

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

[*Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* by Bertrand Russell; Edited by Professor Paul Edwards, George Allen & Unwin, 1957; 16s.]

AN AMERICAN friend of mine called to see Bertrand Russell at his Merioneth home earlier this year. During the conversation, Lord Russell remarked that he had come to be thought of as too respectable. But — he added — “My next book will change all that!” Well, here it is: Russell the rebel once more — or, at least, the nonconformist — and a timely reminder that our greatest living intellectual remains an outspoken Freethinker.

“There has been a rumour in recent years” — he writes in the Preface — “to the effect that I have become less opposed to religious orthodoxy than I formerly was. This rumour is totally without foundation. I think all the great religions of the world — Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Communism — both untrue and harmful.” How welcome this is at a time when many of those who share Russell’s views seem frightened to voice them openly: with a prevailing attitude of “Don’t let’s be beastly to the Christians.” When Humanists tumble over themselves trying to produce “positive” statements that the BBC might accept, and all the time the most important job is to prove that religion is “both untrue and harmful.”

“Why I am Not a Christian”
Few could do that job as well as Bertrand Russell, as this book shows. Nearly all the essays have appeared before; most of them are twenty or thirty years old; but they are as stimulating as ever. The title piece is the well-known lecture held under the auspices of the South London Branch of the National Secular Society in 1927, which has been kept pretty continuously in print, and which most Freethinkers will have read. A clergyman of my acquaintance recently dismissed it on grounds of age, which is considerably easier than dealing with it. Perhaps, like Mr. Ronald Duncan, the clergyman thinks Christianity not historical, but “poetical and mystical”! Reviewing Lord Russell’s book in *Books and Art* (November), Mr. Duncan refers to people today “who have abandoned long ago an historical basis for their Christian belief”; who are “prepared to admit that there was no First Cause”; “are not concerned with miracles”; and “do not believe in either a physical resurrection, life after death, or the immortality of the soul”; but who nevertheless “perceive a mystical truth in the gospels, and an inspiration in Christ’s life — whether He lived or not.” This is the level on which Russell should write — according to Mr. Duncan — instead of keeping to “his limited and literal interpretation.” The suggestion is absurd, of course. Lord Russell would rightly eschew any attempt to deal with Mr. Duncan’s perception of mystical truth in the gospels (it would surprise me if Mr. Duncan himself knows what he means by the words he uses!); and the nonsense of “inspiration in Christ’s life” is obvious from the section of “Why I Am Not a Christian” that indicates the defects in Christ’s teaching.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Bertrand Russell’s Latest Book

— By COLIN McCALL —

“Why I Am Not a Christian” is, in fact, a model of its kind, and quite unanswerable.

Other Essays

Among the other essays are one on Thomas Paine, and such titles as, “Has Religion Made Useful Contributions to Civilization?”, “What I Believe,” “Do We Survive Death?”, “On Catholic and Protestant Sceptics,” “Our Sexual Ethics,” and “Religion and Morals.” In this last short piece, written in 1952, Lord Russell says, “I do not believe that a decay of dogmatic belief can do anything but good . . . What the world needs is not dogma, but an attitude of scientific inquiry, combined with a belief that the torture of millions is not desirable,

whether inflicted by Stalin or by a Deity imagined in the likeness of the believer.” Two years later he wrote the two articles on “Can Religion Cure Our Troubles?” for the Stockholm newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*. They are a splendid plea for Freethought: for “reasonableness, tolerance, and a realization of the interdependence of the parts of the human family”; and for the recognition that “there is not the faintest reason in history to suppose that Christianity offers a way out” of our troubles. “Intelligence, it might be said, has caused our troubles; but it is not unintelligence that will cure them. Only more and wiser intelligence can make a happier world.”

Satire

Among Lord Russell’s great gifts is the ability to see the heart of a problem, and to explain it clearly for others. His disposal of the “Natural Law” argument in “Why I Am Not a Christian” is a fine example of this capacity. Satire, too, is at his service, and he uses it delightfully in deflating the idea of “purpose” in the universe. “The usual argument of religious people on this subject is roughly as follows: ‘I and my friends are persons of amazing intelligence and virtue. It is hardly conceivable that so much intelligence and virtue could have come about by chance. There must, therefore, be someone at least as intelligent and virtuous as we are, who set the cosmic machinery in motion with a view to producing us.’” His comment quietly completes the deflation: “I am sorry to say that I do not find this argument so impressive as it is found by those who use it.”

Controversy

Russell, of course, has always loved controversy — and shone at it. Indeed, it may be said that controversy is the life-blood of his writing, for he is perpetually concerned with ideas—his own and other people’s—weighing them, subjecting them to stringent critical analysis. Here we have more than that: we have the text of the debate with Father Copleston S.J. on “The Existence of God,” that must surely have been the intellectual high-water mark of the BBC’s Third Programme. In contrast to most of our radio programmes, this was a genuine debate. And if I am convinced that Russell won the encounter, I nevertheless realise that he was up against a worthy opponent. But I do

think he won. Mr. Philip Toynbee has already given him the "purely philosophical round" easily, and the argument from experience "by a narrow margin." Mr. Toynbee thought, however, that Russell was "utterly overwhelmed in the final dispute about moral absolutes" (*The Observer*, 6/10/57). Whether Mr. Toynbee still thinks so after Professor A. J. Ayer has shown the former's objection to be logically inconsistent (*The Observer*, 13/10/57) and Father A. A. Stephenson, S.J., has agreed that "Professor Ayer is right" on this point (*The Observer*, 20/10/57), I don't know. But I think Mr. Toynbee might have saved himself some embarrassment if he had taken note of Russell's fourth remark in the debate. "Would you agree that if there is no God — no absolute Being — there can be no values?" — Copleston had asked — "I mean, would you agree that if there is no absolute good that the relativity of values results?" And Russell had replied quite clearly: "No, I think these questions are logically distinct. Take, for instance, G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, where he maintains that there is a distinction of good and evil, that both of these are definite concepts. But he does not bring in the idea of God to support that contention." And Professor Ayer substantiated this with a reference to Leibniz, who, although a theist, "pointed out long ago that the moral argument for the existence of a deity fails entirely. If values are not absolute, it loses its premise. If they are absolute, a deity is not required to validate them."

Banned

The reader may not agree with everything Lord Russell says — I don't myself — but one can hardly fail to be impressed by the rational approach to human problems that

pervades all these essays. By contrast with this Freethinking sanity, however, there is an appendix of Christian insanity and intolerance. For, Professor Paul Edwards, editor of the book, has added an account of the banning of Bertrand Russell from teaching at the College of the City of New York. The Christians who opposed his appointment showed themselves worthy followers of the loving saviour who spat out "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" — and thereby inspired Mr. Duncan?

A letter from Protestant Bishop Manning denouncing "a man who is a recognised propagandist against both religion and morality, and who specifically defends adultery," was the signal — as Professor Edwards says — for "a campaign of vilification and intimidation unequalled in American history since the days of Jefferson and Thomas Paine." The Jesuit weekly, *America*, called Russell "a desiccated divorced and decadent advocate of sexual promiscuity . . . This corrupting individual . . . This professor of immorality and irreligion." The same paper hailed Hon. Justice E. McGeehan — who pronounced against Russell — as "a virile and staunch American . . . a pure and honourable jurist . . . (who) lives his religion in mind and soul."

Here were all the elements of McCarthyism directed against one man: a man whose whole life has been spent in the enlightenment of mankind and who, not surprisingly, writes today, "I am as firmly convinced that religions do harm as I am that they are untrue."

This book should be on the shelves of all Freethinkers, for it is a testimony to the evil of religion and the value of Freethought.

On John Stuart Mill

By W. L. ARNSTEIN

IT IS FOR ME, at least, a rather unusual honour to have an entire article addressed to me personally, as is Mr. Cutner's "Did John Stuart Mill Fail?" First, let me observe that I readily agree with many of Mr. Cutner's observations. John Stuart Mill was quite obviously not a militant atheist — nor did I assert in my original letter that he was — and it is quite possible to argue, as Mr. Cutner does at length, that Mill's posthumous *Three Essays on Religion* represent a step backward. I do disagree with Mr. Cutner, however, on a number of points.

Although Mill's father may well have been "a complete sceptic," he wrote little on the subject and his scepticism hardly implied that his son would turn out to be a militant atheist. It was, after all, Greek which James Mill began to teach his son at the age of three, and not irreligion. Mr. Cutner might have had a better case if he had maintained that John Stuart Mill did not fulfil his early promise as a Greek scholar. In any case, whatever his lack of militancy, Mill — as Mr. Cutner concedes — can hardly be charged with being a Christian apologist.

Where Mr. Cutner and I apparently diverge is that I can conceive it quite possible for a man to fulfil his early promise as an economist, as a reformer, as a logician, and even as a philosopher, without his ever becoming a militant atheist. Newton's influence in the world of physics is hardly negated by his orthodox writings on the Bible. Darwin's importance in the world of biology is hardly compromised by his haziness on the existence or non-existence of a deity. In the same way, the pertinence of Mill's writings in a number of fields is not necessarily invalidated by his lack of clarity in his *Essay on Theism*.

In the material world, as opposed to the spiritual, immortality cannot, after all, be taken for granted. For a philosopher it exists only to the degree that his ideas are still discussed and his books are still read. That many people still read Mill can hardly, to be sure, be proved mathematically, but that his books are still reprinted can be demonstrated. Not merely in the last half century, but in the last decade, the following of Mill's works have been reprinted: *Essays on Political Economy* (1948); certain articles on Bentham and Coleridge (1950); *Autobiography* (1948), his letters to Harriet Taylor (1951), and *A System of Logic* (1947). In addition there have been several recent editions of his essays on *Utilitarianism*, *Representative Government*, and *On Liberty*. This does not begin to list the many anthologies in which excerpts from Mill's writings are included. Some of the latter are assigned reading in various American college courses in history, political science, and philosophy. I can testify to this by personal experience, since the some two hundred students in my history courses this fall are all undergoing the ordeal — or pleasure — of reading the greater part of *On Liberty*.

The limited bibliography above does not, of course, include a number of books about Mill. Now Mr. Cutner may perhaps contend that Mill's works do not deserve all this reprinting, or that even if the books are widely reprinted, they are not widely read. Yet the works of few philosophers are read in their entirety by any one person, either in their own lifetimes or thereafter. I would not claim to have read more than a small fraction of Mill's works myself, nor would I subscribe blindly to everything I have read. When judging, however, whether human beings live up to their early promise, we should not compare them with an unattainable ideal of perfection, but with their counterparts in similar fields. In such a comparison, John Stuart Mill, whatever his admitted limitations, continues, in my opinion, to stand up well.

Buddha and Buddhism

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE INCREASING importance played by Asia in world affairs, reflects itself in a widespread interest in the great Asiatic religions. Gone now are the days when both Europe and Christianity represented the equivalents of civilisation and religion. From a critical angle, such a point of view coincides with the teachings of the essentially modern science of Comparative Religion which classifies Christianity as merely one, perhaps not even the most widespread, of Oriental religions. The distinction, for what it is worth, of being the world's most widely held religion is sometimes ascribed to Buddhism which is, in any case, the oldest of the world's cosmopolitan religions, dating traditionally from the 6th century BC and certainly from before the 3rd, when its earliest monuments appeared in what was probably its birthplace, India. In recent years, a considerable revival of Buddhist activity has been reported in Eastern Asia and a notable event in Buddhist ecclesiastical annals, the 6th General Council of the Buddhist Sangha (Church or Order), was held in Rangoon in 1954. Parallel with which Asiatic development there has been some missionary activity in Europe; and here, the Buddhist Society, presided over by the well-known Barrister Mr. Christmas Humphreys, produces its own literature and conducts a small, but active propaganda. Mr. Humphreys' own *Pelican* book *Buddhism* has even been something of a best-seller in English speaking circles.

Under the perhaps somewhat question-begging title, *Men of Wisdom*, Messrs. Longman, Green and Co., the publishers of religious books, have now issued a new series in conjunction with the American publishers Harper and Brothers. Of the first four "Men of Wisdom" with whom I hope to deal, three are Christians; Saints Paul and Augustine and the lesser known German mystic Meister Eckhart, whilst the fourth volume bears the more collective title of *Buddha and Buddhism*. It must be said that the new series is marked throughout not only by competent scholarship, but by admirable illustrations. The volume on Buddha is by a French specialist, Maurice Percheron and is translated by Edmund Stapleton, and contains not only a summary of the often obtruse technical Buddhist terminology, but also a useful bibliography of the more important English and European works on Buddhism. Like the earlier books of Mr. Humphreys, the author gives a lucid summary of the whole vast historical canvas of Buddhism in many lands. Unlike the President of the English Buddhist Society, M. Percheron does not appear himself to be a practising Buddhist and his general standpoint is that of a sympathetic but critical scholar.

As in the parallel cases of Jesus and Muhammed, no contemporary account of the Founder of Buddhism survives and as our French author admits, even his historical existence and of course, his traditional dates—624-544—are also conjectural. All that can be stated with certainty is that the origins of Buddhism must have been earlier than the 3rd century BC, when the Indian ruler, Asoka — sometimes described as the "Buddhist Constantine" (the personal comparison is very flattering to Constantine!) — announced his conversion to Buddhism and covered India with Buddhist monuments and inscriptions, some of which still exist. Since Buddhism — unlike both Christianity and Islam — has always been a peaceful creed, relying solely upon propaganda, its initial progress before Asoka was

probably slow, and the traditional date of its foundation — about 500 BC appears quite possible.

One can assert with some confidence that the original Buddhism started as a reforming movement in Hinduism, rather than as a separate religion, as it afterwards became. In this respect it is analogous to Christianity and Islam, both of which started as Jewish heresies. On the social plane, early Buddhism seems to have begun as a revolt of the second "Warrior" caste against the growing supremacy of the Brahmin priestly caste. Buddha himself, is represented as having been a member of the "Warrior" caste, the son of a Sakya nobleman in what is now Nepal, where, as our author indicates, the Brahmin ascendancy was still undeveloped. Intellectually, Buddhism appears to have started as a philosophy rather than a religion, which it afterwards became, particularly in its Mahayana form, north of the Himalayas.

The oldest traditions represent the Founder as preaching a philosophy which may be styled agnostic rather than atheistic, and which involved a rejection of "final causes" rather similar to that advanced by modern positivists like Comte and Herbert Spencer. But though—as M. Percheron indicates—some traces of this original critique still survive in the older, or Hinayana form, preserved in the monasteries of Southern Asia; it is as a supernatural religion that Buddhism has passed into world history. The Virgin Birth, Enlightenment — the title "Buddha" means "The Enlightened One" — under the Bo Tree, and the subsequent virtual deification, belong to the domain of religious psychology, whatever the original philosophy may have been.

Since the Dharma or Teaching of the Buddha was adopted by King Asoka — whose existence is vouched for, not only by his inscriptions, but by contemporary Greek evidence — in the mid-third century BC, Buddhism has emerged into the full light of history, and has spread into China, Korea, Japan, Burma, Indo-China and Ceylon — in all of which lands it still exists — and into the East Indies, where Islam superseded it. In Tibet it took on a peculiar theocratic form, and a self-styled "Incarnation" of Buddha still exercises temporal as well as spiritual power as the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. Buddhism even sent missionaries to the West, and at least one early Christian writer refers to Buddha who, as M. Percheron shows, was eventually canonised by the Eastern Church as "St. Josaphat." In India, its birthplace, Buddhism died out during the first millennium, perhaps because of its pacifist character, which rendered it unable to resist aggressive Muslim invaders. But nowadays a Buddhist revival is said to be in process, and the Indian Government was officially represented at the recent 2,500th anniversary of the traditional death in 544 B.C.

Buddhism has been primarily a monastic religion, preaching a modified asceticism in ethics, and a modified pessimism in philosophy. But this has not prevented it from creating magnificent works of art, some of which are admirably reproduced in the Longmans' book.

Those who seek enlightenment on Buddhism — religion of "Enlightenment" — cannot do better than consult this erudite summary written with Gallic lucidity and superbly illustrated.

[*Men of Wisdom — Buddha and Buddhism*, By Maurice Percheron — Longmans Green and Co.; 6s.]

This Believing World

An article by Ritchie Calder, "My Quarrel with the Churches" in *News Chronicle* (Oct. 23) could very well have appeared in THE FREETHINKER. It dealt with the old quarrel between Religion and Science, and it made Religion look very small in comparison. Of course "Religion" in the context was Christianity—and Christian letters have poured into the newspaper's office more or less violently protesting against such an iconoclastic attack on the Holy Beliefs of so many people. Of course, Christianity and Religion *must* be true — they come from God Almighty himself. What scientists attack is not *true* Christianity, but Churchianity, or man's interpretation of God's Precious Word. Man can be wrong, but God Almighty never.

★

This "Churchianity" or "wrong interpretation" business is the last stand of deluded, though very pious, people. Indeed, even ministers of religion have written to *News Chronicle* admitting that they have had to give up all sorts of things in the Bible. The truth is that — without going into details — responsible Christian leaders have had to *civilise* true Christianity. They have given up the absurd dates shown in the Authorised Version, the stories of the "Creation" of the Universe and the Flood. They don't believe that Elijah went up to Heaven in a Fiery Chariot, and they move heaven and earth to explain away the plain teaching of Jesus that we must hate our parents to be his disciples. But they have not answered Ritchie Calder.

★

Our old friend, the Bishop of Bristol, was given the happy task recently of explaining to school children all about God, and a most amusing mess he made of it. For twenty minutes he drawled on, confusing himself and naturally his hearers, trying to show how much of a Person God was and how much he wasn't. If any child emerged from the ordeal having the slightest idea of what the Bishop was talking about, we would certainly like to meet him. What the Bishop should now try is to find out a little more of the discoveries of Anthropologists. He would learn that the question is now not "Is God a Person?" but when and how did Man ever believe in a God at all? And he would learn the answer.

★

According to the "Sunday Pictorial," the Rev. M. Fryer, who goes about in canonical robes blessing animals at religious services — no doubt thus saving their souls — is not really a C of E clergyman. He appears to have been ordained by "Archbishop" Harold Nicholson, an ex-waiter, though we are not told who ordained Mr. Nicholson. To fight cruelty to animals, Mr. Fryer has collected £500, but we are sorry to say that no animals have so far benefitted — he admits this — from the fund. He has been working only two and a half years. Still, what does that matter? After all, blessing an animal in church proves how God even looks after the sparrows. Or does it?

★

The "Observer" review of Dr. Katherine Kenyon's book *Digging up Jericho* which details the story of the excavations there made over a number of years, is headed "Walls of Jericho" though the reviewer, Miss Jaquetta Hawkes, almost avoids the fact that the famous "walls" supposed to be blown down by Israelite Priests have never been unearthed; or in other words, that the story, as related in Joshua, is a myth. That traces proving people had inhabited the site about 9000 BC could be found, while none at all of Joshua's Jericho will not be surprising to Freethinkers. But it will take a long time still before the Bible is recognised for what it is — a book of myths and fairy tales.

The Fight for Lincoln Square

FLORENCE VAN SWEARENGEN, Secretary of the New York League for Religious Freedom (charter-members of the American Rationalist Federation) tells the story of what one small freethought group can do when opposed to the "armed might" of the New York city authorities.

The story begins in 1956, when the New York City Planning Board embarked on the ambitious "Lincoln Square Project." Robert Moses, Parks Commissioner, planned to demolish a slum area and in its place build a "Cultural and Educational Centre for the Performing Arts" which would cost approximately 228 million dollars. Under the American Slum Clearance and Development Plan the Federal Treasury would provide two-thirds of the cash. The Centre would include buildings housing a public library, Metropolitan Opera House, museum, a library of music and opera, five theatres, housing, etc., etc. So far, so good. It would also include a new school for the (R.C.) Fordham University, accommodating 4,000, two R.C. churches, a parochial school, a convent and a site for the (R.C.) St. John's University.

It was obvious to the freethinkers that the separation of Church and State would be abused by a project which used Federal funds to subsidise sectarian (R.C.) institutions. In September 1956 the League for Religious Freedom attorney, Martin Scheimann, filed a brief of protest, calling the city to abandon the project as planned. Although committees of tenants and business men had made strenuous efforts to foil the plan, their work was of no avail. The one issue which stopped Moses and his team of Catholic collaborators was the League's brief, raising the issue of a violation of the American constitutional principle of Church and State.

As Florence Van Swearingen says, further plans cannot be made "until Moses can find some new gimmick which will by-pass the Constitution and the suit now pending in the courts!" It is perfectly obvious that if the city authorities were allowed to establish the R.C. Church so comfortably in the Lincoln Square Project a most dangerous precedent would be created. Similar "cultural and educational centres" could be established throughout the United States, each with a R.C. H.Q. paid for by the U.S. Government with the taxpayers' money!

Now a "Citizens' Committee for the Proper Use of Lincoln Square" has been instituted. The members range from Lincoln Square Chamber of Commerce to religious groups. The lawsuit now pending may force Moses to drop his plans. Until an open hearing is held the Federal Government has refused to advance their two-thirds share.

The *New York Post* carried the headline: "Lincoln Square Project is Doomed!" The moral of this story is plain. How many would have said: "But what can *we*, such a *small* group, do?"

D.S.

The Holborn Hall Meeting

WE HAVE pleasure in reporting the success of the meeting organised by the N.S.S. with Mr. O. C. Drewitt as the lecturer. His address, "My Years as a Monk," was listened to with intense interest by a packed audience and elicited valuable questions and discussion. We hope to report it more fully in a later issue.

—NEXT WEEK—

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS
By A SCHOOLMASTER

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.
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All Articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, November 17th, 6.45 p.m.: J. ROCHE, "Religion and the Workers."

Central London Branch, N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, November 17th, 7.15 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "The Making of Moo," the play by Nigel Dennis.

Conways Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 19th, 7.15 p.m.: G. H. TAYLOR, "The Making of Moo"—play by Nigel Dennis. (With readings from the play).

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 17th, 6.30 p.m.: O. C. DREWITT, "My Life as a Monk."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (International Club, 64 George Street).—Saturday, November 16th, 3 p.m.: K. ZILLIACUS, M.P., "Patriotism, Humanism, and the H-Bomb."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, November 17th, 2.30 p.m.: D. N. MAXWELL, "Borstal."

Portsmouth Branch N.S.S. (Foresters Hall, Fratton Road).—Thursday, November 21st, 7.30 p.m.: Discussion on Christian Intolerance. Speakers: Rev. B. THOMAS, M.A. (C. of E.), Canon LYNDSEY (R.C.), P. POTHECARY and P. G. YOUNG (N.S.S.).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 17th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D., "Human Biology and the Hydrogen Bomb."

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 WOOD.

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

LONDON readers who are interested in the brilliant play, *The Making of Moo*, which was recently reviewed in THE FREETHINKER, may like to have this reminder that Mr. G. H. Taylor will be talking about the play at Conway Hall on Tuesday, Nov. 19th (see lecture Notices). The author of the play, Mr. Nigel Dennis, has been most co-operative, and Mr. Taylor has arranged for readings from the play

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £260 4s. 3d.; A. Hancock, 2s. 0d.; N. G. Horler, 9s. 3d.; "Hypatius," 5s. 0d.; R. and R. Astbury, 10s. 0d.; T. Benton, 1s. 7d.; Mrs. L. B. Wells, 2s. 6d.; Miss N. M. Brooks, £1 0s. 0d.; E.C.R., 10s. 0d.—Total to date, November 8th, 1957, £263 4s. 7d.

to be given along with his talk. Besides Mr. Taylor, others taking part in the play readings will include various members of the Secular and Ethical Societies.

★

MR. F. A. RIDLEY'S highly-praised *Problems of Church and State*—delivered as a paper to the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in Paris last September—is now available in pamphlet form for the reasonable price of 4d. This scholarly, yet stimulating piece of work first appeared in THE FREETHINKER, and it now makes an excellent 16-page pamphlet. Another new publication is the report of the National Secular Society's recent relations with the BBC and Independent TV. Titled *BBC ITA and Atheism*, this pamphlet sells for 3d. Postage is 2d. on one or two copies.

★

MIDLANDERS SHOULD note that Mr. T. M. Mosley (Vice President N.S.S.) and Mr. Edmund Taylor will be guests of the Nottingham University Union Debating Society on Tuesday, November 26th. They will speak to the motion "This House will beware of the Papal Bull" in the Portland Lecture Hall, in two sessions, 4.30-6.30, and 7.45-10 p.m. Opposing the motion will be guest-speaker, Miss Erika Fallaux of the Catholic Evidence Guild, and another. Looking further ahead, on February 18th, 1958, Mrs. Margaret Knight will debate "That religion is an obstacle to clear thought." The Nottingham Union seems assured of at least two first class debates.

★

AT the 5th World Congress of the Catholic Press in Vienna, Count de la Torre, editor of *Osservatore Romano*, stated: "It is not only the duty of the Catholic journalist to explain and spread the teaching of the Church, but also to fight for liberty, justice and *truth*." (Our italics.) A perusal of the Catholic press after reading this leads us to the assumption that most Catholic journalists are only part-time workers.

★

WRITING in the Vatican weekly, *Osservatore Della Domenica*, Fr. Raimondo Spiazzi said the number of Polish students entering the priesthood was "one of the signs of the thriving spiritual life of the Polish people." The number of seminarists under the Communist regime is now "more numerous than before the war," said Fr. Spiazzi.

★

MR. D. SHIPPER'S many correspondents are asked to note his change of address to 5 Kyveilog St., Cathedral Rd., Cardiff.

By Their Fruits

MR. ADRIAN PIGOTT has culled the following from last month's number of the *Ulster Protestant*:

"Statistics were recently published about the youthful delinquents of Liverpool. The city's population is 10% Roman Catholic—yet the official police records indicated that R.C. schools had provided no less than 82% of the young criminals. This horrifying disclosure has very much alarmed the complacency of the local R.C. clergy. Their representative on the Liverpool Education Committee has requested the police that, in future, no detailed statistics should be published!"

Give and Take

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

ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 18th, I was privileged to act as chairman at a public debate in Aberdeen on "Humanism and Christianity" between Mrs. Margaret Knight and the Rev. Ian Pitt-Watson. On arrival at the hall, I was astonished to see a vast concourse of people moving in. I at first concluded that a rock 'n' roll session was being held in another part of the building, but soon learned that all were at least apparent seekers after wisdom. The Aberdeen Humanist Group, who organised the debate, anticipated in their more sanguine moments an audience of perhaps one hundred. In fact, more than three times that number turned up, and the venue was hurriedly changed to the large ballroom.

It must not, I believe, be too hastily assumed that this indicates a growing interest in problems of religious belief among the population at large. Aberdeen is, after all, a University city, and since Mrs. Knight is lecturer in psychology and the Rev. Pitt-Watson University chaplain, a large proportion of the spectators no doubt consisted of students. Moreover, Mrs. Knight has, of course, a national reputation following her famous broadcasts, and both speakers were due to take part in a television programme in a few days. However, to see so many people prepared to forsake TV and cinema in order to attend a closely-reasoned philosophical discussion was indeed gratifying.

In introducing the participants I gave a brief history of the conflict between science and religion since the publication of *Origin of Species*. I went on to point out that both BBC and ITV had very peculiar ideas of what constituted unbiased religious discussion. They generally confronted an educated Christian with an amateur sceptic, often a journalist, with the result that the scales were heavily weighted in favour of the former. I suggested that the Christian's opponent should always be drawn from one of the recognised humanist and secular societies. These remarks gained headlines in Saturday's Aberdeen *Press and Journal* — "Minister Hits at TV and Radio Discussions."

In her address Mrs. Knight delivered a clear and hard-hitting attack on Christian doctrine, which she carefully distinguished from Christian ethics. The widespread incidence of pain and suffering throughout nature precluded the existence of a personal God, and there was little or no evidence for Christ's resurrection, and human survival after death in general. She quoted delinquency figures from Holland, Great Britain and the United States to show that religion had the reverse of a good moral effect.

The Rev. Ian Pitt-Watson, who is the son of a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, and one of the leading younger ministers of the Kirk, did not in his speech answer Mrs. Knight's charges directly. He contended that Christianity was not irrational but supra-rational. The life, death and resurrection of Christ represented God's intervention in history. People who could not respond to the challenge of the Christian faith were as tone-deaf as those who failed to appreciate a Beethoven symphony.

There then followed an interesting point-by-point exchange of views between the speakers. Mr. Pitt-Watson questioned Mrs. Knight closely on the problem of moral values, asking how, if there were no absolute standards, one action could meaningfully be said to be "better" than another. Mrs. Knight acknowledged this difficulty, but argued that the hypothesis of a personal God, far from solving the problem, in fact aggravated it. In her turn she demanded of Mr. Pitt-Watson how he could reconcile such unpleasant natural phenomena as the carrion crow with the reality of an all-powerful, all-loving creator. Mr. Pitt-

Watson thought there may have been a "fall" in the animal kingdom as well as a fall of man, but admitted that in these matters we can only see through a glass darkly.

After a collection which conclusively disproved all tales concerning Aberdeen meanness, an excellent discussion from the floor of the house took place. Humanists and Christians seemed fairly evenly divided, and many interesting points were raised. One Christian who affirmed that a mouse stalked by a cat really enjoyed the experience was howled down by his irate neighbours. Mr. Pitt-Watson confessed that he did not understand how a "Christian" nation could have dropped the first atom bomb.

When each speaker had briefly summed up, I regretfully brought the meeting to a close. The debate was first-class propaganda for humanism, and there can be no doubt that many people present gained a new appreciation of the case for freethought. There was a comprehensive and on the whole accurate account next day in the local morning and evening newspapers.

Fox Hunting

WE RECENTLY DISCOVERED a case where an area president of the R.S.P.C.A. was also a Master of Foxhounds! An inquiry brought information from the Chief Secretary of the R.S.P.C.A. to the effect that there was nothing inconsistent in this because in the case of the fox "alternative methods of control do not exist." The fox is "a comparatively small animal running close to the ground and offering a poor target," and to class it with some other cases is to "over-simplify" the problem. The R.S.P.C.A. "adheres to a policy which it deems to be reasonable and realistic."

The R.S.P.C.A. official statement of policy says that "as regards fox-hunting, alternative methods of killing foxes, such as shooting, poisoning or trapping, can well cause more suffering, and the Society therefore does not at present attack fox hunting."

Now if we grant the above argument (which actually we do not, as will be seen), what becomes of all the dressing up, the red habits and the horns and all the other childish paraphernalia and ceremony? Does the R.S.P.C.A. think we are foolish enough to believe that people who behave in this way have no other motive but to put one fox to its eternal sleep as courteously and painlessly as possible?

Are we to suppose that these dear, kindly folk, having tried all other methods in vain, are at long last, and entirely against their natural inclinations, persuaded that the only method of extermination is to make it a grand and noble Social Occasion!

The R.S.P.C.A. is a *royal* society. Does that mean it has the approval of the Sovereign? Is the Queen perhaps a patron? And if so, what shall we proceed to deduce?

However, neither Mr. Shipper nor I was satisfied with the R.S.P.C.A. reply, and after Mr. Shipper had had further—but not progressive—correspondence with them, our next contact was the League Against Cruel Sports. They informed us that control of the fox population *can* be achieved without the cruelty and barbarism of hunting.

In 1956 fox destruction societies in England and Wales accounted for 7,300. We are referred to the Ministry's Bulletin No. 150 (H.M. Stationery Office, Kingsway, London) called "Wild Mammals and the Land," which gives instructions on how to avoid cruelty in fox shooting. At 2s. 6d. the book also serves the purpose of a small book with photographs, on Natural History.

G.H.T.

De-Populate II

By R. READER

IMPRESSIONS made on our senses are stored in memory as past experiences. As these latter accumulate, we realise that they form a chain leading up to the "present moment." And if we compare our own personal chain with those of other people we can see that all show certain similarities and linkages, that is, they are subject to laws. Circumstances which existed in the past, if reproduced in the present, are likely to produce the same effects in the future. At the same time, we all become aware, through the death of our fellows, that the organs on which we depend for our sense impressions are not everlasting, that they suffer the same fate as all other living matter. The chain of cause and effect ends abruptly with our own demise, and all our attempts to look beyond are useless: we can conceive of after-life only in terms of living experiences—of which death is the negation.

Men in all ages have come up against this impassable barrier, and in general their reactions have been of two kinds. A minority accept the barrier, reflecting that the object of life is to go on living, and that our existence presents too many practical problems, too many occasions for service, too many opportunities for creative work, or in helping others to create, to waste it in profitless speculation. This is the attitude of the buoyant, healthy mind.

The position of the others is less happy. Unable to pass the barrier by reason, they skip over it in imagination, constructing a life-after-death which, obviously, can be based only on their own, personal living experiences. And this is where the trouble starts. The living experiences of any two individuals are never identical. Furthermore, since the purpose of the imaginative construction is to allay death-anxiety, any contradiction (or even modification) of one individual's construction by a second individual will produce anxiety, antagonism and hostility. It is this, and nothing else, that is responsible for the notorious love existing between various Christian sects, and, indeed, between any two religious groups.

Nor is this all. It is a truism that nature compensates, and often over-compensates for exaggerated concentration on any given aspect of life (e.g., many intelligent and studious children, brought up amidst sickness, suffering and bereavement, have later become exceptional physicians). Similarly, religious neurosis (a top-heavy leaning to the phenomenon of death) invariably engenders inordinate worship of death's antithesis—*young life*. That is why organised religion, in all countries and in all ages, has always encouraged and provoked human procreation by every possible means.

Such a policy at first was bound to succeed. In the days of the mammoth, humanity could hope to survive only by procreating abundantly. For centuries population rose side by side with living standards, and nowhere was there any consciousness that this process would necessarily be limited by the area and resources of the earth.

Today, in a thousand ways and places, population is outstripping production. But even more important than any material considerations are the mental effects of swarming. It is now virtually impossible for the Western European to obtain those moments of relaxation and solitude essential to mental health, virtually impossible for him to stir without physically or metaphorically getting in someone else's way.

But always the delegates pass over the problem, or

invoke the Aunt Sally of India, where emaciated corpses are altogether too obvious to be disregarded. One can imagine the consternation, the frozen silence, that would greet the delegate who said, "Gentlemen! What you see in India is only a simplified, gross example of what is taking place in a different manner here. Thanks to our favoured position, we are not yet starving. But the hospitals are overflowing with mental and physical disease; the corpses on the congested roads; the insuperable housing difficulties; the increasing taint of criminality and degeneracy; the unending 'rise in the cost of living' (that marvellous euphemism for the disappearance of all that makes human life more than sleeping, eating and drinking); and above all the nightmare obligation to construct inhuman killers for the adolescents of other nations in order that our own may survive—are not these things, and a million more, incontrovertible evidence that we are following India, not leading it?"

No, a delegate would never say this. It goes directly against the purely personal death-anxiety-motivated after-life constructions of religious neurosis.

Until these errors in the collective thinking have been eliminated, it is quite useless for delegates to herd together into rooms and to try to overcome, by a few sonorous words and gestures, the problems that have the common origin of overpopulation. These problems are forcing ever more restrictions and controls upon us—the very restrictions and controls that we so deplore on the other side of the Curtain. If we in Britain really wish to avoid the military dictatorship that has overtaken a large part of the other side of that Curtain, we must realise that *all those who are now encouraging and provoking procreation are helping the Communists*. Five million extra babies in snow and tundra, with general conditions wretchedly low is one thing; a million more on an already overpopulated island living on importations will bring about economic collapse (the prelude to military defeat) long before the said babies can fight for us in 1976 (or in 1986 if they have to learn atomic theory). Therefore let us bring the population question boldly into the open, ignoring the gibberings of organised religion. The "world that could be" is too beautiful and interesting to sacrifice it to ideas that have their foundations rooted in the delirium of a handful of religious neurotics.

Museum Piece

Beware! for the Bells of St. Quintin have tolled;
Have a care, as the reckoning nears.
Get the muzzles and gags or the future will hold
Bloody noses and cauliflower ears.

Let us hail the Queen's Champion, loyal Sir Hogg,
As a throwback to History's pages,
England's hero who challenges Malcolm the Dog,
Stepping straight from the bold Middle Ages.

Has any museum curator a case
For a comic historic exhibit?
Give our campanological warrior a place
By the cuckstool, the stocks and the gibbet.

G. H. TAYLOR.

The Pope Appeals—To Jesus

M. LOUIS DOREAU sends us a translation of the Pope's prayer to Jesus to encourage sacerdotal callings. Taken from the French paper, *Le Figaro*, it appears in a despatch from Rome dated 31st October, 1957. We are sure readers will find it interesting, not to say, amusing.

"Art Thou not distressed, O Lord, to see so many multitudes, like unto shepherdless folds, without any one to break for them the bread of Thy Word, without any one to offer them the water of Thy Grace, exposed to the peril of hungry wolves that ever besiege them?"

Canst Thou without suffering behold so many fields where the ploughshare has not yet penetrated, where thistles and thorny berries grow rife without anybody to dispute their ground?

Hast Thou no pains to see so many gardens yesterday green and leafy, threatened to become yellow and barren? Wilt Thou allow so many harvests already ripe to weather down their grain and become lost for want of arms able to gather them?

O Mary, purest Mother, who from Thy pious hands bestowed us the Holiest of Priests—O glorious Patriarch Joseph, the perfect example of response to the holy appeals—O Saintry priests, who in Heaven form around the Divine Lamb a chorus of devotion—obtain for us numerous and good opportunities so that the Fold of the Lord, upheld and guided by watchful pastors, may reach the sweetest pastures of Eternal Felicity. AMEN."

CORRESPONDENCE

MRS. KNIGHT ON TV

In the history of Freethought in this country it has seldom been the highly placed men who have made the running. This has been done by others who have made it possible for the rest to speak more freely than they would have done without the preparation that has been made for them.

Everyone remembers the famous Margaret Knight broadcasts because they represented the first break in the B.B.C. sound barrier.

Yet a further step forward was taken when the B.B.C. permitted a discussion on television between Mrs. Knight and three well-known Christians on Tuesday, October 22nd. Once again, Mrs. Knight spoke as a Scientific Humanist and was able to get across to her audience some brief but adequate statements of the Humanist case. There then followed a number of questions from the Christians, especially from the clergymen, who exhibited none of that "humility before the facts" which characterised Mrs. Knight's remarks. Once again we had an illustration of the fact that when a well-known man or woman, prominent in some branch of science, is asked to talk on religion, the clergy are quick to make the most of their admissions, and to slur over what they say against religion.

It is to be hoped that in any future discussion of this sort, Mrs. Knight will press on with the good work and will not permit her scrupulous sense of fair play and forbearance, nor her well-known gentleness of manner, to deter her from administering some much needed raps upon deserving clerical knuckles.

JACK GORDON

BECHAMP AND PASTEUR

In the interests of truth, may I be allowed to correct J. Fournel's statement (September 20th) in which he says, "What Pasteur demolished was not spontaneous generation, *in general*, but the *then* so-called spontaneous generation..." All the evidence available shows clearly that whatever demolition Pasteur was credited with was not due to any discoveries of his own. He had firmly established himself in the camp of the Sponteparists, as the spontaneous generationists were called, and there he remained until 1858. In the opposite camp was the great savant Béchamp, of whose discoveries the *Moniteur Scientifique* predicted that time would do justice to them, and that when the then living actors had passed from the stage and impartial judgment brought into play his genius would be revealed to the world.

During the years 1854-57, Béchamp had been quietly submitting the then prevalent theories about spontaneous generation to careful scientific tests in his laboratory at the Strasbourg School of Pharmacy, at which school he held professorships in Pharmacy and Chemistry. He also held doctorates of Science, Medicine, and

Physics. The first results of his experiments were submitted to the French Academy of Science in 1855, and the final results, together with his conclusions, in 1857. He had proved conclusively that so-called spontaneous generation could not take place if air, with its atmospheric germs, was rigidly excluded from the solutions under test, which led to the conclusion that what was thought to be spontaneous generation was brought about by existing living organisms.

It was not until 1858 that Pasteur, after having previously poured scorn on Béchamp's experiments, went over to the camp of the Panspermists, who were the opponents of spontaneous generation. It may be contended that neither Béchamp nor Pasteur disproved the theory of spontaneous generation, but it cannot be disputed that Béchamp was first in the field. No wonder Fr. Guérmonprez, in his *Béchamp: Études et Souvenirs*, wrote (page 18): "To get a right idea of questions of priority, the works of Pasteur... are not the ones to be studied; but the impartial records of the learned Sciences, particularly those of the Academy of Sciences of the Institute of France." Pasteur's flagrant plagiarisms of Béchamp's writings and ideas finally compelled the latter to make a public protest. Incidentally, Béchamp was well ahead of Pasteur in calling attention to the relationship of germs to disease, which he said, and proved, were the results and not the cause of disease—a view to which an increasing number of doctors are now beginning to subscribe.

J. T. EGERTON.

BILLY GRAHAM

Re M.C.'s letter, Billy Graham made clear the real object of his "Crusade" when he said, "The Germans are flexing their muscles; they are head and shoulders above other peoples; they are entitled to the most modern weapons." It seems their bestial crimes—recorded in *Scourge of the Swastika*—made them eligible to join the "peace-loving nations" of N.A.T.O.

Brig. General Crozier wrote that to win wars it was necessary to transform men into beasts, and to make sure the change was permanent! He praised the Christian Churches as our "greatest creators of blood-lust," and Dr. Graham certainly keeps up that tradition!

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

AN APPRECIATION

I have read with great satisfaction Mr. G. I. Bennett's article on "Religious Faith and Moral Life." It has helped me a lot and I think that more of that kind of article would go far to show the Christian what our Freethought philosophy is.

CHARLES DENNING.

OBITUARY

WE REGRET to announce the death of Sydney Brooks of Holborn, London, at the age of 69. Mr. Brooks was the son of a Freethinker and had been a reader of this paper for many years. He had a wide circle of friends by whom he will be sadly missed. We extend our sympathy to Mrs. Brooks and family.

The General Secretary of the National Secular Society conducted a Secular Service at the City of London Crematorium on Tuesday, November 5th.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H. Taylor. Price 3/6; postage 6d.

FREEDOM'S FOE—THE VATICAN. By Adrian Pigott. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

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