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# The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVII—No. 44

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

AROUND THE YEAR 200 of the present era, the Christian writer Tertullian coined the famous phrase—"Sanguis martyrorum semen ecclesiae" ("The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"). Tertullian has always struck me as being the most interesting of the Early Christians or, at least, of those who have left any written legacy to posterity. He was a rigid fundamentalist and a lively writer, with a biting wit and a talent for epigrams. In both respects one

notes a resemblance with the late Monsignor Ronald Knox, whose recent death has both dimmed the gaiety of nations and incidentally deprived contemporary Christianity of its wittiest modern apologist. Tertullian was the *enfant terrible* of the Church which he left to join an ultra fundamentalist heretical sect; but he seems to have been one of the first Christian thinkers to have grasped the immense future that lay before the young Oriental creed. His warning to the pagans that it was singularly fortunate for them that the Christians had been taught to return good for evil since otherwise they would quickly learn what could be done on a dark night with a few small torches, was a hint to the rulers of the Roman Empire. A century later Constantine took it!

**A Creed with a Future**  
Tertullian was a contemporary of that melancholy process which Gibbon was to term "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" which, according to the great English historian began about 180 with the death of the saintly Emperor, Marcus Aurelius. The age was one of simultaneous military decline and of growing Oriental superstition, which in the course of the next century witnessed the demise of the great rationalistic philosophers of antiquity, the Stoics and Epicureans. Even the allegedly rationalistic Marcus Aurelius was not quite so devoid of contemporary superstitions as some modern freethinking writers have sometimes supposed. On one occasion he threw two live lions into the Danube to assuage the flood. No doubt at this period some farsighted Christians—perhaps Mithraists also—began to realise that their exclusive Oriental creed might come in time to dominate the Empire. The writings of Tertullian in particular, positively exude confidence in the future of his co-religionists. Christianity was a creed with a future.

**Christian and Pagan Persecutions**  
From the reign of Nero up to that of Diocletian, the pagan Caesars persecuted Christianity as well as other religious cults, including Druidism in Britain. These persecutions have received much publicity and have probably been exaggerated in the process. That of Diocletian, an attempt made by an already declining Empire to crush a potential "Fifth Column" in its midst, appears to have been about the only serious one to attain more than local significance. In the fourth century, Christianity got definitely on top; then the *real* persecutions started. That is to say, if the aim of persecution is to eliminate the persecuted cult, whilst it must be conceded that the persecutions conducted by the

pagan Emperor Nero *et al*, were unsuccessful, those carried through by the *Christian* Emperors after Constantine met with *permanent* and overwhelming success. *That*, incidentally, is proved by the complete elimination of the pagan cults, whose surviving temples, still periodically unearthed by the spades of modern archaeologists, testify to their ubiquitous worship throughout the Roman Empire prior to the 4th century, the century when Christianity definitely arrived. As far as Tertullian's most famous epigram was concerned, "the blood of the (Christian) martyrs" was certainly "the seed of the Church." But equally certainly, the blood of the *pagan* martyrs, probably shed much more liberally after the victory of

Christianity did *not* prove the "seed" of anything. In fact, it hardly sufficed to keep even the names of the pagan gods alive.

### The Jealous God

In an interesting article in our contemporary, *The Humanist*, Mr. Adrian Brunel has described the wealth of archaeological data found in the recently excavated city of Ostia, the port of ancient Rome. In his article Mr. Brunel has given details of the numerous cults, some indigenous, some, like Christianity itself, imported from the East, which were represented by temples at the "Gates." (Ostia is Latin for "gates.") From the 4th century on, all of them, from Father Neptune, the old god of the Mediterranean, to the sun god Mithras himself, like Christianity, an import from the East, disappeared from the Roman scene: like the fabled "snark" of Lewis Carroll, they "softly and suddenly vanished away and never were met with again." But their exit was not a voluntary one. In a series of persecuting edicts, the Christian Emperors of Rome set themselves to wipe out every trace of paganism. From the time of Theodosius to Justinian, the Christian Empire regarded it as its primary duty to extirpate the old pagan cults with fire and sword—and they did so most effectively. Unlike the persecutions of Christianity by the pagan Empire, these bitter persecutions were eminently successful; so successful, in fact, that they have become completely forgotten, since no followers of the ancient gods survived to draw attention to them; nor was it only rival religions which were suppressed; in 449 a ferocious law suppressed all anti-Christian writings past and present, as calculated "to promote the wrath of God." Christianity which had once modestly demanded toleration for itself, now that it had got control of the State power, ruthlessly suppressed all opposition. Jehovah, "the jealous God," set out to do away with all forms of religious competition and establish an effective monopoly.

### Force and Religion

Nor, it should be noted, was "the blood of the (pagan) martyrs" destined to become the "seed" of any new Church. The cult of the ancient gods definitely declined and seems eventually to have died out by the end of the 6th century. The gods and goddesses who had stood in the

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —  
**Force and Religion**  
— By F. A. RIDLEY —

way of "The One True Church" had vanished from the terrestrial scene. They had literally gone underground, whence their temples have recently been recovered by the spade of modern excavators. It would appear that Tertulian's epigram is only true in exceptional cases. Even Christianity has had its ups and downs; if it eventually won in the West, it was subsequently eradicated in its birthplace, Palestine, by its militant rival, Islam, whilst Islam itself was later obliterated in one of its most brilliant strongholds, medieval Spain, by the sword of Christian Crusaders and by the fires of the Inquisition. In the parallel cases of less fortunate religions, force similarly enjoyed the last word; the unhappy Albigenes of Provence were exterminated by the Catholic Inquisition and, like the ancient pagan cults, no fresh "seed" sprouted from their blood. In point of historic fact, it appears to be an undeniable truth

that, so far it is from being true that force is powerless against ideas, the converse has usually been the case. Most dead religions either perished violently or, at the very least, violence had at least some part in their final fade-out. It seems to be true that ideas are but seldom vanquished purely in the realm of ideas, and that the historical tag, "Great is Truth and it will prevail," if true, is only so in a very relative manner. Certainly many examples combine to prove that it is quite possible to eliminate a religion by force; the passing of the ancient gods, of the medieval Albigenes and of modern Protestantism in Spain, all prove that "the blood of the martyrs" is not necessarily either "the seed of the Church," nor any sort of guarantee of ultimate victory of the cause for which the martyrs endured torture and death with unavailing heroism.

## Clydeside Comedy

By COLIN McCALL

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!  
Come bouse about the porter!  
Morality's demure decoys  
Shall here nae mair find quarter. . . .

—BURNS.

THE LAST TIME I ventured on the subject of the Scottish Sabbath, I veritably trespassed on holy ground. The Scots were up in arms and bent on vengeance. How dare a Sassenach—even one of Scottish descent—enter those sacred precincts! Well, I have spent quite a number of Sundays north of the Tweed and they have mostly been very dull ones. I am no drinker—travelling or otherwise—and, alas! I play no golf, so my plight may be imagined. Now I always try to ensure that my Scottish Sundays coincide with visits to places where I have friends. Edinburgh for preference, because it also offers stimulating open-air meetings on the Mound.

However, a Scottish friend who lives north of the capital has passed me a copy of "Scotland's National Newspaper," the *Daily Record* of Saturday, September 14th, which contains some native criticisms of the dear old Sabbath and its anomalies. In an accompanying letter, my friend says that his personal comments are "unprintable." I shall try to keep mine printable but I shall also keep close to the *Record* text, lest I alienate some more of my Scottish brethren.

There has, it seems, been quite a "battle" over the visit of British and American sailors to the Clyde. Some 20,000 of them taking part in a NATO sea-air exercise were granted shore leave. What will they find awaiting them? asked the *Record*. "*They'll find towns fighting about Sunday dancing and Sunday drinking,*" it answered in italics. "*They'll find they're expected to endure the typical Scottish Sabbath—going for walks and visiting relatives.*" One town alone, Rothesay, agreed to permit dancing on Sunday, and it caused quite a stir by doing so. It was rumoured that Oban might do so too, but this caused such a "storm" that the rumours were hastily and officially denied. The Rev. Duncan McCallum, clerk to the Presbytery of Lorn, stated the obvious: that the church people and the presbytery were sternly against Sunday dancing. Local magistrates, however, did agree to treat visiting American sailors as *bona fide* travellers, which meant that the sailors would be able to drink in the town's hotels while the locals were barred.

Dunoon went further, and a special Town Council meeting decided to permit the opening of an amusement park—without music, praise be!—until as late as 8 p.m. No

wonder there was opposition. Councillor Miss C. S. McPhail deplored the decision. "Americans"—she said—"think of Scotland as a place where the Bible is read and honoured," and "Opening the fun fair on a Sunday will give them a wrong impression of the Scottish people." The Rev. Robert Allan of St. Andrew's Church, Kirm, thought that the Americans would not be entertained by roundabouts. And Mr. James R. Sim, science master at Dunoon Grammar School and secretary of Dunoon branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society (surely a most incongruous amalgam!) warned that Scotland was "slowly becoming a continental resort so far as Sunday is concerned."

God forbid! Largs and Fairlie forbade it too—or rather, never even thought of it. No Sunday dances there! At Greenock there was a hope: the Town Council actually voted in favour, but changed its mind "when a storm of protest went up." Greenock and Gourock, however, did not entirely heed Mr. Sim's terrible warning. Cafés were to be open in both towns to sell soft drinks and ice cream and, believe it or not, Greenock would also have Sunday cinemas!

How Burns would have satirised it all! Thanks in large measure to his civilising influence it is not as bad as it otherwise might have been. At least there is lemonade (and perhaps La Lollo) in Greenock; something a little stronger (than the lemonade) in Oban; *la ronde* (until 8 o'clock) in Dunoon; and Scotch reels in Rothesay. The irony is that the vast majority of Scots care not a hang for the Kirk. If Rangers played Celtic on a Sunday (and the Catholic Celts would no doubt be willing) it would be a Sunday "battle" of far greater moment to the average Glaswegian than any between Presbyters. In Edinburgh, too, Hearts v. Hibs would draw the crowds against all the fulminations of ministers, Mrs. McPhails, and Sabbatarian science masters. The ghost of Calvin still walks in the hallowed land, but it frightens few.

Town Councils, however, are notoriously sensitive to criticism, especially religious criticism; and not only—I hastily acknowledge—in Scotland. When re-election—and perhaps eventually the exalted position of provost—is at stake, one is naturally cautious. Over-cautious, in fact, for the *real* influence of the Church in Scotland (as in England) is not as great as the politicians seem to think. Mr. Sim speaks from weakness, not strength. And there may be some *bona fide* travelling Scots who toast the "auld alliance" on the Sabbath, hoping for a faster decline towards the continental Sunday.

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# Deep Waters

[A review of *The Foundations of Inductive Logic* by R. F. Harrod.]

By REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

It is now more than two hundred years ago since David Hume put the philosophical cat squarely among the pigeons with his revolutionary scepticism regarding the hitherto almost universally accepted idea of necessary causation. Philosophy has never been quite the same since. Hume contended that no event in the universe can ever logically entail any other event. From this it follows that we cannot infer any general proposition from a particular series of empirical observations. This, of course, if accepted, cuts the ground completely away from the great Baconian principle of induction on which the whole of modern science is based. Such out-and-out scepticism was intolerable to both scientists and theologians, and many have been the attempts from Kant onwards to refute Hume. Mr. Harrod is not satisfied with any of them and in the present book he puts forward a solution of his own to re-establish the validity of induction.

His arguments are highly technical, and much too complicated to discuss with even a show of adequacy within the confines of this review. Put very baldly and briefly, however, Mr. Harrod's argument is that Hume's conclusions are valid only if we accept his postulate of a "Heraclitean" universe—that is one which is in continual flux. Mr. Harrod contends that on the contrary we can, through experience, make contact with certain "stable fragments." Since there is no reason to suppose that at any one time we are on the extreme edge of such a fragment, we can confidently assume that what is stable at the moment will remain so for a little longer. Thus we can, after all, "generalise" from particular instances and frame working hypotheses—in short, induction as a principle has been reinstated.

Of more general interest to freethinkers is Mr. Harrod's final chapter, significantly entitled "Beyond Experience." One must regret that here our author abandons the concrete incisive nature of his earlier arguments, and becomes almost as vague and woolly as any Oxford Grouper. He stresses again the extremely limited nature of all our knowledge, and suggests that "in principle we are in the same position as those lower forms of life, the limitations of whose range of vision are apparent to us." He claims that we do not have to go beyond the range of our experience to be confronted with the unimaginable. The carrier qualities of electrons and protons, of chairs and tables if they exist are unimaginable... On several grounds it is probable that there are conscious beings which do not directly or indirectly impinge upon our senses. To deny this is to take an egocentric view of an extreme form... Since a world beyond our ken probably exists round the corner, so to speak, it is wanting in intellectual energy never to give a thought to it.

No one would, of course deny that there are bounds to what we know. But to try to talk of a realm which by definition is unknowable is to abandon philosophy for mumbo-jumbo. To say that the carrier qualities of electrons, protons, chairs and tables are "unimaginable" is just not true, for the simple reason that if they *were* we could not talk of them at all. So far as we have the slightest consciousness of anything existing, to that extent it ceases to be the unknowable or unimaginable.

There are no doubt regions beyond human experience. But the moment we say anything about them whatever, or even form a concept without verbalisation, they are *ipso facto* brought within the framework of our knowledge and are no longer "beyond experience." Likewise, Mr. Harrod's "conscious beings who do not directly or indirectly impinge upon our senses" (for whose existence he offers no evidence whatever) must be conceived by him

according to the pattern of human imagination or not conceived at all. Far from it being "egocentric" or "wanting in intellectual energy" never to give a thought to "the world beyond our ken," such an operation would be as impossible as lifting oneself by one's own bootlaces, for it would involve trying to think about what is beyond the limits of thought.

However, it becomes clear that Mr. Harrod does not really believe in a world completely "beyond experience," for he hints that this "invisible" realm enshrines the values of truth, goodness, beauty and love, and that it is the creative artist who brings us into closest touch with it. All that Mr. Harrod is here saying is that there are experiences which we call ethical, æsthetic and so on, as well as those we label physical, chemical or biological. But the former no more belong to any "invisible world" than the latter and it is mere religious obfuscation to say that they do.

It must not be supposed, however, that Mr. Harrod is an admirer of Christian orthodoxy. It is true that his book ends with an entirely gratuitous and unjustifiable eulogy of the ethical teaching of Jesus (the glaring faults in the character and doctrine of "the Master" are, of course, ignored), but this is sharply contrasted with the errors of "the myth makers, the miracle mongers, creed writers, church founders and dogmatists." And elsewhere he castigates roundly theologians who "use words like eternal and perfect which trick the mind by purporting to mean something but which in their theological context mean nothing at all." As he puts it forcefully:

In the religion of truth, doubt is as holy as belief... Perhaps no better definition could be given of a lie in the soul than to believe on authority what at the deepest level of one's intellectual being one finds grounds for doubting. When it was added that if one did not accept doubtful matters on authority, one would be condemned to eternal torture, that was carrying blasphemy against the religion of truth as far as it was possible to go. In spite of its shortcomings in the final chapter, some of which I have tried to indicate, Mr. Harrod's book is to be commended highly for its courageous attempt to tackle afresh one of philosophy's thorny problems.

## Brotherly Love

THE "Question Box" of the *Catholic Times* (23/8/57) carried an anxious query from a reader who asked: "What is the right thing to do if a Protestant, living with Catholic relations, is ill and asks that a C.of.E. clergyman should be requested to bring her Communion?" Further, "could the Catholic relations prepare whatever was necessary for the clergyman?"

No, was the answer, the relatives must not summon the clergyman specifically to administer Communion—that, obviously, "would be a forbidden form of co-operation in non-Catholic worship." They should tell a non-Catholic friend of the non-Catholic relative to summon the non-Catholic clergyman. (What nonsense!) Or, if this was impossible, they could tell the clergyman that the sick relative "wishes to see him"—but they mustn't mention what for—Get thee behind me, Satan! Nor must they prepare anything with religious significance for the visit—no fraternising with the enemy.

Christians unite! Nothing like Christian Tolerance and Brotherly Love. Peace on Earth and Good Will to All Men, but mind we're not contaminated!

D.S.

## This Believing World

More news has trickled through about the new translation of the Bible, this time not from Greek or Hebrew, but from Aramaic—the language “our Lord” used when he went about “doing good” in Palestine. The translator is convinced that all the Bible was originally written in Aramaic; and, of course, it is not so full of “miracles” as the Holy Book which we have always looked upon as God’s Precious Word. Nor are there so many absurdities which even now are implicitly believed in by all good Christians. Mr. G. Lamsa, the Aramaic scholar responsible for the new translation, is sure that his version is “consistent”; but whether his kind of consistency is worth any more than the innumerable contradictions with which our Bible is filled, will be worth while examining when his Bible is published. After all, is not the Aramaic based on the same myths and miracles?

★

According to the “News Chronicle,” the Rev. M. Fryer recently blessed dogs, cats, hamsters, guinea pigs, budgies, canaries, pigeons, tortoises, Welsh cobs, goldfish and “a writhing six-foot python” at a church in Bognor Regis. Unfortunately, the civet went “berserk” and badly bit the owner of the python—though why a cat should do such a thing in church after being blessed is not at all clear. However, the vicar, Dr. W. G. S. Snow, was asked why a serpent should be blessed at all, considering it was “the symbol of evil.” Dr. Snow had a simple answer to that—“Serpents went into Noah’s Ark and were preserved by God.” We always thought that at least the more intelligent parsons had given up the Noah’s Ark fairy tale but we are hopelessly mistaken.

★

But the intriguing thing about this is that, while believing every comma in the Flood story is divine and inspired, Dr. Snow actually claimed that “the Garden of Eden story, with the serpent as the cause of sin was adapted by the author of Genesis from an old Babylonian legend”; and the Genesis story was “a primitive attempt to explain the origin of things, including evil.” We hope his congregation will swallow this, and *not* ask whether the Flood story is also not a Babylonian legend as all archaeologists now admit? And we hope they won’t ask also—if the Serpent story is a legend, what becomes of that bulwark of Christianity, the Fall of Man? If there was no Fall of Man, then there was no need of a Saviour. Poor old Jesus!

★

It has cost the Paramount Pictures Corporation about eight million dollars to film “The Ten Commandments,” and, according to its director, Cecil B. de Mille, it was worth every cent. In the Ages of Faith, he recently declared, “men built soaring, magnificent cathedrals to express the love of God.” Encouraged by Paramount, two men who never questioned the cost, have put up this “twenty thousand feet of celluloid” as “a modern expression of faith in the same God.” No doubt the two men concerned really believe this—but no doubt also they are hoping they’ll get their money (and much more) back.

★

As for Mr. de Mille himself, he is quite sure that the Ten Commandments are “not outmoded relics of a barbaric age.” On the contrary indeed. He wants the public to “use this picture” as he hopes and prays that “God himself will use it, for the good of the world.” This leaves us intensely curious as to whether God has the necessary cinema apparatus in Heaven, with the right kind of screen to take

it and operators who know how to project films. Personally, we think Mr. de Mille would do better than God Almighty in seeing his “Ten Commandments” properly distributed in this world *before* getting a World Premiere in Heaven, so to speak. But as to whether it will help to produce a better Heaven, or, for that matter, a better Earth, we are quite Agnostic—we simply don’t know.

★

We knew it would come—Jazz at the Altar. Some of the solemn, sacred, pious and often boring Church music has been re-written by the Rev. G. Beaumont and televised and applauded by all jazz and rock ‘n’ roll lovers and, of course, attacked by the dear old stagers whose ideal is the music attached to “Washed in the Blood of the Lamb.” Mr. Beaumont calls his version of Church music a “Folk Mass,” but it is doubtful even if its modern syncopation and approach will bring crowds to Jesus. The first Christian sect to try something on the same lines was the Salvation Army, which set many heavenly words to more or less “vulgar” music-hall tunes on the plea that the Devil must not be allowed always to have the best ones. But Salvation Army religion itself is as dead as mutton.

## From Fiji

MY CORRESPONDENT IN FIJI is Mr. J. P. Bayly, a director of J. P. Bayly Ltd. (Planters and Graziers). Mr. Bayly tells me there are a few atheists and agnostics in Fiji, but religion has a strong hold; Methodist, Roman Catholics, Anglican, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, Lutheran, Jehovah’s Witnesses, all being represented, in roughly that order of strength. The Salvation Army failed to establish themselves, being disliked by a previous Governor.

There are a great number of Indians, Hindus, Sikhs, etc., and a few Moslems. These, too, have their various sects and in spite of the relatively small number of Moslems, they seem to have as many sects as the Christians (a Mohammedan equivalent of Christian unity?).

Mr. Bayly asserts that many of the Hindus are atheistic, “though they do not admit it or perhaps even realise it.” They certainly are as far as belief in a Christian God goes. All the main missions offer free schooling as the primary attraction of their religion and many of the Indians use the educational facilities offered, later rejecting the religious beliefs which were part of the bargain.

Mr. Bayly offered to pay for a fellow-atheist in Suva (35 miles away) to broadcast freethought propaganda, but with the broadcasting authorities not favouring the idea, the scheme failed. A few years ago Mr. Bayly endowed a clinic in Suva for the lower income groups. Strangely enough, he said, the doctor who runs it is an ordained C. of E. minister, who wanted to introduce Church propaganda.

Mr. Bayly laid it down that the J. P. Bayly Clinic was to cure men’s bodies, and was not concerned with their souls. Furthermore, the clinic was open to all, irrespective of colour, creed, or race. The Governor supported Mr. Bayly strongly and a reluctant doctor minister surrendered. They now get on well together, says Mr. Bayly, “although he would like to convert me. But he hasn’t a hope!”

D. SHIPPER.

—NEXT WEEK—

MORE LIGHT ON GHOSTS

By H. CUTNER

# 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.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

H. SCOTT ROPER.—We do not exist for the purpose of championing every good cause, any more than every good cause can be expected to champion Secularism.

G.F.—Writing from a far country, our anonymous Bulgarian correspondent who detailed some of his experiences in our July 26th issue, explains that it was not a Russian but a Bulgarian concentration camp, Kussian, that he was sent to, and also wishes to correct the name "Petrov" to Petkov.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

Brandford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, November 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: M. C. WATKINS-BAKER, "Science and Esthetics."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, November 3rd, 7.15 p.m.: J. W. LESLIE, "World Secularism through Esperanto."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 5th, 7.15 p.m.: ADRIAN PIGOTT, "The Mischief-making Vatican."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 3rd, 6.30 p.m.: R. BARNES, "British Politics 1857 and 1957."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, November 3rd, 2.30 p.m.: Councillor G. DUTTON, "I Believe."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 3rd, 11 a.m.: F. ROYSTON PIKE, "Man's Pursuit of the Millenium."

### OUTDOOR

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

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

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

Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH or CORSAIR.

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: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: D. SHIPPER.

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

## Notes and News

READERS and their friends should note that on Sunday, November 10th next, the former Father Norbert Drewitt, O.P., S.T.L., S.T.Lic., is to give an address on "My Years as a Monk" at Holborn Hall, W.C.1. The meeting will be

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £257 10s. d.; A. Hancock, 2s.; R. Reader, 5s.; Mrs. B. Allbon, 2s. 6d.; J. McCorrishken, 10s.; K. M. Browne, £1; E. S. Channon, 10s.; M. G. Clarke, 4s 6d.—Total to date, October 25th, 1957, £260 4s. 3d.

held under the auspices of the National Secular Society; it will commence at 7.30 p.m.; there will be time allowed for questions and discussions; and admission is free. Mr. O. C. Drewitt (as he now is) has completely renounced the Church, and his lecture should prove provocative and stimulating. We hope for a large audience.

★

UNITY THEATRE (1 Goldington Street, London, N.W.1) is now presenting—for the third time in its history—"Match-girls," the story of the courageous struggle for a living wage at Bryant and May's factory in 1888: the first women's strike in world history. Charles Bradlaugh, Annie Besant and Bernard Shaw were among those who supported the girls; the struggle aroused nation-wide interest, and was deservedly won. Mrs. Besant appears as a character in this interesting play which has still one week to run.

★

WE learn with some surprise that the redoubtable Bishop Fulton J. Sheen is to "abandon" broadcasting (*Daily Telegraph*, 24/10/57). Mr. Sheen is reported as saying in explanation that "one must occasionally retire to the shades and shadows of the Cross, where the soul is refreshed and strengthened." This surprises us even more. We should never have thought that *Dr. Sheen's* soul needed refreshing and strengthening.

★

MR. HAROLD DAY, the Bradford N.S.S. Branch President, has been having a keenly fought controversy with Christians in the local *Telegraph and Argus*, and a remarkable amount of space has been given to both sides. It is refreshing to find the *Argus* again showing some idea of fair play.

★

MANY and varied are the ways of bringing THE FREETHINKER to the notice of a wider public. Our reader Mr. A. W. Harris, of Rhyl, has been successful in inserting an advertisement in the Personal Column of his local paper. We commend this method to other readers and supporters—and N.S.S. Branches—who may be able to do the same. A few details (including, of course, the address and subscription rates) can be got into a few compact lines.

★

MEMBERS of a Leicester Congregational Youth Club walked out *en bloc* the other evening and joined another club nearby. The youngsters objected to the parson's high-handed attitude in enforcing compulsory church attendance and an epilogue after the evening activities. The warden at the new club (whose membership has risen 25% as a result) stated: "We are not concerned here with either religion or politics. The objects of this club are purely recreational, and are aimed at keeping youth off the streets."

★

RECENT statistics show that Geneva—once known as the Rome of Protestantism—now has a 45% Catholic population. This represents a remarkable growth if we consider that in Calvin's time there were (officially) no Catholics in the City. At the Catholic rate of increase in population there seems little doubt that within the next few years they will command a majority in once-Protestant Geneva.

## The Chronicler as a Jahwist

[This is the fourth instalment of what we believe is an angle of of Biblical criticism which is original.—Ed.]

By JOHN BOWDEN

THE CHRONICLER gives King Hezekiah and his revival of the moribund Jahwist cult honourable mention, as one would expect. It was this monarch who first made any systematic attempt to destroy the "high places" and other appurtenances of Baalism. Naturally the Chronicler has the Levites playing the leading part in this reformation, but the older authority knows nothing about it.

During his orgy of destruction Hezekiah "brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made," according to 2 Kings 18 : 4. This is unmentioned by the Chronicler. Was it because of the implied reflection upon Moses?

Much of the story of Hezekiah in Chronicles is taken up with an account of the great passover, the like of which, the Chronicler avers, had not been seen in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon. Remarkable to relate, the older writer hasn't a word to say about this noteworthy event; in fact, the word "passover" does not appear in his account of Hezekiah's reign.

The account in Kings records Hezekiah's payment of tribute to the Assyrians. To raise the amount levied the king stripped the Temple of its gold and silver. The Chronicler passes this despoilment of the house of Jahweh in silence.

Next to David and Solomon, the king who comes in for the Chronicler's enthusiastic acclaim is Josiah. This king effected a reformation of religion far more drastic and far-reaching than anything attempted by Hezekiah. The youthful monarch properly "let himself go." The Baalist images were smashed, the groves cut down and defiled by being filled up with "the bones of man," and the high places done away with. It seems that the reforms were even extended into the northern kingdom.

But what did most to endear Josiah to the Chronicler was the centralisation of worship at Jerusalem. It was this decree that placed "all power" in the hands of the Zadokite priests and enabled them thenceforth to impose their will upon the people of Judah.

In the account of Josiah's great reformation in 2 Kings 22 and 23, the uprooting of Baalism was consequent upon the discovery of "The Book of the Law" by the high-priest Hilkiah, the book having been found hidden away when the Temple was undergoing repair. Prior to this, for the Jahwist priests, opportune discovery, Baalist worship had, it is clear, gone on unchecked. If he was not himself a Baalist, Josiah had at least acquiesced in the Baalist practices of his people. We need not doubt that the Jahwist priests had endeavoured to "guide aright" the boy king, but he appears to have been wholly unresponsive to their wiles.

The discovery of the Book of the Law altered all that. This book, which was represented as carrying the authority of the great Moses, laid down the form of worship which was "pleasing to Jahweh." The superstitious king at once put into effect the enactments of the Book of Deuteronomy, the result being the massacre of the Baalist priests and the extirpation of Baalism.

The Chronicler, however, felt it incumbent upon him to show that so exemplary a king was a fervent Jahwist even before the discovery of the Book of the Law. Where the older documents had stated unequivocally that the reformation had been undertaken in the king's 18th year of reign (*i.e.*, when he was 25) and was consequent upon the discovery of the book which had been so long lost, the

Chronicler affirms that Josiah had turned to Jahwism in the eighth year of his reign (*i.e.*, when he was 16 years of age) and that four years later, in the 12th year of reign, the destruction of Baalism took place. That is, according to this so trustworthy historian, the extinction of Baalism took place *six years before the discovery of the book which, according to 2 Kings, "triggered off" the work of destruction.* The Chronicler himself notes that the Book of the Law was not brought to light until Josiah's 18th year.

The Chronicler, of course, enthuses over Josiah's passover sacrifices; nothing like it had been known since the days of Samuel. Once again the Levites are represented as having played an important part in the celebrations; and once again we find no mention of Levites in the original narrative.

Nor in the Kings' account is there any mention of Levites being engaged in the work of Temple reconstruction. The impression there given—that the Levites counted for naught in the work of restoration, was one that had to be removed, and the Chronicler proceeded to remove it. Taking the older record as his basis, he deleted a word here and there (the deletions being necessary to make his revised version read grammatically) and proceeded to insert references to the Levites and at the same time make it appear that the reformation had taken place *before* the discovery of "the law of Moses." In the amended version given hereunder the words in italics are the Chronicler's additions to the original account.

"Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the House, he sent Shapan the son of Azaliah, and Masseiah the Governor of the city, and Joash the son of Johaz the Recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God. *And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the door, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnants of Israel and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they delivered it into the hands of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord; and the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord gave it to amend and repair the house: even to the carpenters and to the builders they gave it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings and to make beams for the houses which the King of Judah had destroyed, and the men did the work faithfully; and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Meriai: and Zechariah and Messhullam, of the sons of the Kohathites to set it forward; and the others of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of music.*" (2 Chron. 34 : 8-12. Revised Version.)

And so, by a piece of deliberate falsification, the Chronicler succeeded in getting the Levites into the picture, at the same time making Josiah a whole-hearted Jahwist from the time he reached his majority at the age of 16.

It was to Jahwists a settled belief that strict observance of the laws of their god was rewarded by material prosperity. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," sang the Psalmist; and this reassuring note was echoed by the Chronicler. The wicked, on the other hand (the wicked being those who neglected or were lax in their observances of the Jahwist rites), were very properly punished at once by an outraged deity. (It should be borne in mind that it

was not until late in their history that Jews had any expectation of rewards or punishment in another life; the righteous received their reward and the wicked their punishment here and now). If events failed to bear out this comforting doctrine, the inconvenient facts were explained away. Thus, when an ostensibly pious man suffered hardship and want, his piety was merely a cloak, a facade, to hide his evil thoughts and deeds. This, it will be remembered, was the theme of Job's critics.

That the "righteous" would be given plenty of time to enjoy their blessings was a reasonable expectation. "With long life will I satisfy him (the Jahwist lover) and show him my salvation"; while the "bloody and deceitful" were to have their lives shortened. Alas, experience did not always bear out this predication, and it posed a formidable problem, especially in the case of the long-lived Manasseh.

As previously observed, Hezekiah, who was Manasseh's father, had restored Jahweh worship and with it the supremacy of the Jahwist priests. From the moment of succession his son set out to undo his father's work, and he destroyed every vestige of Jahweh worship. The altars of Baal were re-erected and the Jahwists mercilessly persecuted. Yet this man was the longest lived of all the Hebrew kings; he reigned uninterruptedly for 55 years and then died peacefully. To explain the anomalous and deplorable fact was for the Chronicler a pressing problem, and he solved it in characteristic manner. He "discovered" that towards the close of his life Manasseh had repented him of the evil he had done. He had, we are told, been carried off by the Assyrians and while in their hands had "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." Jahweh heeded his supplications and had him returned to Jerusalem, where he immediately "took away the strange

gods" and "cast them out of the city." He "repaired the altar of Jahweh and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve Jahweh God of Israel."

Of this belated repentance the writer of Kings knows *nothing whatever*. Nor does he know anything of a clash with the Assyrians. He certainly would have known of it and recorded it had such a clash occurred.

The falsity of the Chronicler's account of the repentance of Manasseh is shown by the existence in Josiah's reign of the idolatrous altars said to have been destroyed by the long-lived king. No, the Chronicler does not record this—it would have contradicted the story of the repentance; but it is recorded in 2 Kings 23:12. In Jeremiah 15:4, also, there is a specific declaration, in the reign of Josiah's successor, that the sin of Manasseh was as yet unexpiated.

The Chronicler also had the task of accounting for the untimely death of the irreproachable Josiah—the man who had destroyed Baalism root and branch and, by centralising worship in Jerusalem, had made the Jahwist priests unchallengeably supreme. He did this by embellishing the brief account in 2 Kings 23:28-30 of the king's death in a battle with the Egyptian king Necho, who was on his way to take part in the battle of Carchemish. The Chronicler represents this attempt to stay the progress of Necho as contrary to the will of God, and it is implied that it was because of this endeavour to thwart Jahweh's designs that Josiah was slain.

We note that in Jeremiah 22:15-16 it is twice indicated that all had been well with Josiah. This does not suggest that the king had met a violent death in battle. Once again, the Chronicler drew upon his imagination, it seems.

## Vanity versus Vitality

By GORDON CAULFIELD (U.S.A.)

A TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT BOOK! This conviction seethed and swept over me overwhelmingly upon reading G. G. Coulton's *Friar's Lantern* in the Thinker's Library.

Dr. Coulton spent years in historical research, examining actual medieval documents. His book observes the facts, and describes vividly the life of the people in Catholic England in the Middle Ages. What an ignorant, brutal, shocking life! As he says:

"My main points are as follows: (1) that clerical morals in the Middle Ages were such as no civilised modern country could tolerate; (2) that even in reverence and care for their churches these men were far below the modern standard; (3) that the so-called Ages of Faith were in fact too often ages of doubt and despair for sensitive souls; (4) that, less than a century after St. Francis's death, spiritual Franciscans were tortured and burned by their "relaxed" brethren for their strict adherence to that rule to which all were alike pledged; and (5) that the injustices and cruelties of the medieval Inquisition were almost past modern belief."

How well the facts prove the author's points! This is the ridiculous religious past which the BBC in England so carefully protects. Human intelligence as expressed in the fine brave voice of Margaret Knight is seldom heard; a hundred or a thousand perpetrators and perpetuators of this nonsense from out of the dark past drone on and on. It is indeed a sorry sight. What a shocking, shameful shackles for the mind of modern man. This is a stifling of national genius which the English will surely live to regret deeply. And, of course, America is in the same position here, as the Robert Scott case proves.

People are basically bright and decent. But how can they ever express their intelligence and human feeling for

the beauty and greatness of life through this cloak of past paltriness? As the anthropologist, M. F. Ashley Montagu, in his new book, *The Direction of Human Development*, observes: "Human nature is good. It is only our present human nurture that is bad." He emphasises this strongly. As my good friend Archibald Robertson puts it in his generous and inspiring book, *Man His Own Master*, in the Thinker's Library: "The fault is not in average human nature, but in the pre-scientific framework within which average human nature functions. The remedy lies in stripping that framework of its idealistic trappings, and in mobilising men and women of good will for the job of bringing it up to date and giving human nature a chance."

On the one hand we have this ignorant religious past; on the other we have today's new spirit of scientific intelligence. The dismal failures of the one, and the magnificent achievements of the other are so striking as to be obvious to anyone with an open mind. Vanity versus vitality. This is why the BBC, as it were, closes minds—or prevents and perverts their opening, as also does the shameful big business press.

Free the mind and you free the man.

That is why journals like THE FREETHINKER and *The Humanist* have a value to humanity out of all proportion to their size. We do well to support such value, for it is our own better future that we advance.

Freethought, thought which is free, concerning, for example, the Middle Ages, is nothing short of observational social science. Any social scientist who ignores such pregnant facts is not a social scientist worthy of the name.

while those scientists who do observe these facts and their tremendous significance to our society today, have a contribution to make to our culture which is so vital as to be almost beyond valuation. These hold high the light, these point well the way, to humanity's own fine future.

## Holy Menagerie

BOGNOR REGIS again hits the religious headlines!

In these days, when it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract humans to church, it is refreshing to find in this town the new and diverting experiment of getting the animals instead.

Disappointment, however, attended the effort, for our Dumb Friends proved no more eager to co-operate in Divine Service than do the vast majority of humans. Nor were they altogether dumb, according to the *News Chronicle* report of October 14th.

The Pets Service took place at St. John's Church, Bognor Regis, on October 13th and the menagerie detailed in "This Believing World." The python, in view of the disgraceful conduct of his ancestor in the Garden of Eden, was no doubt the Chief Sinner brought to repentance, and had been brought all the way from Derbyshire for the Grand Occasion, its escort including a civet and a sheepdog.

The civet—ungrateful creature!—went wild during the singing of a hymn and attacked a keeper, who had to be taken to hospital to have his wounds dressed.

In the confusion the civet missed being blessed with the other animals. It still looks the same, but the Almighty is not to be deceived and will know how to discriminate the Unblessed from the Blessed.

Another hitch in the proceedings was when Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding read the lessons to the accompaniment of a barking puppy. Evidently this irreverent little bitch did not realise she had been blessed.

Asked about the blessed snake, the Vicar of Bognor Regis explained (from the vast recesses of his scholarship) that "serpents went into Noah's Ark with the rest of the animals and they were preserved by God."

Let us not, however, disparage this holy experiment. It may yet save the Church and I present them with a new anthem:

*With a Cat's Catechism and Dogma for Dogs  
Let us do Divine Service in style!  
With a pig in the pulpit, a chalice of frogs  
And a python stretched out in the aisle.  
With a parrot for preacher and sheep in the pews  
(And donkeys and ostriches too).  
Bless 'em all! Bless 'em all!—because what can we lose  
If we change to a sanctified Zoo?*

G. H. TAYLOR.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### A WARM ATLANTIC WAVE

Just thought I'd drop you a line letting you know how much I appreciate your periodical, THE FREETHINKER. It is absolutely the best periodical that I have ever encountered. Your writers are extremely enlightening, and are masters of wit and satire. But their best point is their unequivocal militancy. This is as commendable as it is rare (at least, in my country).

In this country all is perfect conformity, and a man's thoughts and beliefs may be known by simply knowing his last name. In this country the ignorance of the ignorant, and the sycophancy of the non-ignorant would simply amaze you. There is simply no intellectual honour and courage among the learned; this is because they would lose their jobs if they spoke up. Oh, land of freedom!

My country is fast approaching a corporate state. I, a college

student, have already been expelled from a Teachers' College because of my openly-avowed Atheism. I, an American citizen, have already been denied employment at a public library because of my refusal to sign a loyalty oath which ends with the words "So help me God." All this despite the fact that our Constitution explicitly states that religion shall not be made a test of public office. In my country, anyone seen reading a Freethought journal or any scholarly work that is "off the beaten track" is immediately suspected as having "subversive leanings." But who, I ask you, is subversive—we of the independent mind or those who corrupt and prostitute our Constitution? It is ignorance that is the enemy—church-inspired ignorance and politicians that prostitute their souls for the sake of church-delivered votes.

Regrettably, I have not time for all I would like to say, but I do feel constrained to repeat my unqualified approval of your complete militancy. Integrity is hard to find nowadays. ALAN ROSEN.

P.S.—THE FREETHINKER is good not only for anti-religious purposes, but also as an authoritative source of anti-Communist material (Shipper, Bulgarian correspondents, etc.).

### THE FREETHINKER

In view of the continued rising costs of production and increase in postal charges, etc., it amazes me that you don't raise your price to sixpence. Such a step, I can well imagine, would be repugnant to you, especially in view of the support of O.A.P.s, but to keep your price down might give the impression that you can meet rising costs with equanimity. And that, as we well know, is certainly not the case!

Another method, I suppose, would be to make an all-out appeal for the Fund. My best wishes and support, whatever you decide.

E. ALLEN.

### THE ALTRINCHAM AFFAIR

I have been a Republican for most of my life; but I hope I am not the only Republican who thinks Lord Altrincham's article an exhibition of bad taste. It would never have been published had he not been a peer; and it is an argument, not for Republicanism, but for the abolition of hereditary titles.

HENRY MEULEN.

### WE ALL MUST DIE

Thanks are due to Mr. Bennett for his article "We all must die." I have always considered it strange that those who prate of pie in the sky are the very ones who are most anxious to find ways of not eating their pie. All too often we read either the sentimental or religious mush or the Hamlet-like fear about death, and I think it is refreshing to read about death from a rational viewpoint.

Anything more inconsistent than the Christian view of death would be difficult to imagine. Those who have lingered on the brink of death (there must be thousands) will themselves often wonder whether it was worth the effort to bring them back, especially when they may be condemned to a miserable existence. I often think of those condemned by inoperable cancer, who have their lives prolonged for about two more years by means of the operation known as colotomy. Have we the right to condemn our fellow-humans to such a semi-animal existence?

G. L. DICKINSON.

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