real thing, the "sublime" religion of Jesus, could never be given up even by the most honest of doubters. Miracles—yes; devils—yes; even Virgin Births and Resurrections must go. But to give up Jesus of Nazareth—that is quite impossible; and so one gets these souls in torment who wrestle with the heart and the head and who, if they are labelled at all, come into the category of "honest doubters."

Famous "Doubters"

In his *More Nineteenth Century Studies*, Professor Basil Willey, who is Professor of English Literature at Cambridge, has given us a most fascinating account of some of these "tortured" souls. Francis Newman, J. A. Froude, the seven contributors to *Essays and Reviews*, Tennyson, Mark Rutherford, and John Morley, are all brilliantly and searchingly analysed in a way that makes me envy the lucky students who sit under him.

But there was one thing which puzzled me enormously. How is it that, in the very detailed account of their books and personalities, we get no hint that they had ever heard of contemporary Freethinkers—men like Richard Carlile, Robert Taylor, Charles Southwell, G. J. Holyoake, Robert Cooper, Charles Bradlaugh, and later, among many others, G. W. Foote and John M. Robertson? These men were not just honest doubters; they were convinced Freethinkers. They may have also suffered some early pangs in giving up the Faith of their childhood; but once given up, the only pains and penalties they suffered afterwards came from the unceasing boycott and hatred of Christians—the true followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Three Brothers

Prof. Willey's very sympathetic account of Francis Newman is a refreshing change from the one that that brilliant writer and thinker is generally accorded in books on English literature. In fact, one of the idiosyncrasies of our English critics is the ease with which they can deliberately avoid any discussion of the books written by an avowed Freethinker—as distinct from an honest doubter.

Prof. Saintsbury, for example, in his *Short History of English Literature*, while fully noticing John Henry Newman, makes no mention of his brother Francis; and neither he nor Prof. Willey mentions the third brother who, as it happens, was an Atheist. Charles Robert Newman was the "bad boy" of the family, and his two brothers were very unhappy about it. He was poor and shy, and has been so overshadowed by his more famous brothers that he

appears never to be mentioned where it can be avoided. But he also wrote essays, he wrote them well, and in one he had no difficulty in neatly disposing of Francis Newman's Theism.

It may surprise Prof. Willey that G. W. Foote wrote some brilliant essays

on the Newmans, published in pamphlet form in 1892 as *Rome or Atheism?* Foote showed that John Henry was afraid of Atheism, and never discussed it. As for Francis, Foote maintained that he was only "half-logical." John Henry Newman as a Catholic was "entirely logical" in dismissing Atheism, just as Charles Robert was in dismissing God. Francis, declared Foote, "retained his belief in God and a future life simply on grounds of faith."

The "Avowed Atheist"

Prof. Willey mentions Francis Newman's *Early History of the Late Cardinal Newman*, but he says nothing about G. W. Foote being referred to therein as "a fine writer, editor of THE FREETHINKER, and an avowed Atheist." Francis Newman tried to reply to some of Foote's criticism, and was quite unsuccessful, as the reader can see if he consults *Rome or Atheism?* Foote was always at his best when he dealt with the more cultured of our writers, and he took care to make his arguments deadly. The great Cardinal, who was moved towards Rome by his heart only, was obliged to admit in a passage quoted by Foote that "there is nothing between it [the Catholic Church] and scepticism, when men can exert their reason freely." No one knew more than he that in Rome you were not allowed to use reason freely except under certain conditions. When Foote declared that "there is no logical halting place between Rome and Atheism," he could upset Francis, but John Henry had to admit it.

Whatever may be said of Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith*, in the ultimate it must be recognised as a deadly blow to Christianity; and almost equal in many respects to the more famous *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* as a literary work.

John M. Robertson, in his *History of Freethought*, does not class the *Phases* as equal to C. C. Hennell's *Origin of Christianity*; and he adds: "The militant Freethinkers had handled practically all its critical points previously; and they had added a destructive philosophical criticism of the theism to which Newman uncritically adhered." As Francis grew older, he went more and more over to something he liked to call Christianity—"I uphold the sacred moralities of Jew and Christian" are his words. The destructive criticism of Christianity which went around him during his very

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Some

Honest Doubters—1

By H. CUTNER

long life made no mark whatever.

Prof. Willey's fifty pages devoted to Francis Newman make absorbing reading, as do those devoted to Tennyson, who, as a poet, seems to have suffered some kind of eclipse with our literary critics. But he was a very great poet all the same, though, like Newman, he appears to have known little, if anything at all, of the Freethought campaign against Christianity. He recognised in Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of Creation* a formidable enemy to the Bible story, and could not have been surprised when Darwin's *Origin of Species* answered the questions left open by Chambers on Evolution. Here again we get from Prof. Willey a keen analysis of those poems in which one can see how his "honest doubts" affected Tennyson's work and personality. Tennyson met most of the great Victorian worthies—Huxley, Tyndall, Ruskin, Watts, Kingsley, Morley, Leslie Stephen, Jowett, and many others. Many of them were "honest doubters," though Huxley and Tyndall were, of course, thorough unbelievers.

Vestiges of Creation confirmed Tennyson's belief in Evolution—in fact, declares Prof. Willey, "Only those (if there are still any) who think that Darwin invented Evolution in 1859, will be surprised to find that it is anticipated by Robert Chambers in *Vestiges* or that Tennyson had anticipated them both." Even Prof. Romanes had shown

that, "In *In Memoriam*, Tennyson noted the fact (of Natural Selection) and a few years later Darwin supplied the explanation." Prof. Willey notes that it had been "fore-shadowed by Kant, Goethe, and Lamarck."

But though Tennyson may be classed with "honest doubters," and though he did not find God through the famous design argument—his own words are, "I found Him not in world or sun"—he did find God from "reasons of the heart," as Prof. Willey points out; just as Pascal, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Kierkegaard recognised that "faith is not a matter of rational demonstration." Of course. Any genuine Freethinker, that is, one not hampered by honest doubts, could have told him that. But we can say of Tennyson what R. H. Hutton, the editor of *The Spectator* and a devout Churchman, said of him, as quoted by Prof. Willey:

There was an agnostic element in Tennyson, as perhaps in all the greatest minds, though in him it may have been in excess, which kept reiterating, "We have but faith, we cannot know," and which, I should say, was never completely satisfied even of the adequacy of dogmatic definitions which his Church recognised. . . . He finds no authoritative last word such as many Christians find in ecclesiastical authority. . . .

Perhaps Tennyson in his heart of hearts went even further away from religion than either Hutton or Prof. Willey saw.

The Reverend David

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE REV. DAVID SHEPHERD is the Church's latest, and most promising, TV "personality." His name is an obvious "draw" and the Church is just as obviously "cashing in on it." Moreover, here is a man who does not repel viewers at sight. In these days of the *poseur* parson, the pipe-sucking padre or the slap-me-on-the-back rollicking reverend, it is refreshing to find one who is content to be just himself, David Shepherd, modest and unpretentious, perhaps slightly puzzled by it all, and making no show of learning or of even the slightest degree of ability in argument.

His recent projection into the public gaze as a Christian propagandist is due to his skill, not with the weapons of debate but with the cricket bat. D. S. Shepherd is one of the most elegant English batsmen it is possible to watch in these days of dearth. A brilliant Test century as recently as last season guarantees him a ready-made audience no matter what his subject may be. Thousands who listen to him talking about religion would be just as ready to hear him on radishes or rats. After one of his appearances a teenage girl remarked, "Isn't he beautiful?" Asked what he was talking about, she replied, "I don't know. I never listen. I just look."

It is indeed difficult to determine exactly what he *has* said when he has finished. My impression of his performance on ITA on Sunday, May 5th, was that he said nothing at all, and said it very charmingly. The programme was well produced and not over-rehearsed to the extent that everything appears mechanically in order: there was just a little judicious prompting by the Shepherd, and quiet following by the sheep. The upshot was that two couples claimed that they had found Jesus Christ, while Shepherd's landlord expressed his admiration for such events. The following were among the pathetic exchanges that took place in this discussion, and I record them sadly.

(1) A student nurse complained of tired feet, but since she found Jesus she was treating her patients, not as cases, but as individuals.

Perhaps inadvisedly David asked if her feet were still tired. "Yes, I don't mind telling you they are," she answered.

(2) One of the men interviewed told of a criminal convicted of an offence against a little girl. Fortunately his wife was already a Christian and he has now reformed and his sentence had been lessened. Here, David cautiously interposed that it would not do to think that because a man was a Christian he would get off lightly.

(3) A married couple were on bad terms. "A lot of prayer was going up for them" and they finally came together when he gave up the other woman. Verdict: "I truly believe that Christ answered the prayers," said the narrator.

And so it went on, except that the other anecdotes were rather less clear-cut, though they offered equally convincing proofs—to those who already believe—of the existence of Jesus in our hearts.

On several occasions the couples were asked what difference a Christian life made. The only clear answer emerging from the haze which always hangs over these programmes was that it meant "a way out of difficulties." How? By prayer, it was alleged. "Then," pursued David, "what do you pray about?" "Well, lots of things—anything at all." And so our intellectual feast proceeded.

On the same evening it had been announced that three children had been killed on the way to Church in Northumberland. One wonders what twists of argument these people would have employed to explain that away on the hypothesis of a good God who cannot achieve his Divine Ends without the slaughter of the innocents.

The final shot in the programme was made by Shepherd himself, explaining how he "came to know Jesus Christ." As a boy he idolised Hutton, the famous cricketer. Later he came to know him by playing in the same match against him. It was the same with his experience of Christ!

In face of such convincing arguments what can we say? They convince us that the Church authorities will not be so foolish as to allow David to debate with any representative Freethinker, though we should be more than willing, and would concede the choice of innings on his own ground.

We imagine he will be more comfortable with "converted" Christians in the safety of the TV studio. It is a great pity, however, that his talents should be thrown away on such inconsequent drivel as that we heard on May 5th.

REVIEW

St. Helena

By F. A. RIDLEY

ROUND ABOUT THE YEAR 330 of the Christian era there occurred the most momentous discovery in the annals of humanity. No! We do not refer to the discovery of America nor even of the North or South Pole. We refer to the discovery in, or near, Jerusalem by the Empress Helena, mother of the first Christian Emperor Constantine, of the True Cross upon which Christ died for the sins of the world. The pious Empress who made this memorable discovery was herself perhaps of British stock; according to one account she was the daughter of old King Cole of Colchester; whilst another, perhaps more probable, account makes her the daughter of an innkeeper somewhere in Asia Minor. However that may have been, to discover the True Cross constitutes an incontestable proof of authentic sanctity. Accordingly, May 21st is consecrated by the Church as the Feast of St. Helena. It was upon this precise date in 1502 that a Portuguese mariner sighted a lofty volcanic rock standing sheer out of the South Atlantic almost equidistant from South Africa and South America. A pious Catholic, the Portuguese seaman christened his discovery "St. Helena," and as St. Helena it appears on past and present maps. However, it is not with the pious Helena that history and popular sentiment associate it. For his destiny decreed that another imperial person had to spend his last years on the island, and though Napoleon Bonaparte was far from being a saint, he certainly cuts a more substantial figure on the canvas of world history than does the saintly but shadowy Helena. To the modern world St. Helena is Napoleon's isle, the historic scene of the tragedy of the modern Prometheus, of the greatest soldier and administrator in human annals spending his last years buried on the obscure southern island amid the Atlantic breakers.

The great majority of books about St. Helena are in the main supplements to the vast and ever-growing Napoleonic literature. But here at last is a book that isn't. For in his new book, *Isle of St. Helena*, Mr. Oswell Blakeston recounts a recent visit by him to this remote island, and very divertingly, as well as informatively, he does it. Apart from its interest for students of Napoleana, there must be very few books devoted, as is Mr. Blakeston's narrative, to St. Helena, the island itself, and its inhabitants, rather than to the tremendous shadow of the man of destiny — and Waterloo. For St. Helena itself must surely be one of the most remote and little-known places in the world. This "small island," as Napoleon described it in his youthful copy-book, a volcanic cone rising straight out of the Atlantic, about 49 square miles in extent, is, we suppose, surpassed in remoteness only by its northern neighbour, Ascension Island, which Mr. Blakeston briefly describes and which until recently, ranked as a battleship "on the strength" of the British Navy, and the still more inaccessible Tristan da Cunha, named after its Portuguese discoverer, to the far south. St. Helena is, we learn, 1,180 miles from South America and 1,140 from South Africa. It is by the African route that visiting ships pass, and drop the occasional visitors, including Mr. Blakeston and his artistic friend, Mr. Max Chapman. In St. Helena they stayed for a month, and this book describes as much of the mountainous island and its racially mixed inhabitants as they could do in that space of time. They certainly appear to have made good use of their opportunities.

Physically, St. Helena appears to have most of the attributes of an island paradise. Socially, it appears to be more of a mixed grill. Life is cheap, but the majority of the

inhabitants are poor; about 5/9d a day is the average wage and there is an unemployment problem, most inadequately solved by relief work provided by the Government at even lower rates of pay. For people with small, fixed incomes, St. Helena must be something of an earthly paradise. Mr. John Betjeman, who contributes an interesting foreword, declares that £300 a year would enable its owner to live in luxury in this Fortunate Isle. Even in 1956, Messrs. Blakeston and Chapman found a comfortable and cheap hotel in Jameston, the capital, which contains three public houses, the only ones on the island.

Until recently, conditions were extremely primitive; telephones and electricity were only introduced during the military occupation in the last war. Two notable items emphasised by the author are the absence from this Utopia of lawyers and snakes!

One of the merits of the Blakeston Odyssey is the manner in which the writer steps clear of Napoleon and his sinister island shadow, Sir Hudson Lowe, his guard. Still, there are some fine illustrations, including one of Napoleon's bedroom, where the Emperor succumbed at the age of 51 to a malignant cancer. The famous dialogue between George IV and the messenger is recalled.

Messenger: "Your Majesty's greatest enemy is dead."

King: "Is *she*, by God!"

According to Mr. Blakeston, the island has had many other famous visitors since Captain Dutton annexed it in 1658 by order of Oliver Cromwell. The great Darwin visited its shores, so did the astronomer Halley; so too did Captain Cook, not to mention Captain Jenkins, hero of the missing ears incident, which provoked a European war. In modern times two picturesque prisoners of war were transported to St. Helena — the Boer General, Cronje and the Zulu chief Dinizulu. At one time during the last war, we learn that the British Government were thinking of St. Helena as a possible prison for Hitler.

All the above and many equally interesting facts about the past and present of St. Helena will be found in Oswell Blakeston's narrative. But these are merely the bare bones, as it were, of this account. Readers of Mr. Blakeston's earlier book, *Portuguese Panorama*, can imagine how vividly he clothes them with human flesh and blood. St. Helena appears indeed to have more than its fair share of eccentric people, as the keen eye of this practical student of human nature did not fail to note. For example, the spiritualistic governor who sat aloof in official grandeur waiting for astral messages from his deceased son; and the Anglo-Catholic bishop who found Rome too "low church" to wish to join such a Protestant organisation; and in the background the white ants which are literally undermining the physical foundations of St. Helena society.

This is a book to read or to dip into as the mood takes one. We are full of gratitude to Oswell Blakeston. We hope his next island trip will be either to Tristan da Cunha or the Maldivé Islands, about which we know little. THE FREE THINKER, I am sure, would relish a book by Mr. Blakeston on that Methodist paradise of Queen Salote, the Tonga Islands. Meanwhile, we will absorb St. Helena. Were it not so far from Christmas, we would transform a recurring cliché into a present truth by saying that here is the *ideal* present; after reading it we are almost prepared to believe that Mr. Blakeston might have found the True Cross on St. Helena's isle.

[*The Isle of St. Helena*, by Oswell Blakeston, Sidgwick and Jackson. 21s.]

This Believing World

The result of the well-known Gallup Polls by Mr. G. Gallup himself on the question of religion is that in Britain religion is declining, and in America it is increasing. Actually, on this question the American percentage is 69% increasing, and in Britain only 17% claimed an increase. The Americans gave 14% that religion was declining — the British, 52%. We were not surprised to find after this that 81% of Americans insisted that religion could answer almost all or even all the problems of the day. In Britain only 46% agreed here. And in Britain also, 41% felt that politics had more influence than religion.

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The one thing that emerges from all these Gallup Polls is that in England, at long last, more and more people are beginning to realise that religion is quite futile — though only a few have the courage to throw it overboard. *Indifference* is the keyword here — while in America a constant barrage of advertising particular churches in the social life of a town tends to keep religion — not necessarily Fundamentalist beliefs — alive far more than in England.

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The impact of TV on the organised religion of the Churches is bound to have repercussions. At Steverton, for instance, many fully-believing parishioners have been wooed away on Sunday evenings by the heroine of "I love Lucy," and small blame to them. The vicar now wants to change the time of the evening service so that worshippers can worship at both shrines — that of Jesus and that of the inimitable Lucille. What a pity that some divine script writer would not be allowed to depict the home life of the Virgin so as to rival "I love Lucy" in appeal. What a hit the Monroe or the Dors could make in the part!

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Fancy a spook defying a live Bishop armed with Holy Water and the Lord's Prayer! That is what one is still doing in Sunderland, and so seven Spiritualists "are going to attack the ghost," we are informed. But it is hard to believe that where a Bishop has so signally failed a bunch of mere Spiritualists will succeed. We advise the spook to stick it out and, if possible, to rattle his chains a little more. As for the Lord's Prayer, he should show the Bishop (of Jarrow) that it is of no more value in getting rid of him than reciting a multiplication table. In any case, why should a spook be ejected from his living quarters? Where, in these days of housing shortage, could he go?

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Since we first came across it fifty years ago, we must have read the "Report of Lentulus to Tiberius" (describing how a Roman actually saw "our Lord" in Palestine) at least 1,387 times. It is always being trotted out by people, whenever they see it, as if no one else had ever seen it before, to prove what Jesus really looked like. It is hardly necessary to add that it is an unmitigated forgery. Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* — perhaps sorrowfully — is obliged to admit that of Lentulus, "there's no such person," as Betsy Prig in an unforgettable moment once said of Mrs. Harris to Mrs. Gamp.

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The flamboyant title "He Saw Jesus" heads a letter in one of our national newspapers sent in by a Mrs. Allgood, and is followed by dear old Lentulus's *Report*, just as if, in the lady's opinion, it is all "Gospel truth." Well, it certainly is as true as "Gospel," for even in the New Testament cannot be found a bigger pack of lies. Still, there's plenty of life in it yet, and it will do duty perhaps for centuries to come. Once started, a good, healthy Christian lie can hardly ever be caught up.

The best preacher they ever had was the verdict of residents of Elmdale in Kansas on Mr. Calvin Laskey. And as a proof of the way religion helps sinners by saving them, these residents must have been surprised to learn that Laskey was in jail for six months, and that he had had 26 previous convictions. Yet he had trebled his congregation in nine months. Such is the power and beauty of Christianity.

Prayer

By A. YATES

A LETTER recently appeared in THE FREETHINKER from Mr. Mohammed Yakub Khan, Imam, The Mosque, Woking, in which he says: "It often makes we wonder how often those claiming to be Rationalists indulge in talk most irrational. The cheap jibes at the fact of prayer which is borne out by the experience of many spiritually well-attuned people certainly falls under that category."

Our experience teaches us that the world is governed by laws which we call *natural*. Mr. Khan believes that these laws are ordained by God, and as such, beneficent, but has he ever considered that, though the normal action of these forces is necessary to our existence, they are subject to violent changes often widely destructive of life? Terrestrial and atmospheric disturbances like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, storms, etc., have destroyed millions of people in the past, and the daily press is a record of disasters by land, sea and air which no skill or foresight could prevent. We surely cannot suppose that those who have thus perished did not supplicate God to save them in their extremity. Are we to charge a Being whom Mr. Khan believes to be all-wise, all-good and all-powerful with allowing millions of His creation to appeal to him in vain? Can there be stronger proof of the inevitability of natural law, and the consequent inefficiency of prayer? Must we not rationally conclude either that there is no God, or that He permits the laws of nature, however calamitous, to take their course?

Mr. Khan bases his argument for the efficacy of prayer on the "experience of spiritually well-attuned people." But this so-called spiritual experience is confined to the individual suppliant, and cannot, as such, be advanced as proof. Prayer is emotional credulity, the result, in most cases, of temperament and early environment, and the imagined response to it, like the fulfilment of any other wish or desire, purely accidental.

Mr. Khan tells us that "Prayer and God's intervention in human affairs in response to it are hard facts which have stood the test of experience, and even experiment."

We would remind Mr. Khan that the vast number of those who have prayed to no purpose is a harder fact.

Loss of Prestige

WE cannot often claim to be in complete agreement with Methodist missionaries in Asia, but in this particular instance we are. Reporting on the progress of Christianity on that continent, the Rev. G. B. Jackson reports (*Manchester Guardian*, 30/4/57): "There is no prestige for the Asian to be gained by an association with an organisation which has its roots in the West. Rather, he exposes himself to charges of disloyalty. There is a smear attached where there used to be glamour. All over the world, especially in Asia, the Church is losing prestige or, shall we say, being cleansed of the prestige which adhered to it. That cleansing process hurts, but it only hurts our pride. Ultimately it is a good thing." It is indeed.

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.

- L. PERCY (Mrs.)—Darwin's *Descent of Man* mentions Neanderthal, without expressing any verdict.
- E. A. SIDDONS.—The oldest MS. of the Hebrew O.T. is dated about the 10th century; if the monks have the "credit" for preserving old MSS. they must have destroyed all the Hebrew books they could get hold of.
- F. MARRIOTT JONES.—Before an R.C. bishop can assume the title of patriarch, prelate or archbishop, he must wear a pallium, a wool collar which has been blessed by the Pope.

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: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston, Surrey).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- 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.
- Wales and Western Branch N.S.S., Bristol (The Downs)—Sunday, May 19th, 7 p.m.: —DAVE SHIPPER.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR and EBURY.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 19th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Not God, but Man."

Notes and News

As MENTIONED last week, the 1957 Annual Conference of the National Secular Society is to take place on Whit-Sunday, June 9th, in the Leicester Secular Hall, 75 Humbersstone Gate, Leicester, after a reception for members and friends in the same hall on the previous (Saturday) evening. The two sessions of the Conference will start at 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. respectively, and there will be an outdoor demonstration in the evening from 6.15 p.m. onwards in the Market Place, Leicester. A coach trip is being arranged for Whit-Monday. The Conference is open to all members who hold the current year's membership card,

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £214 13s. 8d.; Mr.Hitchcock, (Kingston Branch), 2/6d.; A. W. Coleman, £1 10s. 0d.; A. Hancock, 2s.; F. Murrill, 5s.; J. Kirkham (Canada), £5 2s. 8d.; D. Pezze (U.S.A.) 11s.; I. B., £1.—Total to date, May 10th 1957, £222 6s. 10d.

and those who intend to be present should make their hotel reservations not later than May 22nd through the General Secretary, N.S.S., 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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THIS IS AN appropriate place to appeal for donations to the National Secular Society Benevolent Fund. According to a rule of the Society, "Every Branch is expected to make an Annual Collection for this Fund," and we urge compliance with it. The Fund is low at present and we do not want to have to refuse deserving cases. Please do all you can to help.

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OUR contributor Mr. Macfarlane recently found perhaps unexpected support for his anti-nationalist campaign when Pope Pius warned against "yielding to the lure of a selfish narrow nationalism"; this he combined with a warning to "resist the forces of godless materialism." We imagine the motives behind the denunciation of nationalism in the cases of Mr. Macfarlane and the Pope respectively are quite different. One says "Let's all be human beings", the other, "Let's all be Catholics."

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CARDINAL STRITCH, Archbishop of Chicago, has appealed to the U.S. Government to relax immigration quotas, allowing more *Italians* into the States. This would ease Italy's critical labour situation, said the Archbishop. It would also raise the percentage of R.C. immigrants, but no one would suspect the Archbishop of ulterior motives, of course.

TRIBUTE

THE funeral of our old colleague, John Frederick Aust, aged 88, took place on Friday, April 5th, at the Penmount Crematorium, Truro, the service and oration, at the expressed wish of the deceased, being undertaken by the writer.

Jack Aust was a member of the National Secular Society for over 65 years, and during his illness he often spoke to Mr. E. J. Hughes, myself, and other colleagues, of the early battles for freedom and tolerance against religious bigotry and persecution; of combatting the lie of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, and of stewarding at stormy gatherings for G. W. Foote and others. Knowing his end was near, he composed a little skit on a dying Atheist which he dictated to his devoted wife. The local Methodist minister called on him during his last few days, but although with his usual honesty and tolerance he thanked him for calling, it was with his N.S.S. colleagues that he desired to spend his last hours.

D. J. CROWLE.

LECTURE REPORT

ON Tuesday, April 30th, F. A. Ridley, President N.S.S., lectured on "The Vatican and World Politics" at the Cardiff H.Q. of the Wales and Western Branch. The speaker, a leading authority on this subject, painted a vivid picture of the international political machinations of this politico-ecclesiastical Fascist power and held the attention of a larger-than-usual audience until question time, when he dealt capably with many queries. D.S.

NEXT WEEK

A PROTESTANT VIEW OF THE PAPACY
By F. A. RIDLEY

Republicanism is Not Dead

By WM. KEANE

IF MR. NICHOLSON thought Republicanism were dead he would not have written his letter (April 12th). It is very much alive. Being born is not a qualification for anything; that is obvious. The job of a British monarch is pure make-believe and unnecessary. As Bagehot remarked, the Queen would have to sign her own death warrant if asked to do so. It is time we acted sensibly and legislated all these persons into private citizens able to earn their own living.

If, as Mr. Nicholson observes, republics are plentiful, people preferred them. The British Commonwealth members India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Eire, etc., prefer republican forms of government. Lord Bryce thought the Swiss Government most businesslike. Mr. Nicholson should note that a Swiss President is elected annually by the Federal Council; the elected councillor receives an allowance of £120 yearly in addition to his councillor's salary. Compare £120 with some of the cost of British monarchy!

The estimated cost to the taxpayer of the Coronation, after the sale of seats, was £950,000. The cost of celebrations by local authorities throughout the country is not known. The preparation of the Gothic for a world cruise was £500,000, and the cost of cruise is not known. The Royal yacht cost £2,000,000 and about £150,000 annually to maintain in idleness, and large sums daily when used. The upkeep of Royal palaces in 1955 was £500,000, and Civil Estimates show that £400,000 is to be spent on modernising Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. In the coming year upkeep of the Royal palaces will cost £533,800. Add to these the cost of sending a young woman to the Caribbean in a Stratocruiser at enormous expense, accompanied by the Britannia, and again to East Africa, and a Duke on a world cruise in the Britannia, lasting some months. The *Sunday Express* (July 12th, 1953) says the wage bill for 15 officers and 63 other ranks of the Queen's Flight was £45,000, with £50,000 for petrol, oil, spares, etc. "Bigger still is the impending cost of replacing five out-of-date Royal Vikings with modern jets. Four Viscounts at £350,000 would add up to £1,400,000." So says the *Sunday Express*. The *Sunday Pictorial* of April 20th, 1952, reports that at Windsor Castle 120 minor officials and servants look after the Queen, Queen Mother, Princess Margaret, Duke of Edinburgh and his two children. Included are five dressers, two valets, three nurses, five pages, ten footmen, five chauffeurs, 40 housemaids, three personal detectives and 20 policemen. When she goes to Buckingham Palace, says the *Sunday Pictorial*, the Queen will have a household staff of 230 to care for the 690 rooms and 10,000 pieces of furniture. Upper servants are served by those of middle rank; those of middle rank by lower grades. "Such are the class distinctions," says the *Sunday Pictorial*, "that five separate dining-rooms are maintained, so that various ranks do not mix at meal-times." There is a great deal that the people do not know about this institution of monarchy; and the Press, cinema, sound-radio and television do all possible to make it popular. I note, however, that the *Daily Express* commented thus: "Tories as well as Socialists should question the wisdom of granting to the three-year-old Prince Charles an income of £10,000 a year."

It would take too much of THE FREETHINKER'S valuable space to give more about the expense and inconvenience the institution of Monarchy causes in this country, but it is interesting to note a newspaper report of December 20th, 1950, which mentioned that a lance-corporal at Catterick Camp was sentenced to 56 days' detention. He pleaded guilty to a charge that he did not stand to attention in a

cinema in Catterick Camp when the National Anthem was played. The defending officer said that the lance-corporal "was an Atheist" and "got the idea that he did not believe in Royalty."

It is noteworthy that in July 1952 the *Sunday Pictorial* published the results of a poll held among its readers on the question of financial provision for the Royal Family and 18,135 readers returned voting forms. I doubt whether many of these were aware of the enormous expense and inconvenience the Monarchy causes, but 15,251 thought simpler living would not diminish respect for the monarchy, 16,393 were against an income of £10,000 for Prince Charles, 16,193 voted for fewer Royal residences, 14,887 thought Court presentations should be abolished, and 16,419 thought minor members of the Royal Family should follow careers in business or the professions. If free discussion of this subject took place the days of Monarchy would be numbered.

Religious Persecution in U.S.A.

MR. JOSEPH LEWIS, President of the Freethinkers of America, has another celebrated case on his hands, a case of religious bigotry depriving a teacher of his position.

Mr. Thomas C. Robinson came to Miami three years ago from Minnesota. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a B.A. degree. He was drafted in the Army and rose from private to lieutenant. When he came to Miami, he enrolled in the University of Miami for the purpose of becoming a teacher. He received, in many instances, the highest marks in his class. When he had the necessary points, he applied for an internship without pay—a necessary requirement—in the Dade County Public Schools. He was accepted and assigned to a particular school.

Joseph Lewis spoke before the Dade County School Board on the subject "Religion in the Public Schools." Extracts of the talk were reported in the Miami papers. Mr. Robinson wrote a letter supporting Mr. Lewis.

Now the trouble begins: When Mr. Robinson called at the office of the University of Miami for his registration, for the position to which he had already been assigned, he was asked by one of the professors whether he wrote the letter which appeared in the *Miami Herald*. He said he was the author. They dubbed him a "fanatic" and told him he was not acceptable as a teacher; that in order to be a teacher in the Public Schools of Dade County he had to believe in God. The refusal of the University of Miami to certify Mr. Robinson—for a position for which he is highly qualified and ideally suited, is the most flagrant and arrogant assumption; it is bigotry and intolerance twice compounded.

Must Mr. Robinson begin life all over again? Must his years of study and the money spent for tuition be wasted because of religious bigotry and intolerance? Mr. Lewis considers it a privilege to contribute the first \$250.00 to start a legal fund to fight for the right of Mr. Robinson to become a teacher in the Public Schools. The United States Constitution specifically states that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust. . . ."

Mr. Lewis has already retained a prominent attorney in Miami to handle the case. This may be another "Scopes Trial."

The Mysticism of Richard Jeffries

by G. I. BENNETT

(concluded from page 147)

And then we come upon something else. In more than one place Jeffries, swept along on the full tide of his mysticism, says he "cannot understand time." Such is his thinking, here, that he imagines that the whole of history can be encompassed in the mind in this living, pulsating moment. The past flows into and becomes the present, and the present sweeps over and merges with the future. Now—this fleeting instant—this pin-point of time—is eternity, and eternity is now. But, as with all mystical feeling, this is a highly subjective experience, and like all experiences of the kind, it has no external validity. To suppose that it has such validity is tantamount to saying that what exists as a thought—for you or for me—exists in fact, and it may be urged as an ultimate criticism of Jeffries' thinking that he tends (like all mystics) to objectify an intensely subjective experience, to set it down as though all could readily understand it and enter into it.

I do not disguise my view that, in some ways, Jeffries is an artless writer—but with what gifted artlessness does he write! In that state of high, nervous feeling in which the pages of the *Story* are cast together, he throws himself against the walls of inevitable human limitation with so passionate a force that it almost seems that they will be breached to reveal a vista, magnificent and infinitely expansive, beyond.

Almost, but not quite.

The Story of my Heart is its author's only attempt to take the citadel of absolute knowledge by storm. He knows that he cannot do it at all unless in the white heat of emotion. In later works intensity of feeling is to produce some wonderful pages, incandescent in places still; but a mellowing wisdom now gently penetrates them; a calmer, more meditative spirit presides, tinged with a certain pensiveness, as though disillusionment had set in. Perhaps greater experience, and thoughtful reflection on that experience, had helped to bring about the change; but long illness, depriving him of his old freedom to wander as he list in field and woodland, must also have much affected him.

What do we get in the later essays? No abandonment, certainly, of the religious heresy voiced so unequivocally in the *Story*: that "reason and knowledge and experience tend to disprove all three"—deity, immortality, and the substantive life of the soul. I have, indeed, come across so many indications of his unbelief in quite late writings that it reduces to small importance the allegations—even if true—as to his dying a Christian, to which in *Richard Jeffries' Last Words* I drew attention. But the high hopes, and visions of the ideal, inspired, at least in part, by the mysticism we have here been considering—they are almost gone. The essay, *The Pageant of Summer*, closes on the note: "To be beautiful and to be calm, without mental fear, is the ideal of Nature. If I cannot achieve it, at least I can think it." In *My Old Village* (one of his last essays) there is the pathetic cry that too many memories crowd the beloved haunts of our boyhood, and "the happiest days become the saddest afterwards; let us never go back lest we, too, die." And in *Hours of Spring* (surely one of the loveliest things that ever came from his pen!) we have this: "The heart from the moment of its first beat instinctively longs for the beautiful; the means we possess to gratify it are limited. We are always trying to find the statue in the rude block. Out of the vast block of the earth the mind endeavours to carve itself loveliness, nobility, and

grandeur. We strive for the right and the true: it is circumstance that thrusts wrong upon us."

I find such lines as these a melancholy but instructive contrast to those in the *Story*, so full-charged with mystical fervour that they see the ideal made real and would wing us, if they could, into a thrilling and breathtaking realm unknown. Personally, I do not regret that Jeffries expressed any one of those earlier sentiments, for they bequeathed us a unique book heroically conceived and inspired. But I think the ultimate trend of his thought away from the fevered spirit of the *Story* inevitably right, even if it is at the same time a mute acceptance of failure to burst open the gates of infinity with the lever of mysticism.

CORRESPONDENCE

CORRECTION

Mr. Ridley is perhaps not happily advised to refer to the author of Ecclesiastes as an "Apostle," nor to embark on a home-made parody of Ecc. 3, 5. (March 29th.)

A somewhat hesitant Agnostic myself, I find that opponents often point to the needless levity of some of your contributors; and it is not always helpful to say that the latter are knowledgeable men sincerely devoted to their cause.

Is anything really gained by a parade of indifference to the potency of many biblical passages, such as Ecc. 3, 1-8?

S. E. YOXALL.

OCH AYE!

In his article on "Christian Missions in India," Mr. Ridley speaks of "England's India Empire" and "200 years of English rule." This is rather an insult to the Scottish people, who played their part in building the British Empire. To call it an English Empire is certainly not in accordance with the facts.

J. STEWART.

WHY BE MILITANT?

We should be militant wherever the Church forces itself upon us or our children—or anybody's children. This the Church still does. However, I am inclined to agree that militancy can profitably be discarded in matters of private belief.

I sometimes wonder if the "terriers" automatically join the N.S.S. and the "spaniels" enlist with the R.P.A.!

Even pacifists will agree that there is a time and place for militancy.

ERNIE CROSSWELL.

"Now that the battle of Freethought has been won, 'Why be militant?'" asks Mr. G. I. Bennett. It would be interesting to hear from Mr. Bennett where freedom of thought has been won.

Does he mean the freedom of thought allowed by the BBC or by the press or in the schools where religious lies are being planted in the minds of innocent children which will be difficult to eradicate. Mystical subjective thought from an armchair won't do. We need an army of well-informed men and women who will go forth and teach people the truth.

It will be hard work against the tremendous wealth and political power of the Church of England the growing power of Roman Catholicism with dollars at their command, and their belief that it is easier to mystify men and women than to enlighten them. They will use the weapon of mysticism for all they are worth, and will put up a terrific resistance to retain their wealth and power.

PAUL VARNEY.

In brief, we must be militant because the enemy is. We should meet aggressiveness with militancy. There are occasions when "gentle persuasiveness" is wise, but not when attacked. We then ought to give blow for blow, so "Hats off" to our fighters. More power to their elbow.

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

CHRISTIANITY'S RIVAL?

There is an illusion among the Christians that theirs is, if not the only, at least the oldest religion in these islands. If one reads the Venerable Bede, it appears that the Angles and similar peoples were just waiting to be converted to a holy life, and to receive its alleged consolations. It is likewise implied that they gave up their old gods as soon as they heard "The Word." This is nothing but blatant propaganda. In fact, the peoples of North-West Europe did not take kindly to Christianity. In Norway, for instance, St. Olaf found that when he couldn't slaughter his subjects in the name of Christ, he had to offer them a cow each as a bribe to be baptised.

The old religion did not die, however, despite the Christian efforts to kill it. It held its own throughout the Middle Ages and, when Europe took great strides forward in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it moved forward too. It became known as Witchcraft. Sorcery had really nothing to do with the old cults, being more a branch of primitive science than anything else; but the distinction became gradually less and less, and by 1500 they had

become synonymous. For the next 150 years, determined efforts were made to stamp them out.

We might note a curious fact about the cult. Although it was, and is, practised by peasant communities, it has never lacked rich and influential patrons. They made it a deadly form of freemasonry.

The march of science ought to have made such primitive practices obsolete, but there are some country districts in Europe, and even in England, where old rituals still persist; there are still covens dotted about the countryside. Sunday newspapers may titivate the appetite with snacks, but they rarely delve too far into the mystery hamper.

In London there are a number of organisations which have a definite leaning towards ancient cults and, given the right conditions, it might yet have a widespread appeal as the orthodox religions decline and the strain of modern life increases. It happened in Russia prior to 1914, witness the rise of Rasputin, who was a member of a widespread group which grew up as a gesture of frustration among the educated Russians. Similar symptoms may be detected in other countries, but the necessary background is lacking. Here we have a background and tradition, not yet dead, which could be brought to virulent proportions. PETER F. MOORE.

MALTHUS

In reply to the neo-Malthusian, I would draw attention to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* article on Malthus. Here is a list of his works and also some fair comment on the *Essay on Population*.

I would also draw attention to the differences between the first and second editions of the *Essay*. For a book which refutes Malthus I would refer also to *Progress and Poverty*, Book II, by Henry George. GEORGE DICKINSON.

N.S.S. AND POLITICS

Mr. G. I. Bennett, in your issue of April 12th asks whether I would take exception to the present Principles and Immediate Objects of the N.S.S. As to the first, I do. The old Principles said "it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide." I maintain, and did at the Manchester Conference which decided to restate the Principles, that this phrase was altered because of Communist and Left Wing Socialist pressure. It was altered because of the word "utility." I was accused then by the Chairman, the late Chapman Cohen, of "fighting to maintain a word." I said then and repeat now that the word "utility" was the keystone in the desire of the Communist to change the principles because of its connection in Economics and Political Theory.

Mr. McCall says in a footnote to Mr. Bennett's letter that the N.S.S. has not lost by its political excursions. I say that it has in the long run, by the infiltration of Left Wing Socialist propaganda, however disguised it may be.

In Cyprus the N.S.S. subscribes to self-determination, but a few weeks previously support was given to Nehru against Pakistan over self-determination in Kashmir, on the grounds that Nehru was a Rationalist and Pakistan a Theocracy.

I am an Atheist, perhaps more now than I was thirty years ago, but I am outside the N.S.S. and there are many more like me, and many again like Mr. Huxley who have never been members. To say the least about it the gains have not all been with the N.S.S. and the dragging in of Justin's *Historical Analogy* as a justification for the action of the Executive does not help the contention that members have been lost directly and indirectly. H. H. HICK.

OBVIOUSLY

I am not quite sure whether Mr. Nicholson is angry because I pointed out that Chapman Cohen was not a Materialist, or because I do not write for Intelligent Australian Aborigines. Obviously, if I wrote for an I.A.A., I could never have said that this earth of ours was once a gaseous ball as evolutionists and astronomers insist. Nor would I have said that Matter came before Mind, because—obviously—he would never understand what I mean. And it therefore obviously follows that an I.A.A. would roar with laughter at my stupidity in saying that electrons can be weighed—though our physicists are doing it every day.

Perhaps the I.A.A. think the moon is made of green cheese?

H. CUTNER.

THE EGYPTIAN AND CHRISTIAN TRINITY

Your correspondent may be technically correct in regarding the Christian Trinity as a metaphysical one, whilst its Egyptian predecessor consisted of three physically distinct deities. In actual practice, however, Mr. Morrell is merely indulging in verbal quibbles. If he will consult almost any old Catholic Prayer Book he will find God the Father depicted as a patriarchal gentleman with a white beard; God the Son as a separate person and a robust man in the prime of life, with a black beard and black hair; whilst the Third Person, the Holy Ghost, is usually depicted as a Dove fluttering about between his senior partners.

It is true that the Christian Trinity does not contain a feminine counterpart of Isis but, as I remarked in my article, the Dove almost certainly belongs to the symbolism of an originally feminine cult. F. A. RIDLEY.

RATIONALISTS AND A FUTURE LIFE

In the correspondence proceeding in *The Sunday Times* on "The Great Mystery," in a letter of March 24th, the Rev. T. Finan drew attention to the fact that belief in a future existence was not a specially religious doctrine, his last words being "Man's immortality was held on rational grounds alone by the greatest philosophers several centuries before Christianity and has been so held by many ever since."

I replied to this letter thus: "It is true that many philosophers held a belief in immortality long before Christianity was known. But this does not prove anything. It is merely an example of the fact that human egotism has never been able to reconcile itself to its disappearance and destruction at death. Philosophers have spoken and written as much nonsense as the theologians on this subject. What is never explained by the holders of this belief in human immortality is where the billions of people who have lived and died since human life began on this earth are supposed to be existing at the present time."

This letter was not published.

C. H. NORMAN.

N. S. S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

Wednesday, 8th May 1957—present Messrs L. Ebury (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Taylor, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs Ridley and Warner. Ministry of Works assurance that new traffic arrangements would not limit speaking pitches at Hyde Park was noted. The Annual Financial statement was adopted. Branches would be urged to support the Benevolent Fund. New members were admitted to N. London, Wales and Western, and Parent Branches, (8 in all). A Manchester Branch request for literature for Poland was approved; Worthing Branch lecture arrangements were given, and a pamphlet on Television and Atheism was authorised. Mr. P. G. Young's further work in Hampshire was commended and permission was given for the formation of a Branch there. The case of a Royal Marine being compelled to swear on the Bible was reported, and possible action considered. Conference arrangements were announced. Mr. G. H. Taylor was chosen to represent the Society in case of a possible debate with Rev. Donald Soper. The next meeting was arranged for Wednesday, 22nd May.

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