

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVII—No. 47

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

AFTER A GLANCE at the Indian cult of Buddhism which later became the world's first cosmopolitan creed, authors and editors of the *Men of Wisdom* Series turned their attention to Christianity, that curiously destined oriental cult which became the religion of Europe. Whilst Buddhism migrated east from India, Christianity conversely went west into Europe. The three volumes still to be considered in the new series concern three leading figures in the evolution of Christianity: Sts. Paul and Augustine, and the lesser-known German medieval mystic, "Meister" Eckhart. Continuing in chronological order, we now propose to discuss St. Paul. We use the term "discuss" since—whilst such a point of view is ignored by the Roman Catholic author—the extant sources for any "biography" of Paul, are heavily suspect. Even the actual existence of the New Testament Paul has been questioned by some serious scholars.

The Second Founder of Christianity

All such rationalistic criticisms are blissfully ignored by M. Claude Tresmontant—the author—and by Mr. Donald Attwater, his English translator. Every word of the Book of Acts relating to the life and activity of the New Testament Paul is authentic history; and every word of the "Pauline" Epistles was actually penned by the Apostle, coming down to us verbatim, without subsequent additions. This applies, incidentally, to all the "Pauline" Epistles as accepted dogmatically by the Roman Catholic Church—even to such elsewhere universally rejected Epistles as *Timothy*, *Titus*, and *Hebrews*. In short, our Catholic author presents the orthodox Paul, the "Second Founder" of Christianity and, in effect (rather than the shadowy "First Pope," Peter—to whom, and to whose, alleged connection with Rome, our author hardly refers) the actual founder both of the Church of Rome and of Catholic and Christian theology. If we put our critical faculties into temporary cold-storage and accept the author's assumptions—which are those of his Church—one must admit that he has performed his self-appointed task very competently. He gives us a scholarly account of the times, and the historical and cultural background of the First century missionary; whilst the illustrations are remarkable and varied. For a small book of some 200 pages, the production is worthy of the well-established reputation of its publishers. Incidentally, the numerous citations from the "Pauline" Epistles with which the book is interspersed are taken by the English translator from the recent English translation by the late Monsignor Ronald Knox. They sometimes differ considerably from the Protestant Authorised and Revised versions, and are less sonorous and grandiloquent. Certainly the translation is much more modern in style than the Protestant translations. Perhaps this can be cited as another example of the worldly wisdom of the Church of Rome.

The Acts and the Epistles

As M. Tresmontant admits: "The only sources we have

for the life of St. Paul are *The Acts of the Apostles* and the letters he wrote to various Christian communities." With regard to the former, *Acts* give a vivid and fairly detailed summary of the activities of Paul as an early Christian missionary, particularly the anonymous travel-diary which writes in the first person plural about the sea-voyages undertaken by the Apostle and his companions. Looking at the question from a critical angle, one can say that

the question of Paul's existence depends almost entirely on the account in *Acts*. The series of elaborate theological treatises nowadays designated the "Pauline" Epistles, appear to belong to a later age, and to be by different hands. As the German scholar, Albert Kalthoff,

has aptly commented, it is most unlikely that Paul, the missionary of *Acts*, wrote a single line of them; particularly of what Kalthoff describes as "that monumental tome of Catholic theology," *The Epistle to the Romans*, which may be said to have constituted the dogmatic foundation of the whole Christian theological system. (cf. A. Kalthoff: *The Rise of Christianity*, translated by Joseph McCabe).

I do not, however, think, any more than Kalthoff did, that the fact that an entire religious literature was named after Paul, necessarily disproves his historical existence. Actually it rather appears to confirm it. The fact that so many later authors wished to invoke the name of Paul for their own compositions is surely a testimony to his fame and, accordingly, to his existence. This supposition is strengthened by the nature of the "Pauline" literature, which tended towards a breakaway from Judaism. The Paul of *Acts* is also represented as a bold innovator who denied the universality of the Mosaic Law. It seems probable that the historic Paul—the missionary in *Acts*—started the movement which eventually created the Christian Church, independent of Judaism: a transformation which the *Epistles* indicate. Naturally, on such a supposition, where *Acts* and the *Epistles* disagree in their description of Paul's activities, *Acts* is likely to be more reliable.

Paul and Marcion: "The Apostle of the Heretics."

The fame of Paul—whatever the facts about him—belongs to a later age than his own. It was not until over a century after the traditional date of his death (64 A.D.) that Paul was accepted by the orthodox Catholic Church. As late as the middle of the second century, Justin Martyr—then the leading writer of the Church—never quotes or refers to him. To Tertullian—as late as about 200 A.D.—Paul was "the apostle of the heretics," and it is to the "heretics" that he owed his fame—and his later acceptance by the orthodox Church. What is probably the latest book in the New Testament, the *Second Epistle of St. Peter*, refers to the contemporary heretics who twist Paul's writings "to their own damnation" (Ch. 3. V.16). In fact, the first time Paul's Epistles appeared in a canonical text, it was in the heretical New Testament of Marcion, the great second

VIEWS and OPINIONS

"Men of Wisdom"

—St. Paul

By F. A. RIDLEY

century heretic who published the first N.T., prior to which the Jewish Bible, our Old Testament, was that of the Christian Church also. Marcion's N.T. consisted of his own gospel and ten Epistles of Paul. He was excommunicated by the Church of Rome in 144 A.D., perhaps the first *authentic* date in the history of Christianity? Later, the Church "borrowed" Paul from the "heretics," bowdlerized his alleged writings, and forged new ones to refute Marcion. In one of these (1 *Timothy* 6:20), Marcion's book, *The Antitheses* is mentioned by name—a fact concealed in our dishonest translation. By Tertullian's time, Paul, "the apostle of the heretics," who owes his fame to Marcion and

does not appear to have ever referred to the Jesus Christ of the Gospels, had become accepted as a *bona fide* apostle. Actually, though, it was not until the Reformation that Paul—the "Paul" of *Romans*—fully came into his own as the "Second Founder of Christianity."

We must conclude with a warning to our readers that neither the above exegesis, nor anything remotely resembling it, will be found in this highly orthodox, undoubtedly learned, and beautifully illustrated book by a Catholic scholar.

[*Men of Wisdom — St. Paul*, by Claude Tresmontant, translated by Donald Attwater, Longmans, Green and Co. 1957 — 6s.]

The Chronicler as Propagandist

By JOHN BOWDEN

THE TENDENCY to exaggerate is seen in almost everything the Chronicler wrote. Thus in giving his account of the war of Abijah against Jeroboam, the Judean monarch is said to have led an army of 400,000 men against the king of Israel, whose army numbered exactly twice as many. This army of Israel, moreover, caught Abijah's forces in an ambush. It mattered not; Jahweh was with Abijah. All his warriors had to do was shout, then pursue and massacre the panic-stricken Northerners, half a million of whom were killed. This terrific butchery was, we are given to believe, due entirely to the intervention of Jahweh.

The number of men engaged as given by the Chronicler is utterly absurd. Still more absurd is the number of slain — 100,000 more than the total number of Abijah's army. The older writer has not a word to say about this remarkable episode. We can be quite sure that had things happened as related by the Chronicler the earlier authority would have known of it and would certainly have recorded them.

What 1 Kgs. 15:3 tells us about Abijah (there called Abijam, presumably to distinguish him from Abijah, the son of Jeroboam — or has the Chronicler confused the two names?) is that he "walked in all the sins of his father" Rheoboam. This statement is judiciously omitted by the Chronicler. Abijah was "persona grata" with him because of the Judean King's denunciation of Jeroboam for having "cast out the priests of Jahweh, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites" and making priests "after the manner of other nations." As a result of the championship of the sacerdotal caste Abijah was extolled as one blessed by Jahweh, it being recorded that he had 14 wives, who collectively bore him 22 sons and 16 daughters! All mention of his "sins" was suppressed. (2 Chron. 12).

After this highly-coloured account of Abijah's crushing defeat of Jeroboam's army comes the story (Chap. 14) of the destruction by Abijah's successor Asa of one million men plus 300,000 chariots under Zerah the Ethiopian, Asa's army numbering 580,000, i.e., less than half that of the enemy. Once more the older historian knows nothing of this mighty battle and its outcome. There is a passing allusion to Asa's war against Jeroboam (a continuation of the wars of Abijah), but that is all. The writer of Kings refers his readers to "the chronicles of the kings of Judah" for further particulars of Asa's reign, but these chronicles are not the Biblical Chronicles which, as already indicated, were not then in existence. The Chronicler himself frequently refers to the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

The Chronicler's object in claiming a great disparity between the forces of Judah and those of their enemies was to heighten the victories of the Judeans. Jahweh was with

Judah and in consequence the tiny kingdom was able to rout armies twice the size of theirs. Why, with Jahweh on their side, Judah needed any army at all the Chronicler deponeth not.

Scholarly Christians recognise and acknowledge that the Chronicler has tampered with the older text and the fact has perturbed them greatly. There is a natural reluctance to admit that the "sacred writer" has been guilty of conscious dishonesty, and we can concede that he saw nothing amiss in altering the older texts to make them conform to his ideas of things.

The Bible-venerating Rev. Professor Sayce, explains that the Chronicler: —

"wrote with a didactic and not a historical purpose. That he should have used the framework of history to illustrate the lessons he wished to draw was as much an accident as that Sir Walter Scott should have based certain of his novels on the facts of mediaeval history. He cared as little for history in the modern European sense of the word as the Oriental of today, who considers himself at liberty to embellish or modify the narrative he is repeating in accordance with his fancy or the moral he wishes to draw from it."

Elsewhere Sayce describes Chronicles as "largely midrash," i.e., legendary stories with a religious theme.

Is it churlish to point out that no one has ever suggested that Scott was an inspired writer?

Says Dean Milman: —

"The books of Chronicles may be rather called the books of the High Priests, more especially of the House of Zadok, the line of Eleazar. The reason is simple. From its own internal evidence the books could not have been written before the Captivity. But at that time the high priesthood was aspiring towards the supremacy; it was gradually acquiring that kingly power which it afterwards assumed. The compiler, therefore, perhaps one of that order, would adopt that tradition, that version, or that colouring of events, which would give sanction of antiquity or authority to these sacerdotal claims."

CATHOLICISM IN ACTION

THE VATICAN'S assault on Asia has certainly made great headway since the end of the Second World War. According to the statistics released by the Tokyo Apostolic Nunciature, the Catholic population of Japan increased by 14,706 during the year ending 30/6/1957. This brought the total Japanese Catholic population to 240,000.

HUNGARIAN Catholic weekly *Uj Ember* reports that 40,000 Budapest children have now enrolled for religious teaching in schools, a figure 17% higher than last year. Bishop Endrey, Apostolic Delegate to Hungary, said the Church had appointed 182 teachers to instruct the children. After delays, the instruction would be in full swing this month.

Challenge of Our Age

By FREDERICK E. PAPPS

THERE IS PROBABLY no event in recent history which has aroused such world wide interest and conjecture as the successful launching into space of the Russian satellite "Sputnik." Whether it has convinced the few "flat earthers" that this old earth of ours really does spin around the sun in space is hard to say. However, it is true to say that its appearance has been received with wonder and amazement by the lesser developed peoples of Asia and Africa. Even the inadequately educated here have had their imagination stirred.

In the United States, the event has created consternation in the political, military and scientific spheres, as a most serious blow to their claims of scientific and technical superiority over the rest of the world. Both Britain and the U.S.A. must now swallow the unpalatable fact that they are both being rapidly outpaced in the field of physical science.

Little more than forty years ago, Russia was a vast country peopled mainly by peasants kept in subjection and ignorance by the combined tyranny of an autocratic monarchy and a corrupt, superstitious church. How is it, then, that such a country, from a 98% illiterate population, has risen in so few years to such a high degree of scientific and technical excellence. This is the question which is uppermost in the minds of those whose business it is to govern and formulate our laws, those who direct our industries and finally those who, in our schools and colleges, have in their keeping the education and character building of the young.

A short while ago H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh very ably and conspicuously initiated what is known as the Geophysical Year, an international venture of the scientists all over the world in revealing many of the remaining secrets of the universe. Since the days of Galileo with his first telescope, astronomers have discovered much about the solar system, and the vast distances involved in a study of the universe. So, too, the microscope has revealed to the human eye an ever increasing source of wonder. Oceanographers are plumbing the vast depths, and geologists are finding evidence of the earth's antiquity by studying rocks and strata and fossils of creatures that lived millions of years ago. Despite the efforts of Christian apologists to assimilate the researches of science, the ultimate result is to render the Christian position untenable.

Sufficient knowledge is now available for a natural interpretation of the universe, without recourse to supernatural agency. This view is, of course, anathema to the hierarchy and to followers of the many various sects, who while detesting each other, are united in their hatred of the unbeliever.

For centuries past the Churches have been able, by means of control over all sources of knowledge, to keep the mass of people ignorant and uninformed. The ages of faith were the ages of dirt, squalor and ignorance. The survival of religion depends entirely upon applying the brake to the widening of human knowledge. By means of a very large measure of control over the educational system in our country, the Churches have discouraged and hampered the scientific side of education.

This country has now reached a stage when its deficiency in our rapidly expanding scientific age has become a serious matter for Government and nation. Much as we may hate the ideology of Russian Communism — its tyranny, its falsifications of history and many other features as com-

pared with Western ideas of democracy — the priority they have given to the cause of education is of the greatest significance. Theological objections have been swept aside and vast amounts of money spent on new schools and colleges where the pursuit of scientific research has been the sole aim.

In the *New Scientist*, 17 October, 1957, the eminent physicist, Dr. Kurt Mendelsson, F.R.S., writes: —

"While the present educational system here forces children at the age of fourteen to make up their minds whether or not they want to become scientists, the Russian can leave this decision until he is eighteen. An even greater loss to our scientific effort are probably those boys and girls, who, because they know nothing about science at fourteen, did not go in for science classes, although they might have been suitable material for scientific careers. Headmasters and parents have been brought up in the humanities, often with a defensive sneer for the growing importance of science and technology."

Some little while before the outbreak of World War I, Norman Angell published a best seller called *The Great Illusion*, which expounded in great detail, with masses of facts and figures, the utter futility and stupidity of war as a means of solving international disputes. We now know, after the impact of two world wars, how right he was.

Similarly, the scientific approach and the findings of scholarly research into the history and origins of Christian beliefs have been in most cases suppressed by the bigotry and intolerance of the Christian controllers of our educational system.

Although much lip service is paid to truth and its praises are lustily sung by all the many conflicting exponents of Christian theology, there is much evidence to show that the truth is feared most in this domain of priestly control. In the past they suppressed it by means of torture and bloodshed. Milder methods are now the rule. In the modern world these consist of a very large measure of control over numerous sources of information, such as the newspaper and magazine press, radio and television. That which they are unable to control directly, they rigidly boycott.

There is a saying that truth will out. Evidence of this is to be seen in the growing indifference to religion which is manifest today amongst the younger generation. Whilst not in the strict sense of the words sceptics or atheists, they do exhibit serious doubts as to the veracity of Christian claims. The acquiring of a more scientific education freed from the intellectual confusion created by theologians, must inevitably be followed by a discarding of these primitive beliefs. There is not the slightest doubt that if this country is to meet the challenge of the nuclear age, then the teaching of religious beliefs in our schools must be abolished and modern knowledge made available to all who can profit from it.

NEW I.T.A. CHAIRMAN

FREETHINKERS and liberal-minded people generally will view with alarm the appointment of Sir Ivone Kilpatrick as Chairman of the Independent Television Authority in succession to Sir Kenneth Clark. As Mr. Tom Driberg has reminded us, Sir Ivone was at the British Embassy in Berlin during the years of Hitler's ascendancy and was High Commissioner in Germany during the establishment of Dr. Adenauer and the restoration of the Krupps. This is ominous enough. To cap it all—and no doubt explain much of it—Sir Ivone Kilpatrick is a fervent Roman Catholic.

This Believing World

We are apt to forget sometimes that, though the Church of England is the dominant Church here, there are others — for example, the Methodist Church. Its one-time golden glory under the aegis of John Wesley has however sadly tarnished in this less credulous age, and the moans and groans which used to accompany their denunciations of sinners now, alas, are reserved for their own terrific decline in numbers and influence. As the *Methodist Recorder*, (almost whimpering) declares in a recent number, "leaders are wanted, not larger collections." The truth is that when anybody is found with brains enough to be a religious leader, it is an even chance at least that he finds leadership in the Methodist Church not at all his "vocation."

★

In the same journal there is a review of a book, *Margaret*, destined "to increase your faith," and we notice it only because its author, J. D. Ross, is described as having once been "a militant agnostic." Apart from the fact that most unbelievers who adopt the term "agnostic" do so because they refuse to be "militant," Mr. Ross appears to have gone over to Christ when he first saw "Margaret" in her sick-room, for he knew then that "the world of Christ was being laid open," and "Christ's words were the only ones to live by." Fortunately for Agnosticism, few Agnostics could be bowled over quite so easily, but we still cannot help wondering precisely what Mr. Ross's former militant Agnosticism was based upon?

★

We are pleased to record still another "Agnostic" who has found the Light. He is the Rev. Tom Allan of Glasgow, who once found his views on religion, says the *Sunday Mail*, "corresponding to those of an agnostic." Mr. Allan is now "one of Scotland's most enterprising ministers," and as such, in answer to Mrs. Margaret Knight's recent TV discussion with two parsons and a layman, he proclaims, "I am more certain of the existence of God than I am of the existence of Mrs. Knight" — which shows how a converted Agnostic can even be *plus royaliste que le roi*. His trumpet declaration of Faith begins by insisting that "it is a matter of life and death for you and your children," which is very poor stuff for a parson even if he were once an Agnostic. Mrs. Knight's splendid defence of Scientific Humanism carried no threat of "life and death" to anyone. The Rev. Mr. Allan is simply silly.

★

Needless to add, Mr. Allan's proof of the existence of God is based on his own experience — as he says, "I can speak with him day by day," and this argument, as old as the hills — Egyptian priests 5,000 years ago always declared that they could speak with Osiris or Horus or Isis just as easily as Mr. Allan can with "God" — is one which he thinks is shattering. Another very original argument, meant to overwhelm Mrs. Knight, is, "I believe in God because He revealed Himself in the Man of Nazareth." And this is followed by the also completely new argument about the "greatest thinkers in every field today are Christians," a variation of that dear old argument of our boyhood, "Don't you know that Mr. GLADSTONE is a Christian? Would you have the impudence to argue with HIM?"

★

That there have been arguments for the existence of God which well deserve study, we admit; But it is a long time since we had put forward as a serious contribution the naïve and infantile nonsense which the *Sunday Mail* has printed, and which no doubt is meant to strengthen the waverer and give courage to the Fundamentalist believer. Even the average Salvation Army teenager could do better.

The BBC's "Meeting Point" on the question whether to be a Christian, "Must I Pray?" would have gladdened the heart of Lord Reith, BBC's first boss, with its great Christian Message. Of course, as the parson present insisted, in response to the query, "Does God answer prayer?" there could be only one reply. God *always* answers *every* prayer — in *God's* way, not man's. So if you don't get what you want, say a motor car, a first class TV set, or a huge win on the pools after a long bout of prayer, it doesn't mean that the Almighty hasn't heard and noted your wish. He has, but he is the judge as to whether you ought to have these things, not you. In this, Sir E. Villiers, also present, heartily concurred. So now we know. We have an idea that the BBC's questioner was not a little "heretical," and probably wondered how it was possible for anybody in 1957 to hold such asinine views or be so gullible. But is there any limit to Christian muddle-headed credulity?

Write Lots of Letters

Margaret Knight's Advice

I SHOULD LIKE to urge members to write lots of letters. Write to the papers, write to your member of Parliament, write (in this country) to the BBC. I know this needs a certain amount of self-discipline. One is apt to be seized by the feeling "what on earth difference will it make, whether this letter of mine gets published in the *Barseshire Evening Argus* (or whatever its American or continental equivalent may be), or not." But it *does* make a difference.

It made a great difference, for example, after those broadcasts of mine. I have been told on good authority that editors were astonished at the number of Humanist letters they got, and that this altered the tone of their references to Humanism. For the tone *has* altered — not dramatically, but perceptibly.

What I would like to see is ten thousand Biro's springing from their scabbards — if I may put it that way — whenever some eminent person proclaims — as they are fond of doing, without a shred of evidence — that there are no better preventives of delinquency than the Church and the Sunday School. Or when the sort of thing happens that happened in Edinburgh recently, when a judge said that he would have refused the custody of a child to an atheist father, if it hadn't been that the grandmother, who was a Christian, lived with them, and would give the child religious instruction: and he added a few remarks about atheism and a child's welfare being essentially incompatible. If a thousand or so Humanists had written to the papers then, no doubt not one in twenty of the letters would have been published. But that doesn't mean they would have had no effect. They would have affected the tone of editorial comment: and that is one of the chief ways in which the climate of thought gets changed.

It is the greatest mistake to think that because we are a small and hard-up group, there is nothing much we can do. A small group of active and articulate people, who know where they stand, and know what they want, can achieve a great deal.

[Margaret Knight, concluding her speech to the I.H.E.U. at the Dinner in the House of Commons, September, 1957].

—NEXT WEEK—

A HUMANITARIAN VIEW OF SPACE

By G. I. BENNETT

THE FREETHINKER

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

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

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (83 Suffolk Street).—Sunday, November 24th, 7 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "Freethought, Religion, and Politics."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, November 24th, 6.45 p.m.: J. G. MCINTYRE, "History and Human Responsibility."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, November 24th, 7.15 p.m.: KEN SPRAGUE, "The Cartoon as Propaganda."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 26th, 7.15 p.m.: R. CLEMENTS, O.B.E., J.P., "This Crisis of Loneliness."

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street).—Sunday, November 24th, 3 p.m.: GUY ALDRED, "Freethought—Past, Present, and Future."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 24th, 6.30 p.m.: Professor A. L. ALLOWAY, "The Beginnings of Christianity."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, November 24th, 7 p.m.: C. T. SALISBURY, "Oppression and Exodus from Egypt."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street).—Friday, November 29th, 7.30 p.m.: J. W. CHALLAND, "A Plea for Better Heckling."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, November 24th, 2.30 p.m.: Rev. C. H. HARRINGTON, "A Study in Black and White."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 24th, 11 a.m.: Mrs. M. STOCKS, "Dynamics of the Divorce Problem."

University of Nottingham Union Debating Society (Portland Lecture Hall).—Tuesday, November 26th, 4.30 to 6.30 and 7.45 to 10 p.m.: "This House will beware of the Papal Bull." Guests: T. MOSLEY and E. TAYLOR, of the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, and Miss ERIKA FALLAUX, of the Catholic Evidence Guild, and another.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff).—Tuesday, November 26th, 7 p.m.: GEORGE DAVEY, "The Crisis and the Crusade."

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

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found an extract from the speech of Margaret Knight to the IHEU on the occasion of their dinner in the House of Commons. In it Mrs. Knight urges more letter writing to the press. Even when not published, freethought letters influence editorial comment. This form of propaganda is being excellently maintained by our FREETHINKER readers. We have not the space to mention all efforts that come to our notice, but while on the subject, we note that in the current week alone a dozen or more letters have been brought to our notice. In the *Evening News* at Nottingham, for example, freethought views are being presented and Mr. R. Morrell has been able to include mention of THE FREETHINKER and of the NSS in his latest published letter. Mr. D. Shipper is continually active in the columns of the press in South Wales, and is at the moment pointing to the disparity between Christian and Humanist broadcasting; he appears to have silenced the Monmouthshire Baptists who entered this field of controversy. The *Barnsley Chronicle* continues to be the happy hunting ground for freethought letter writers, and the last issue awards a huge amount of space to two excellent letters from Messrs. Daley and Irving. At Bournemouth, where there are many keen FREETHINKER readers, Mr. Huxley is writing on religion in schools.

Here, as at Leicester, Bolton and parts of London, the battery is pretty well continuous.

★

THE Japanese Government has set up a special committee to overhaul the Japanese educational system. It is interesting to note that two Catholics, Mother Takamine and Professor Inatome, are on the committee. The committee have been instructed to give special attention to an ethical code. To the R.C.s ethics and Catholicism are synonymous terms!

★

MR. JEFFREY SOESTER, secretary of the Secular Society (Leeds University), tells us that the Society (which has been in existence about eight months), although small in number, attracts a capacity attendance for meetings. Their last meeting was a lecture by Mr. Hector Hawton on "The Failure of Christianity."

LECTURE REPORT

"MY YEARS AS A MONK"

THE ENGAGEMENT of a new speaker in Mr. O. C. Drewitt, till recently Father Norbert Drewitt, O.P., a priest of the Dominican Order, was an experiment which proved an unqualified success for the N.S.S. Some 200 people packed one of the lecturing rooms of the Holborn Hall on Sunday evening, November 10th, to hear Mr. Drewitt on what was undoubtedly an attractive subject, "My Years as a Monk".

For over an hour the speaker was listened to with rapt attention while he described his monastic life and the mental processes which had led to his rejection of the Faith and the adoption of the freethought outlook. To a lecture teeming with inside information and pertinent comment the speaker added the delicious flavour of his own brand of dry humour.

Human beings, he maintained, are mostly intrinsically decent, and only go wrong by outside interference, "by being bullied and perverted and taught about God." "Religion," he concluded, "is the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity."

We are expecting that articles from the pen of Mr. Drewitt will be appearing in THE FREETHINKER in the new year.

G.H.T.

“All Made up”

By H. CUTNER

IT IS TO THE CREDIT of both *Psychic New* and *Two Worlds* that they do not shirk reporting long accounts of the address I gave to the Marylebone Spiritualist Association the other day. I meant it to be as strong an attack as I could give against the credulity and, in many cases, superstition of the average Spiritualist; and I had no hesitation in calling the belief that we can communicate with dead people as arrant a fraud as could be found anywhere. I think a good many of the audience had never heard their beliefs questioned in this forthright manner. And I say right here that the “replies” to the cases I gave were to me exceptionally disappointing.

I chose four cases from the history of Spiritualism — cases Spiritualists are always boosting up as giving the most unequivocal proofs of “survival.” Three of these cases are dealt with very fully, not only in “official” histories of the movement, but are given space whenever possible in our Spiritualist journals. Their editors are always quoting them, and nearly always we are given portraits — as if that proved anything whatever. The fourth case is a famous recent one which a one-time reader and contributor to *THE FREETHINKER* asked me to study, which I did so thoroughly, that it is now completely discredited except with those who are ready to believe anything, anywhere and at any time.

The Editor of *Psychic News* has devoted a leader to me — not for the first time — in the issue for November 1, headed with the title of this article, and in it he charges me with “looseness of statement, exaggeration, and facile generalisation.” I suspect that he would like to go much further.

We Freethinkers have always been charged with this kind of behaviour in the field of religion, so it is nothing new to me; but it really is amusing to find Mr. Archer doing his utmost to meet my criticisms with not only “looseness of statement, exaggeration, and facile generalisation,” but also with errors of fact. In any case, had I been properly answered at the meeting, there would have been no need for his leader.

I pointed out that the “founders” of Modern Spiritualism, the Fox Sisters, on their own confession, were unmitigated frauds. They admitted this after forty years of bamboozling the American public. Someone in my audience pointed out that one of them “recanted,” and I retorted, “How then can we trust a liar?” And Mr. Archer’s vindication of them is, “Why, then, does he himself quote their ‘confession’?” Now is not this clever? Here were three women (two of them very young at first) who went about the USA specialising in seances with “raps” with such success, that they are now venerated all over the world where Spiritualists congregate almost as much as Christians venerate Jesus, or Christian Scientists, Mrs. Eddy, and honoured as the glorious Founders of their cult. They confessed after 40 years that they were frauds, and one of them, (I believe), “recanted”; and because I quote this as proof that they had never communicated with the dead, I am actually charged with looseness of “statement, exaggeration, and facile generalisation.”

These three liars, let me tell Mr. Archer, were always put forward as proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that there are spirits who can “rap” a message on a table with their spirit hands; and I am quite sure that what he is really complaining about is that I was able to tell an audience of convinced believers that the Fox Sisters were utter

frauds. My audience obviously didn’t know — except perhaps for one or two — anything about their confession.

Then what about the world famous “levitation” of D. D. Home? Year in and year out, I have read about the way in which Home flew through an open window 80 feet above the ground, and wafted himself back through another window in another room in the same house. This completely lying story, like that of the Fox Sisters, is copied by every Spiritualist writer as Gospel truth — especially as the “witnesses” were three “aristocrats.” Mr. Archer has no doubt whatever of its truth. He says “the witnesses were satisfied that Home did levitate from one room to another.” The “witnesses”! The whole point of my criticism was that there were *no* witnesses. I quoted the exact words of one of the “witnesses”. Here is what Lord Dunraven said: “Rigorously speaking, it is incorrect to say, as I think has been said, that we *saw* Mr. Home wafted from one window to another.” And please note that the word “saw” is in Lord Dunraven’s italics, not mine. After telling us that the “witnesses were satisfied” when there were no witnesses, Mr. Archer proceeds to lecture me. “Lord Dunraven,” he says, was “merely trying to be exact and honest” — as if I called that in question. I cited Lord Dunraven to prove that there were *no* witnesses of a feat of levitation cited as having happened by every Spiritualist historian I have read, and in innumerable articles in Spiritualist journals. I can fancy nothing more inept than Mr. Archer’s silly remark.

It is the same with Mrs. Piper who, at one time, filled many books with accounts of her marvellous trance mediumship — while all the time she dismissed with contempt the childish “investigations” of her powers as a medium by “professors of science” like Lodge and others. When she was asked in a memorable interview for the *New York Herald* (October 20 1901) whether she had any “convincing proof of spirit return?” her answer was, “I cannot truthfully say I have.” And all poor Mr. Archer can urge here is that, like Lord Dunraven, she was “merely trying to be exact and honest;” and in any case, “she was in trance and not the best person to judge.” Well, if *she* didn’t believe the “professors of science,” why should we?

Finally, there is the case of the ill-fated airship R.101 whose unlucky commander, Irwin, “came through” to Mrs. Garrett the medium and the late Harry Price — so we are told — a few days after his death; and Mrs. Garrett was able to give the world an account of the accident packed with technical details which, when compared with the “official” Report issued months (or years, I am not quite sure which) afterwards, tallied in every particular. In the whole of the sordid stories associated with Spiritualism I do not know one which is more of an impudent fraud. I charged the Spiritualist Movement with making it up — hence the title of Mr. Archer’s leader — and I stick to every word I have said on the matter. The story, as given by the *Sunday Dispatch* presumably written by Harry Price, giving all sorts of details of the seance, was according to his biographer and executor, Dr. Paul Tabori, “edited and changed for the purposes of Sunday circulation, and Harry Price had little to do with it.” I dealt in detail with it in these columns in 1949, and I am sure that not a few Spiritualists in the know then must have breathed a silent prayer that very few believers knew anything about *THE FREETHINKER*.

And just a few words to Mrs. Goldney of the Society for Psychical Research who was present, and who, according to

Psychic News, said that I "would not stick to the facts." These columns are open to her to justify this remark. I need only say here that in the interview I had with her over the R.101, she admitted to me that she neither believed in communication with the dead, nor that poor Commander Irwin "returned." And Harry Price said in his *In Search for Truth* (page 158), "There is no evidence that it was the discarnate Irwin speaking." Before talking about my "not sticking to the facts," would it not be best to deal with Harry Price who actually was at the seance with Mrs. Garrett?

It would bore readers if I dealt with the *Two Worlds*

account of my address; but the caption, used as a heading, "Cutner Cuts Curious Capers" could be "capped" by describing many or all of its Editor's talks as "Barbanel Bellows Bankrupt Blather" — but it gets us nowhere. However, I understand that "a complete analysis of every allegation" I made will be given in future numbers. This is all to the good and I shall look forward to this "exposé." If nothing else, my address has shaken Spiritualists up, and they will now have to produce *evidence* that we can talk to the dead.

I await the proof with a smile.

Religion in Schools Today

By ROBERT COSTER

TWENTY YEARS AGO it was possible, even if exceptional, for a child to pass through nine years' schooling and have relatively little Christian mumbo-jumbo rubbed into him. Religious assemblies and religious teaching were optional; true, the option was almost never used, but religious education was undefined and its content was left to Heads and teachers. That was bad enough: it meant at the very least the morning hymn and Ourfatherwichartinhevn, two hundred days a year. It left Scripture a haphazard business, however, and — stupid and time-wasting as it may have been — the fact is that for most of us it amounted to nothing more than reading round the class and secretly looking for the scatological bits in the Bible.

The 1944 Education Act changed all that. It is a pity few people seem to be aware that religion has a far stronger footing in schools today than at any time since the public educational system began. It has, in fact, become the only subject in the school curriculum to which is attached a statutory compulsion to teach it. Daily religious worship is compulsory now, and religious instruction is on a firm basis of syllabuses, specialists, exams and inspectors. There has been a boom in publishing School Bibles and Lives of Holy People; the strip-drawn Bibles in Pictures have gone well, too, showing that the means matter little but the end much.

For most school subjects the syllabuses are prepared by specialist teachers or by the Head teachers. Thus, there may be quite wide differences from school to school in what is actually taught in some subjects: geography, for example, or science. Religious instruction is again unique in having approved national or regional syllabuses which are prepared by committees representing the education authorities, the Church of England and other religious denominations. They contain what one would expect: Old Testament legends, New Testament miracles, commandments and the rest, and lives of eminent Christians too.

Two periods of this a week may not seem much. It is, however, as much as any school subject has apart from English and Mathematics. History, geography, art, science, music, handicrafts all have the same allotted time (poetry has less). And really religion gets a good deal more — not only through the daily assemblies, but in all kinds of extras: broadcast services, the Harvest and Christmas services which have become general in recent years, school plays with religious themes, and the ubiquitous parson whenever he can be invited in.

Children may, of course, be withdrawn if their parents wish. It rarely happens except with Jews (and only, by the way, a devout minority of them). The 1944 Act made this harder too. Under the old dispensation, any religious

instruction had to be given at the beginning or the end of the school day to facilitate withdrawal; that requirement has been wiped out. After all, few people want their children stood apart and marked as odd, and that is what happens; "special arrangements" have to be made which mean that the child either is put in an unfamiliar class or has to hang about for the religious periods, and in some cases the arrangements are so "special" as to make the child almost a sideshow. And atheists are tolerant people as a class, wondering if it is good to press their own convictions on undeveloped minds; Christians have no such scruples.

For teachers to withdraw is even rarer, though the Education Act lays down that no teacher shall suffer any penalty or disability if he chooses not to teach religion and not to attend religious worship. Nothing could sound fairer than that, but unfortunately it means very little in practice. An atheist teacher has no chance of becoming a Head, for example, simply because he cannot conduct religious assemblies. Indeed, a teacher who withdraws blights his chances of promotion generally; few Boards of Governors (the usual interviewing bodies) have not a parson, and few fail to ask the applicant his views on religious teaching.

The Act lays it down that there shall be no victimization, but, of course, victimization is almost impossible to prove. This writer knows of at least two cases where it would be difficult to establish and equally difficult not to see, that teachers were being bullyragged for not toeing the religious line. And even where there is more liberal treatment, no teacher may safely make non-Christian views known to the children. A gospel fanatic may hand out his tracts (during the Billy Graham crusade, many enthusiasts took parties of children to the meetings), but to lend a boy a freethought pamphlet or suggest the existence of a case against religion is to ask for trouble.

Most teachers are religious, however. There is a minority who profess little or no religion but teach it nevertheless — only a very small number actually withdraws. The training of teachers is governed by religion to a considerable extent. Originally, the colleges were run almost exclusively by religious bodies. Something like half the total number are still church-administered and since 1944, of course, the other ones have had to concede some of whatever secular character they possessed by arranging for specialised training in religious teaching.

What does all this lead to? It means that, after nearly ninety years of public elementary education, religion has tightened its grasp on the young — has, in fact, as good a grasp as it could wish, outside Catholic countries. It means that, after two hundred years of modern science, children are being stuffed with that ineffable twaddle about

Creation; if anyone doubts this, by the way, he should look at Clifford M. Jones's *The Methods of Christian Education*, which is a handbook for teachers under the 1944 dispensation. And it means that the meagre avenues of withdrawal that had to be provided as a show of democracy are, if not blocked, strewn with obstacles which are the customary litter of Christianity.

The effects may be argued over. A whole generation now has passed through the 1944-Act schools, but has not yet finished growing up. So far, however, there are no signs of lessening of crime, immorality or any of the other things supposed to have been caused by the absence of proper religious teaching: another empirical test of Christian claims. But any student of society knows, anyway, that these things have nothing to do with religion. The simple facts are that the Churches want control of people's — especially young people's — minds, and the State has given it to them because religion is the oldest and best means for securing a submissive working class.

It is easy to think that it doesn't matter because children throw it all off or even scarcely take it in. Look at the boy who, asked what happened at Belshazzar's feast, wrote hopefully "They got full up." One thing that religious teaching hasn't done much harm to him. That is to underestimate the power not of religion but of school. History, geography, science, language are neglected and forgotten too; the fact remains that, for most people, what they learned at school is the core of their thought on each subject. The growth of elementary education has been called "the silent social revolution." Possibly, then, the latest stage is the counter-revolutionary one.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EVIL EYE

ONE of the first things I learnt as a child was to know and ward off the Evil Eye. It was a certain dart thrown, usually by a woman, which invariably brought ill-luck in its wake. "When going or coming from school," my Mother advised me, "look on the ground when you see anyone coming, as the person might cast a malignant eye on you!" Lo and Behold! the worst once happened. One look from such a woman made my leg swell. To dispel the curse, Mother brought the woman to say three times: "God bless the child! Begone Evil Spirit," and, Hey Presto, the swelling went down. After the measles I remained thin and miserable. Mother put my condition down to the Evil Eye of the neighbours who were all envious of her beautiful children. As a cure, an ass was placed on the road in front of our shop door. Father stood one side and Mother the other to catch me as I was swung over the back and under the belly of the animal, while the whole street looked on and I accompanied the performance with piercing shrieks. The cure was in the cross on the Ass's back.

Anyone entering the house while the milk was being churned had to turn the handle of the churn three times to ward off the Evil Eye, because, if it fell, the milk would never produce butter.

Once there was great consternation over the countryside because the milk kept going sour. Things got so serious that an inspector from the College of Agronomy was sent from Dublin to examine the matter. He put the evil down to the placing of the butter in dirty pans. He was laughed to scorn by priests and people. And wasn't it because Mother neglected to sprinkle Father and the horse and cart with Holy Water that he arrived home with his ear hanging off? It didn't seem to count that he was dead drunk and fell out of the cart! The most efficacious way of warding off the Evil Eye was to consult two people who before marriage had the same name, and do whatever they advised.

NAN FLANAGAN

THE GODLESS UNIVERSE

REFERRING to his letter on "Hair-Splitting" (Sept. 27th) I am afraid that I cannot share Mr. Hewson's strong conviction of a "Something" behind it all. Why "behind" particularly? Does Mr. Hewson assume that this "Something" is a thing apart from the Cosmos, which may be good, bad or indifferent, measured by human standards? And who created the "Something" if it ever was created? No, such reflections land us in the dead end of

Christian theism. We will never "Know," and perhaps that is a good thing for the exercise of the human consciousness on problems it is capable of solving for the betterment of our Kind, we must acquiesce in the inexpressible in this matter. Santayana in his *Reason in Religion* wrote "Great is this organism (the Cosmos) of mud and fire, terrible this vast, painful glorious experiment. Why should we not look on the universe with piety? It follows its own habits abstractedly; it can be trusted to be true to its word. Society is not impossible between it and us . . . it is the source of all our energies, the home of all our happiness. Shall we not cling to it and praise it, seeing that it vegetates so grandly and so sadly, and that it is not for us to blame it for what, doubtless, it never knew that it did."

ERIC A. McDONALD

ASK YOUR LIBRARY FOR IT

Readers may be interested in a mystery story concerning *The Dollar and the Vatican* in Bristol Public Library. Shortly after publication I made a successful application for the book at the Central Library and was the first borrower. Subsequently I made a point of checking whether it was in the racks or—as one would presume in its absence—out on loan. I never once managed to find it on the shelves and, for the first few weeks, I thought it must have been in good demand. Then I wanted to refer to it again, and I asked at the Enquiry Desk, where I was told, oh yes, it was still in stock! More weeks passed without a trace, so I made another enquiry, and was informed that the record card was now in the files for "books missing from stock." I was told this might mean it had been mis-filed; but I pressed for a further copy to be obtained, and this has now been done. There is little doubt, of course, that the original copy has been stolen—and the attendant eventually admitted this likelihood. However, mis-filed or stolen, the moral is clear: it is advisable to keep a check on one's local library and to ensure that there are no similar disappearances in other places.

P. E. J. JORDAN

"BLOOD LUST"

Your correspondent, Thomas Davidson, is surely mistaken in stating that General Crozier *praised* the Christian Churches as our "greatest creators of blood-lust." Actually, I believe the General *accused* them, which is very different.

E. C. TRASK

OBITUARY

THE North London Branch, National Secular Society, has lost an old and valued member with the death—at the age of 80—of Joseph Augustus White. Mr. White was always ready to help his Branch and the movement in every possible way and, even after his retirement in Bognor Regis, used to pay regular visits to London to meet his fellow members. The General Secretary, N.S.S., conducted a secular service at the St. Marylebone Crematorium on Friday, November 1st. We extend our sympathy to Mr. White's family.

C. McC

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.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan. 2nd Edition—Revised and Enlarged. Price 21/-; postage 1/3.

EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY. By F. A. Ridley. A succinct account of its rise to power. Price 1/-; postage 4d.

ROME OR REASON. Ingersolls devastating reply to the late Cardinal Manning. Price 1/-; postage 4d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 4/-; Paper 2/6; postage 6d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition). By Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 6d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE. 18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker. Price 5/6; postage 6d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4/6; postage 6d.