

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVII—No. 48

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

PERHAPS the most controversial volume in the *Men of Wisdom* series is the one devoted to that stormy petrel of the ancient Church, Aurelius Augustinus, nowadays more generally known as St. Augustine. It is true that, at least as far as I am aware, the most ardent "mythicist" has never denied the existence of the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, whose dates — 354-430 — are vouched for by ample contemporary evidence. Both in his life-time and subsequently, the name and fame of the great African bishop have been involved in some of the bitterest theological and ethical controversies in the Church. Outside the New Testament writers, who laid the foundation of Christian theology it would probably be true to say that no-one has influenced Christian thought more widely than Augustine. And probably no theologian has expressed more controversial opinions — or, one might add, opinions more repellent to any mental outlook which takes its starting point from human reason or common humanity.

St. Augustine of Hippo

The French author, Henri Marrou, gives us an erudite — as well as beautifully illustrated — summary of the life and works of this famous Doctor of the Catholic Church, who has, perhaps, exercised an even greater influence on the Protestant Churches than on his own. As in the case of apparently, all this series — which originally appeared in France before being simultaneously published in U.S.A. and Britain in translation — the author, M. Marrou, is a French Catholic, and writes from the standpoint of official Catholicism. This — as he indicates — whilst acknowledging St. Augustine as perhaps its greatest theologian, has never unreservedly accepted *all* the Saint's pronouncements on predestination and the post mortem fate of unbelievers, including unbaptised babies, whom, he taught, would inevitably be damned! Rome has never officially endorsed such opinions, unlike Luther and Calvin, who were Augustine's most faithful disciples. Consequently, M. Marrou's work has a critical character which separates what is and is not valid in Augustine's theological system found in his innumerable works. The volume, like the others in this series, is admirably produced, and gives us all the relevant biographical facts as well as the frequent controversies — several of which have become historical — in which the ideas of St. Augustine figured largely. An extensive bibliography is added, which makes this important and interesting volume excellent value for its modest price.

Life and Times

The life of St. Augustine witnessed two of the most startling transformations in human history: the victory of Christianity over Paganism — virtually completed by the end of the Fourth Century — and the simultaneous collapse of the Roman Empire and of the ancient civilisation in Western Europe (as well as in Augustine's own land, North

Africa) before the German barbarians. Both these events influenced Augustine profoundly. He was the leading theologian of the Western (Latin) Church during this period when Western Europe was being separated from the East by a barbaric iron curtain, and his most famous book *The City of God* (427) was suggested to him by the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410. Before becoming a Christian when already over 30, Augustine had meanwhile become a student of Pagan philosophy, and a member of the Oriental Dualist sect, the Manicheans. In my opinion, this latter connection had more influence on the author of *The City of God* than either the Christian Church or his present biographer has recognised. After being

Bishop of the seaport of Hippo in Roman North Africa from 391-430, Augustine died there whilst the town was being besieged by the Vandals. Though resident in Africa for most of his life, he spoke and wrote in Latin. Like his predecessor, Tertullian, he was not only a learned man, but a lively writer, with a biting wit and a talent for epigrams. From a purely literary point of view he has been praised as a Latin classic, whilst he is said to have anticipated Descartes's dictum, "I think: therefore I am." A materialist would, of course, put it the other way round: "I am: therefore I think"!

The Theologian of Predestination

In both the technical evolution of Christian theology and the wider aspect of European history, St. Augustine is the "Doctor of Grace" *par excellence*. Or, more precisely, he is the theologian of predestination. His more important writings assert the dogma of theological determinism, pushed by him to the very borderline of fatalism and, later, by Calvin in particular, over that borderline: "Some He hath predestined to life everlasting; others to everlasting damnation." The actual expression is Calvin's, but he got the idea, and very nearly the terminology, from Augustine. For, in his famous controversy with the Welshman, Pelagius, Augustine asserted that it is only the Grace of God that can save mankind from total depravity engendered by the Fall. Later, his Jansenist disciples tried to impose this dogma on the Roman Catholic Church (17th century), but the worldly-wise Jesuits would have none of it, and Rome has cautiously left the question open. As M. Marrou tactfully notes, the problem of predestination versus freewill remains "one of the great unsolved problems of (Catholic) theology"! The most horrible of Augustine's deductions was his barely qualified assertion that unbaptised babies will burn forever in hell. In opposing this frightful conclusion, it must be said that the Jesuits were—for once!—on the side of reason and humanity. The Catholic Church—notes our author—is here "well to the rear of Augustine's more extreme conclusions."

The Philosophy of History

St. Augustine's most famous work, however, does not belong to the sphere of theology. *The City of God* may be

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

“Men of Wisdom”
— St. Augustine

By F. A. RIDLEY

termed a theocentric interpretation of history which was to have a profound effect on the Christian Middle Ages. Christian editors have talked a lot of nonsense about this book. Augustine had been a Manichean prior to becoming a Christian, and the Manicheans thought that the whole of human life and history centred around the eternal war between Light and Darkness. All Augustine did was to translate this concept into more Christian language and to state that the whole of human history was a combat between "Two Cities"—the City of God and the City of Man. Actually, Augustine may have borrowed not only the idea but the entire theme from some now lost Manichean book, later suppressed—as nearly all Manichean literature was—by victorious Christianity. Be that as it may, *The City of God* was, for the Christian Middle Ages, the

classical philosophy of history.

An Historic Figure

St. Augustine is certainly one of the most brilliant figures in religious history—his intimate *Confessions* have even been styled the pioneer of the modern psychological novel. From a humanist angle, he was also one of the most reactionary: the pioneer, not only of the damnation of unbaptised babies in the next world, but of religious persecution, which began in his lifetime, with his active support, in this one. But he was a figure in world history, and everyone ought to know something about him. They will find a masterly summary in this admirably produced and documented little biography.

[*Man of Wisdom—St. Augustine*, by Henri Marrou. Longmans, Green and Co., 1957, 6s.]

Inspired Fallacies

By JOHN BOWDEN

THE FIXATION of the Hebrew canon at Jamia (circa 90 B.C.) put an end to any tampering with Scripture. Thereafter the scribes, when making copies of the writings declared canonical, transcribed the books or scrolls before them with meticulous accuracy and refrained from intruding their own views into the text. But by so doing they stereotyped the errors of their predecessors. True, the later Massoretes by inserting notes and comments in the margins for the guidance of readers, did much to correct these errors; but in both the A.V. and the R.V. these corrections are disregarded except where the blunder is too glaring to be ignored. The compilers of these versions preferred to reproduce the Hebrew text as it stood.

After the determination of the Canon the Hebrew Scriptures came to be held in such superstitious awe and veneration that the copyists, to ensure an exact copy of the script before them, reproduced not only the errors but the peculiarities of their predecessors. The older scribe, when he came to the end of a line, might find that he had misjudged the space and had no room for a full-sized final letter. He thereupon inserted a small letter at the terminal point. A small letter would similarly be inserted where one had been inadvertently omitted from a word. These and numerous other peculiarities and corrections were reproduced by later copyists.

It sometimes happened that an ancient scribe, in making a copy of a manuscript, repeated a passage he had already written. An example of such redundancy is found in chapters 8 and 9 of the first book of Chronicles.

Paterson Smyth (*The Old Documents and the New Bible*) pictures the old copyist seated at his desk—

"patiently transcribing letter by letter the wearisome list of names — name after name — name after name — in monotonous succession. At last he stops and lays down his pen. He has just written the words 'These dwelt at Jerusalem.' This will do nicely for a catch-word to find his place again when he returns, and so repeating the words to himself the old man retires to rest.

"I see him next day resuming his task. He arranges his parchments, he looks at the catch-word, the last he has written, and raising his eyes to the manuscript before him, they light on the words, *but at the top of the preceding page*, 'These dwelt at Jerusalem'; and calmly he goes on from that, in blissful unconsciousness that he is writing over again his yesterday's work.

"You can find that little picture for yourself, my reader, if you open your English Bible at 1 Chron. 9:34. This is the verse where the old scribe stopped at 'These dwelt at Jerusalem'; and if you look up to the 28th verse of the preceding chapter, you will find the same words in the line which caught his eye when he returned, and you will see that he has written over again after 9:34 a good deal of the passage that follows 8.28."

The compilers of the recently published Revised Standard Version, with no less veneration for the Bible but with a greater sense of realism than their predecessors, have corrected a great many of the more obvious errors occurring in the earlier versions. But the very existence of such revisions shatters for all time the dogma of Biblical inerrancy and inspiration. No longer can a Bishop Burgon declare (he was speaking of the A.V.) that "the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth on the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High." The Bible, avowed the Bishop, "is faultless, unerring, supreme."

In similar vein Drs. Hodge and Warfield wrote in the *Presbyterian Review* (Vol. II). God, they say, presided over the sacred writers in their entire work of writing "with the design and effect of making that writing an erroneous record." "A proved error in Scripture," they go on to say, "contradicts not only our doctrine but the Bible claims, therefore its inspiration in making those claims."

Well, there is not merely one; there are many "proved errors." And so . . .

The Humanist Approach

THE PAST OF mankind is a long and sad story of errors and crimes and wars. Men have killed men for all reasons we can imagine — personal reasons, religious reasons, political reasons — and yet, the evolution of mankind is a matter of fact, as it is a matter of fact also that this evolution is produced by men themselves. To renew anything, it is necessary to doubt all things, and to ask if they have a stronger base than convention and tradition.

As long as men will confess that they are unworthy creatures, they will also think that it is permitted to take the liberty and the lives of other unworthy creatures, for Heaven's sake, for king's or queen's sake, for party's sake. The well-known words of Dostoevsky, "If there exists no God, all things are allowed," proves to be thoroughly false.

The truth is otherwise. The truth is that always when men think themselves to be but instruments to a superhuman end, they also think they have the superhuman right to use unhuman and underhuman means.

The first thing we have to say to all people is that there are no superhuman ends: there are only human ends, and they are to be obtained only by human means.

[Prof. G. Stuijving of Holland, speaking to the International Humanist and Ethical Union, September, 1957]

A Humanitarian View on Space Travel

By G. I. BENNETT

THE ENCLOSURE by the Russians of a dog in the second satellite to be put into orbit round the earth opens, one fears, a new phase in man's inhumanity to animalkind. There are people who talk loftily about the interests of science being thus served, as though that justified or excused all, and as though science were a sort of sacred idol before which we must prostrate ourselves in solemn and blind veneration.

Where freethinkers stand in this matter I am not altogether sure, but I imagine there will be a division of opinion upon the question whether sentient creatures should be used in the various fields of experimental science. For my part, I am inclined to wonder how far, let us say, laboratory experiments with living creatures take us in the understanding of our bodies and bodily reactions to various stimuli. Despite the assurances we occasionally get that anaesthetics are employed in the biological research laboratories, I have the feeling that there is much suffering as well as mutilation inflicted there in the supposed interests of science. It receives little or no publicity, and therefore is for the most part out of the public mind. How much of it, one may ask, is to any good purpose?

My own position is simple. I am, as I have been throughout adult life, a humanitarian; and a humanitarian can hardly do other than condemn any cruel or mutilating experiments with animals—more especially sensitive and intelligent animals—in the interests of science or of anything else. And so I view with dismay man's "guinea-pig" use of animals in the era of space exploration on which we are now embarked.

On this question of space travel one could make the pertinent comment that man's physical quest of the solar system is premature, for he has not yet put his earthly house in order, so to speak, and learned to live in harmony with his kind. A rapprochement between East and West, between the Communist and non-Communist worlds, would be a development of inestimable importance for the future—it is, in fact, a primary requirement of human well-being today. There are on this planet at this time a thousand-and-one urgent jobs to do—in the battle with disease, in the alleviation of pain, in tackling the giant problems of poverty and hunger, in building a world in which men and women may live free, happy, useful lives unclouded by the shadow of modern war and all its damnable vileness.

It is against this background of world-wide human need, with the radioactive dust-pall of the hydrogen bomb hanging overhead like Nemesis, that mankind now endeavours to conquer space. Come what may, pure knowledge will most certainly gain from the venture (and I would not decry the importance of that). But, while it is at this stage too early to make predictions, it is hard to see that space travel, even if it becomes a practical reality, will confer any material benefit upon humankind. Yet if the brains and treasure now going into rocket propulsion were directed instead *at this time* into channels designed to improve man's lot here on earth, what immediate gain, and what future promise! First things first, we might say. Viewed in this light there is something rather unreal about the current situation. How ineffably tragic if on the tombstone of man it were necessary to inscribe the epitaph that, "though he voyaged out into the limitless vastness of space in search of new worlds, and thereby achieved what was beyond the wildest dreams of an earlier generation, yet he was unable to agree upon a common government for his own little

planet and perished in an internecine war with his kind!"

My present concern, however, is with the new field of inhumanity towards animals (the more intelligent, the worse it be!) that experimental space voyaging has opened. I say it is evil, and I find it difficult to believe that good can come out of evil—or should.

Whatever the future may bring forth, one thing, it seems to me, is very clear: the gateway to real peace and happiness in our world bears the words, "Human Goodness." So many of the fruits of human labours now denied to us would be ours if men were actuated by a regard for others—their less fortunate brethren especially—rather than absorbed in a pursuit of personal ambitions and national aggrandisement.

Compassion for life, the central pillar of Albert Schweitzer's philosophy, may, if we make it part of the pattern of our lives, involve us at times in some difficult dilemmas, but it is through such compassion, through increased moral sensitiveness, that we shall move forward along the path of humane civilisation. There are some who point out that this attitude, logically extended, means a condemnation of the slaughterhouse. So be it, then. In order to live healthily man does not really need meat in his diet, if it is otherwise well balanced. This could entail a sacrifice for some (although perhaps not a very great sacrifice). The important thing is: are we prepared to sacrifice for the principles and ideals we cherish? In the last resort, it is up to us, each and all, to declare whether we would be in the van of civilisation—or but a few steps removed from a brutal evolutionary existence that now, as never before, threatens us with horrifying catastrophe.

Review

The Trials of Evans and Christie (with an Introduction and edited by F. Tennyson Jesse. William Hodge and Co. 30s. net.) WITH her Introduction, by far the most instructive part of this massive volume, Miss Tennyson Jesse has brought to her task as Editor that skill of deduction usually associated with only the most talented detective fiction writers. But Miss Jesse is, of course, very much more than a novelist; with her strong dramatic sense allied to her unique knowledge of the law, she has produced a lucid, exciting and in many respects unforgettable account of two cases, which must remain outstanding for all time in the annals of crime. These two terrifying tales of mortality have fortunately been handled by an expert, who in addition to marshalling her legal facts splendidly, is also one of the finest storytellers in the English language. The three first named victims were prostitutes; moreover, *all three* suffered from a venereal disease; each was treated at different times in the *same* Southampton hospital. Of all these many *Notable British Trials*—and I can pride myself on having read the complete list—the trials of Evans and Christie will, I make bold to assert, be regarded in the years to come as the most important as well as the most graphic of all those written to date. It is only with her views on the Abolition of Capital Punishment that I find myself joining issue with the writer, but Miss Jesse is always so eminently just and balanced, even when she is being at her most provoking, refusing to score any point by sacrificing authenticity, that I can respect her point of view on this burning issue even when disagreeing with it. Certainly her survey and analysis of all the complex circumstances which went towards making the Christie case the "Crime of the Century" would do credit to a team of skilled judges.

PETER COTES.

This Believing World

Every now and again some pretentious parson bursts out in anger because Bertrand Russell or Prof. Ayer says something on the TV "Brains Trust" which offends the delicate susceptibilities of pious Christians. The precious pleas of these people generally takes the form of accusing the anti-Christian brigade of being almost ignorant of the beautiful truths of Christianity, as the Rev. D. M. Kendrick of Bradford did in one of those magazines which add to the gaiety of nations—the Parish Magazine. What the rev. gentleman cannot stand is the spectacle of a professor of mathematics or biology or even "a competent layman" attacking his religion with "blatant errors." The question of religion "demands a specialised study."

★

Mr. Kendrick stands for "the Christian Way of Life" in which "the greatest simpleton and the greatest intellect can kneel together in the Church of Christ as equals." Well, it certainly is true that if "the greatest intellect" can kneel to a mythical Deity at all, he deserves to kneel with a simpleton. We don't want him on our side and rapturously hand him over to Mr. Kendrick. In any case, he almost tearfully begs viewers not to be "influenced" by the experts on the "Brains Trust." But surely this depends on the viewers themselves? Would they not, if they are normally intelligent, prefer the views of a "great intellect" to those of a "simpleton," however full of Christ the latter may be?

★

The "Sunday Mail," quoting Mrs. Margaret Knight on the "Crisis for Churches," finds her conclusion "terrifying." She had pointed out that "more and more Britons are rejecting the belief in a personal God just as they rejected witchcraft hundreds of years ago," and this is too awful to contemplate. But it was up to the *Sunday Mail* to show why a belief in a "personal" God was not just as silly as a belief in personal witches. What this journal did was to send us to the Rev. Tom Allan, who brilliantly answered Mrs. Knight by declaring that he at least believed in a "personal" God. So what? We simply don't know. Mr. Allan's "beliefs" are of no more importance than those of an Australian aborigine. What we want is *evidence*, and where is there any evidence for a personal God?

★

This is a horrid, horrid world, and who is to blame? The Vicar of Measham, the Rev. A. J. Day, thinks it is "the parents"—especially those who, in the hardness of their hearts, refuse to send their children to a Sunday school. These parents, he tells us, were once able to sing "Rock of Ages" and "Abide with Me," and now, alas, the only songs they know are those of Tommy Steele or Elvis Presley—though some of us can see no difference from the *intellectual* level. Mr. Day thinks our "greatest peril" comes from a Godless Sunday. We have an idea that most people think our greatest peril comes from H bombs—but there is no accounting for tastes.

★

At last the Church of England has got a "complete course" of its teaching in a "Pocket Book Guide" by Canon Eaton. It is not intended as a reply to Rome or to that other fine Christian institution, Jehovah's Witnesses, but to give us "The Faith, History, and Practice of the Church of England," which is, in fact, its title. But the real problem remains—will it make converts? Merely to strengthen the convictions of stout members of the Church, or to put them right on disputed points of theology, has only an academic interest. What the Church wants is more members—and where are they?

Although Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge is, as far as the Church of England is concerned, an "outsider," while Dr. Alec Vidler is an "insider," there appeared to be little difference in their views as expressed the other Sunday on TV. Mr. Muggeridge tried hard to find out what Dr. Vidler's views were, but, like the late Fr. Vincent McNab, Dr. Vidler proved a master hand at openly concealing them. That is, Dr. Vidler is, of course, a Christian, but as to Heaven, Hell, Holy Communion, Miracles, etc., he did his utmost to explain why he did, and why he did not, believe in them—leaving Mr. Muggeridge to take his choice. Oh, yes! they both believed in Jesus but both seemed excessively shy in telling us what the "belief" consisted of, which only goes to prove how wide and open are the ranks of the Church of England!

Mauritius

By D. SHIPPER

THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS is set remotely in the Indian Ocean, about 500 miles east of Madagascar, 1,400 miles from Africa and over 2,000 miles from India and Ceylon.

Probably known to Arab navigators by the 10th century and visited by Malays in the 15th, it was nevertheless "discovered" by the Portuguese in 1507.

However, the first settlers were the Dutch in 1598 and they named it Mauritius in honour of Prince Maurice of Orange (the Portuguese named it *Ihla do Cerné*).

The Dutch abandoned it in 1710 and in 1715 the French East India Co. took possession, naming it *Ile de France*. The French Revolution hardly affected the island, but the British won control in 1810 during the Napoleonic Wars.

Under the 1814 Treaty of Paris it was formally ceded to Britain, its name was restored to Mauritius, and the French colonists were allowed to keep their laws (the Code Napoleon is still in force), their language (English and French are official languages) and the R.C. religion.

After Britain freed the negro slaves in 1834 most of them refused to continue working on the sugar plantations, so 34,000 Indians were imported. To this day the Indo-Mauritians are mostly Hindu and have increased in number to form nearly two-thirds of the 539,000 population (we must except a few thousand Moslems).

The Catholics numbered 165,000 in 1952 and the Protestants were only 5,000 strong. The churches receive financial assistance from the State and this amounted to 382,000 rupees in 1954/1955.

The island, only 40 miles long by 30 wide, is one of the most densely populated in the world already, and is expected to increase to a million by 1980 (1954 birth rate 41.3 per 1,000, death rate 16.0 per 1,000). A Government commission is now advocating birth-control and this is being strenuously opposed by the Catholics. The whites and Creoles are mostly Catholic, although the half-breed Creoles retain older superstitions mixed with their Catholic religion. The Catholics are also antagonistic towards the Chinese minority, accusing them of harbouring Chinese-trained Communists.

Although equal rights exist in theory for all races (and race mixtures), the Mauritians are an extremely bigoted people, whites ignoring Creoles and Indians and the latter two avoiding each other.

Port Louis, the capital, is such a squalid, unhealthy town that few whites will live there and, so typically, is dominated by Government House and the two cathedrals, Catholic and Anglican. With religion apparently powerless to combat extreme racial prejudice within its own ranks, Mauritius would appear to present a field for freethought activity.

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.

WILLIAM CRAIGIE.—Many thanks for your support and good wishes, which we heartily reciprocate.

PETER DUNNING.—Norway has only 5,000 Catholics in a 3½ million population. There is every possibility that in a few years' time the new Humanist Society, *Human-Etisk Forbund*, will outnumber them. No "Catholic menace" in Scandinavia!

H. FREISTUHLER (Schwerte-Ruhr).—We read your letters with much interest and appreciate your comments. Your contact with Mr. Shipper will be of mutual benefit to our organisations.

G. S. SMELTERS (Australia).—Your views on the best way of stating Atheism have now been well ventilated in THE FREETHINKER and other freethought journals. We should prefer you now to write on some other topic.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, November 24th, 6.45 p.m.: A Lecture.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, December 1st, 7.15 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Secularism, Past, Present and Future."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 3rd, 7.15 p.m.: T. S. LASCELLES, "Comte's Positive Religion of Humanity—Can it appeal today?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 1st, 6.30 p.m.: D. TULLMAN (U.S.A.), "Atheism Through the Ages."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, December 1st, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Individualism and the Individual."

West Ham and District N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre).—Thursday, November 28th, 7.45 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "Freethought in the World Today."

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.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £263 4s.; A. Hancock, 2s.; Miss E. Lloyd, £1; Wm. Craigie (New Zealand), 10s.; N. Cluett, 2s. 6d.; Anon, 2s. 6d.; T. H. Laird, £2; Anon, £5.—Total to date, November 22nd, 1957, £272 1s.

Notes and News

WE hope many readers will take advantage of the Bargain Offer of books detailed on our last page. These pamphlets make not only a fine introduction to Freethought but an enduring present for a friend at any time not excepting Christmas. Pamphlets have an unhappy knack of going out of print and it is most unlikely these can ever be reprinted at the current cost of printing. We hope therefore readers will make early application for the supply is limited.

★

MR. W. CRONAN, Secretary of Edinburgh Branch of the National Secular Society, writes: "We have been very fortunate in having Mr. W. O'Neill, of London, in our midst for a fortnight, during which he has given us afternoon and evening meetings on the Mound and debated with Mr. Johnstone, of the Baptist Charlotte Chapel." Mr. Cronan refers to Mr. O'Neill's amazing knowledge of the Bible—"he knows it so well that he just knocked all our Bible students stiff by his quotations with Chapter and Verse." When his opponents resorted to abuse, Mr. O'Neill "annihilated them." Londoners will appreciate Mr. Cronan's tribute to Mr. O'Neill, and it was fortunate that the latter's business affairs took him to a place where he could help the N.S.S. in his own inimitable way.

★

FOLLOWING the raising of the Bank Rate to 7%, Bishop Beck of Salford (chairman of the Catholic Education Council), speaking on behalf of the bishops of England and Wales, asked the Government to increase their help to "a flat grant of 75% on the capital cost of all voluntary schools." Although heavy sacrifices would still remain a necessity, with a 75% grant: "We could keep our place in the public education system of the country." The permitted grant is already up to 50%, which seems more than enough to pay for the politico-ecclesiastical indoctrination of British children by the agents of a foreign international power.

★

THE Vatican's Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has ordered three R.C. clergymen who sit as M.P.s in the Hungarian Parliament to give up their seats. They have been given a month to do so, the penalty for disobedience being excommunication.

★

ST. HUGH'S (R.C.) Nursing Home of Cleethorpes, run by the Sisters of St. Joseph, applied for tax relief on the grounds that it was a charitable institution. After Councillor F. Broddle pointed out that it was a *business*—"it trades and makes profits"—the council refused relief.

★

A GERMAN rationalist youth-group leader who writes good English is asking for "young British freethinkers" to correspond with her. Write to Fraulein Hilka Buscher, Rostrup, bei Bad Zivischenahn, West Germany.

★

NEXT WEEK

A RATIONALIST IN HOSPITAL

By PROFESSOR SIR ERNEST KENNAWAY, F.R.S.

The 19th Psalm (Revised)

"THE HEAVENS declare the glory of Man and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech (Bleep-Bleep) and night unto night showeth man's knowledge. There is no speech nor language where the voice Bleep-Bleep is not heard."

Joseph Lewis again interviewed on American T.V.

The following dialogue took place over WXYZ-TV (The American Broadcasting Co.), Detroit, Michigan, August 12th, 1957.

LOU GORDON: Good evening, I'm Lou Gordon. Our guest tonight—Mr. Joseph Lewis. We'll ask Mr. Lewis about his charges that the Bible is a fraud, Billy Graham is a fake, and religion is a crude hoax. And now to our guest tonight for an unrehearsed, spontaneous interview. Mr. Lewis is President of the Freethinkers of America, an organisation self-described as working for the separation of Church and State. He is editor and founder of *The Age of Reason Magazine*, the Freethinkers' monthly publication. He has written eighteen books including *The Bible Unmasked*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *The Tyranny of God*. Mr. Lewis, one of your frequent assertions is that the Bible is a fraud. You once told an interviewer, and I quote, "The Bible is more than a fraud, because it has been the cause of untold misery to the human race and has arrested intellectual progress for the past two thousand years." Sir, why are you so certain that the Bible is a fraud?

JOSEPH LEWIS: The facts of history support my claim. The Bible is a fraud because: first, every historian of any repute has condemned it for interfering with intellectual progress. Almost every science that we're acquainted with has condemned it because it interferes with the progress of that particular science and their particular researches. All we have to do is to take, for instance, the story of Galileo. Galileo constructed a telescope, looked at the planet Jupiter, discovered three moons, made his discoveries public; the result is he was put in prison for his scientific achievement, because it was contrary to what the Bible taught. Take the story of Bruno. Bruno, a great scientist of his day, was burned at the stake in 1600 by the Church because he promulgated doctrines that were contrary to the Church's teachings. He taught and supplied scientific proof of the Copernican theory of the motion of the heavenly bodies, regarding the rotation of the earth around the sun.

Even Copernicus was so concerned for his life, his great scientific discovery was not published in his lifetime, for fear of being burnt at the stake. It was only after his death that his great book saw the light of day. All this, because his finding was contrary to the Bible and the teachings of the Church.

So great was the fear of the Church, at that time, that even the great Leonardo Da Vinci, wrote many of his scientific articles in a disguised handwriting. So great was the Church's power during the Middle Ages that dissection was prohibited and even anaesthesia was condemned as contrary to God's will.

When Columbus sailed to find a short cut to India, many people fell on their knees to pray for him for fear that he would fall into an eternal abyss.

The Church has fought intellectual and material progress at every turn. I could deliver a long lecture on the subject. The Church has been the ignorant bully standing in the path of progress. Religion and the Church have been mankind's greatest enemies. Therefore, I say, and I say again and again, and I cannot repeat it often enough, the Bible has been the greatest hindrance to man's intellectual progress that has ever been known.

GORDON: Well, sir, if your assertion is true, how do you explain the fact that many, many great philosophers, writers and thinkers have accepted and followed the moral precepts of the Bible?

LEWIS: I think that's rather difficult to prove. I know

of no great philosophers who have accepted the moral precepts of the Bible or have followed them. Certainly no great scientist endorses the Bible as an authority. There may have been people who, out of pure hypocrisy, have praised the Bible for its moral values. And yet it does not contain a moral guide. In fact, the Bible does not even contain the words "moral" or "morality." These words cannot be found within its pages. And yet, within the pages of the Bible will be found the most obscene and the most revolting stories to be found between the covers of any printed book.

GORDON: I am wondering, sir, whether you are only against the Bible or whether you are against other religious books from non-Judæo-Christian religions. I am referring specifically to the *Koran* of the Moslems, the *Tau Te Ching* of the Chinese, the *Bhagavad-Gita* of the Hindus, or even the non-Biblical sacred writings such as *The Book of Mormon* or *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures* of the Christian Scientists.

LEWIS: I put them all in the same category. There's no more truth to the *Koran* than there is to the Bible, and I object to them being referred to as "sacred" writings. There is nothing sacred about them. When they are offered as divinely inspired, they are frauds.

GORDON: Have you read all these books?

LEWIS: I have read most of them.

GORDON: Most of them?

LEWIS: Yes, most of them. I've devoted my whole life, almost, to the study of religion and the different philosophies of the earth. I say that Christian Science, in the words of Upton Sinclair, "is a very strict religion—it is strictly cash." It is based upon the hallucinations of Mary Baker Eddy and there's not a particle of truth to it. If anyone relies upon Christian Science as a panacea, he'll find himself sadly disappointed. Not only that, but Mary Baker Eddy stole most of her stuff from a Phineas P. Quimby. Her whole book is a conglomeration of sheer nonsense. Mary Baker Eddy was an illiterate woman, and even with all her help the book is a volume of pure gibberish. The *Koran* was written by an utterly ignorant camel keeper who knew nothing whatever about the affairs of the world. There's no truth to be found within the pages of any of these so-called "sacred" books.

Do we need a better example of the utter folly of these "modern" systems of religion than that of Joseph Smith and the Mormons? Smith was a notorious liar and a thief. He was so dishonest, unscrupulous and perpetrated so many frauds upon so many people, that when he was arrested his victims become so impatient with the law's delay that they broke open the jail and murdered him. So much for this religious scoundrel. He not only falsified the story of his receiving the Tablets of Gold from an archangel, but the whole story of Mormonism is a rank fakery.

That two such systems of religion—Christian Science and Mormonism—too ridiculous for words, could be established in our time, when the intelligence of the people is the highest ever attained, when people can read and write, is almost incredible. Where are the proofs of these religions? Does it not seem strange that the Tablets of Stone which God is supposed to have given to Moses, and the Tablets of Gold which the Angel is supposed to have given to Joseph Smith, are not in existence?

It merely proves, as Mr. Thomas A. Edison once told me, that the people are, it seemed to him, "incurably superstitious and will believe anything." The more utterly ridiculous the origin, the more acceptable it is to some

people. There is nothing too fantastic in the realm of religion that some people will not believe.

GORDON: Well, sir, in 1935 you and your organisation sued the Board of Education of New York City to enjoin the Board from using the Bible in schools. Judge Williams T. Collins dismissed the case in a fourteen-page decision and among the things Judge Collins said was, and I quote, "Authentic freethinking involves the indubitable right to believe in God, as well as the unfettered licence not to believe or to disbelieve in a deity." Do you agree with Judge Collins' definition of freethinking?

LEWIS: I agree with him as to definition but disagree with him regarding the Government's right to impose the Bible upon society.

GORDON: I'm not referring to the case itself, but merely to this statement, which is that authentic freethinking involves the indubitable right to believe in God as well as the unfettered licence not to believe or to disbelieve.

LEWIS: Yes, I agree with that statement.

GORDON: Why do you insist on carrying on this religious crusade against religion?

LEWIS: Well, I think I can best answer that in the words of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare said, "Time's glory . . . is to unmask falsehood and bring truth to light."

(To be continued)

Alice Up-To-Date

By A. R. WILLIAMS

HAVING when young read *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice through the Looking Glass* for their fun and comic adventures, we should read them again when grown up for their satire. Those with any knowledge of politics must be amused at the Caucus Race. Students will chuckle over the substitute for a towel when the wet animals swim ashore: a page from a history textbook as being the driest thing known.

The poems are parodies of hymns, and of the monstrous moralistic verse imposed upon children a century ago, as "You are old, Father William," and "'Tis the voice of the lobster," better known than the original "'Tis the voice of the sluggard."

It was daring of Lewis Carroll to deride Bishop Watts and other pious goody-goody versifiers of the time.

Worse, or better, follows. Lewis Carroll as the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson no doubt knew the mentality of his fellow clerics and still more their devoted congregations. Did any of them realise the implications of the conversation between Alice and the White Queen?

"I can't believe that!" said Alice.

"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again; draw a long breath and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said. "One can't believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

As a summary of what priests tell their listeners it cannot be improved upon for pithiness. It is religious education in essence. Yet so far it has passed without comment. Maybe Lewis Carroll's compeers were too staggered to start a heresy hunt upon it.

With the Cheshire Cat Lewis Carroll is on more delicate and provocative grounds. We need little reminding that the Cheshire Cat's body could vanish away leaving her grin still visible to Alice. If children smile at that, adults should roar with laughter; except those spiritually-minded people

who understand how their beliefs are being turned into ironical humour.

As a clergyman the Reverend Charles Dodgson had been trained in theology and no doubt dabbled in metaphysics, beside having the standards of his class and trade imposed upon him. Did he laugh to himself as he remembered the creed of immortal soul and undying spirit, eternal survival of a non-corporal element after the body died and decayed?

Also at the period Spiritualism was becoming prominent, with its Astral Forms, ghosts, spectres, guides from beyond, disembodied voices and what not.

Whatever he thought of ethereal teachings, Lewis Carroll satirised for our merriment their absurdity in the figure of the Cheshire Cat whose body vanished but whose grin remained. It is just as likely that our bodies can die and anything living survive. The idea is enough to make one grin like a Cheshire Cat.

Strange Customs

by COLIN McCALL

THE VARIED ADVENTURES of *The Dollar and the Vatican* by Avro Manhattan (Pioneer Press) make fascinating, if rather disturbing, reading. Mr. Manhattan has already described the book's fate at the hands of British newspaper and magazine editors. Mr. P. E. J. Jordan told of its mysterious disappearance from the shelves of the Bristol Public Library. Perhaps most curious of all is its recent treatment in Australia. Until four months ago it met with no real difficulty there and made several journeys into the interior. Then, in July, it was suddenly stopped without explanation. It has now been released, but the reason for the delay remains obscure. An official letter to the author, indeed, stated that there was nothing unusual about the hold-up; that it was "normal procedure."

For enlightenment from the top, we turned to *The Times* on November 15th. The paper—we must admit—did its best for us through its own correspondent in Canberra, though the Minister for Customs, Senator Henty, was not particularly explicit. He had announced last month that there was to be a "less arbitrary enforcement of regulations prohibiting the distribution of indecent books." And on November 14th he told a Labour M.P. that the Customs Department had not banned a book on political grounds for fifteen years. He listed the grounds, starting with "advocating the overthrow by force of established governments." We seemed to be getting nowhere fast: *The Dollar and the Vatican* could hardly be said to advocate the overthrow of established governments; on the contrary, it warned governments of a danger they might overlook and which might eventually overthrow them; while even the staunchest Roman Catholic would search in vain for indecency in its pages.

We read on. Four films banned on political or similar grounds in the last five years, one of them entitled "The Bloody Trail." All very interesting, no doubt, but hardly what we were after. Ah! here it was! "Distribution of a book called *The Dollar and the Vatican* by Avro Manhattan had been temporarily held up in September to see whether it came within the scope of prohibited literature."

"September"—but the book had been detained since July! Somebody's calendar was wrong. The "scope of prohibited literature"! We looked back to the "grounds" again. Did Mr. Manhattan advocate the "abolition of organised government"? No. "Assassination of public officials"? We couldn't remember a passage urging such measures. There remained only "expressing seditious intent or advocating seditious enterprise, and we concentrated on these. There could be no doubt, we agreed, that in some

eyes *The Dollar and the Vatican* did represent a seditious enterprise. Seditious—like beauty—is in the eyes of the beholder and, if the beholder be Catholic, intent on increasing Papal power in the democracies, here was sedition indeed.

Yet, assuming that Australian Custom law is designed and operated to defend democracy, the book would seem to be a valuable import, indicating the twin menace of American big business and the Roman Catholic Church, not only to democracy, but to peace. We faced an impasse. There remained the possibility that, whilst defence of democracy was the intention of the Custom law, it is not so operated. At that point we gave it up.

But we thought you might also like to know that a 16mm. film has been banned in Australia. The title? "Shadow over Italy."

CORRESPONDENCE

SENSISM

Your published review of *Sensism* by Mr. Cutner is appreciated. The first sentence in the first quotation (THE FREETHINKER, October 18th) should read: "The body is known directly through the unsensed senses; the existence or occurrence of thought, the soul or the mind, is known indirectly through the use of names in inference from sensed physical objects." (p. 13.) The typographical error changing "unsensed senses" to "unsensed sense" suggests that there are sensed senses and above them a superior unsensed sense. The error reverses the meaning. The omission of the word "known" may cause some readers to miss the meaning.

The last two sentences of the fourth paragraph from the end of the second instalment, October 25th, should read: "The authors of the Gospels searched the Jewish scriptures for phrases and sentences which they could represent to be a prophecy and of which they could write the fulfilment by their historised Saviour. That they fulfilled on paper statements in ancient books is more probable than that the authors of those books knew what would occur a few hundred years later." (p. 1332.) The omission of the last four words of the first sentence and the first three of the second sentence makes the passage meaningless. The object of awareness of always without.

CHARLES SMITH.

[We greatly regret the errors, whether our reviewer's or those of typography.—EDITOR.]

MARGARET KNIGHT ON TELEVISION

As one who listened to the Debate (save the mark) on Television on October 22nd, I endorse Mr. G. H. Taylor's comments, and would like to add some of the impressions which the "three to one" religious team of speakers gave me.

The first thing that struck me very forcibly was the fact that the "Opposition Party" had the audacity to pit three of their number against the undaunted Mrs. Knight and, in equity—one hardly expects justice!—the next time I would like to see Mrs. Knight and two other speakers face to face with one selected speaker from the Christian ranks.

The second thing that struck me was the persiflage of the Rev. Pitt-Watson and the Rev. H. C. Whitley. Sir Edward Villiers was the only one who seemed to take the matter at all seriously, and his personal testimony of having been "in the wilderness" for thirty years did not say much for the working of the "grace of God" to bring him back to the fold! The Rev. H. C. Whitley, I imagine, did not enhance any reputation he may have already made amongst his Christian friends, and his self-satisfied smirking attitude—some-what reminiscent of a Cheshire cat, "my dear parishioners!"—merely seemed to create the impression that he was very fit, fat and well, and that in Christianity there must be some sort of jocular happiness of which we poor atheists know nothing! The Rev. Pitt-Watson was far from convincing and should learn some manners. His cigarette smoking all the time, together with the effect of surrounding the well-nourished reverend gentleman next to him with tobacco smoke—did not seem to me in the best of taste.

GILBERT H. HOLMES.

COMMUNIST DIPLOMACY

Re the letter of Mrs. Matson's (November 18th), it is apparent that our Marxists have short, or should I say convenient, memories. No doubt the Communist support for King Michael of Rumania was overlooked, along with their support of Marshal Badoglio and General de Gaulle, similarly unmentioned.

While I agree in principle with Lord Altrincham, may I add that

I certainly prefer our constitutional monarchy to the above regimes, and think it much safer and desirable to reside under a government led by Attlee or Churchill to a totalitarian regime of Stalin or Krushchev. While a "fellow traveller" may be a different animal in Russia, outside of the Iron Curtain he is in full principle a Communist. Can Mrs. Matson inform us when the Communist Press has attacked the "Red Dean"? It still surprises me that our Communists call themselves freethinkers.

The events of both Poland and Hungary, and the whole history of the U.S.S.R. proves how much the Kremlin values freethought.

D. J. CROWLE.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13TH.—Present: Messrs. Ebury (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Mrs. Trask, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Ridley, Corstorphine, Warner, Mrs. Venton and Portsmouth Branch. A donation to Belgian Freethought Orphanage, *Le Gai Logis*, was authorised. New members were admitted to the Glasgow, Manchester, and Wales & Western Branches which, with new individual members, numbered seven. A watch bequeathed to the Society by Mr. Fred Ransome was presented to Mr. Ebury. Liverpool Branch request for speakers was approved. L.C.C. plans for Marble Arch would be scrutinised, with special reference to Speakers' Corner. Messrs. Gordon and Taylor were asked to prepare a press statement on recent scientific development. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, December 4th, 1957.

OBITUARY

WE regret to hear of the death of Charles A. Sweetman, of Brixton, who was a stalwart of the old South London Branch of the N.S.S. for many years and a constant supporter of THE FREETHINKER. Mr. Sweetman died after a serious operation. Our sympathies are extended to his family.

R.E.S.

FOR NEWCOMERS

AS AN INTRODUCTION TO FREETHOUGHT OR AS A SUITABLE XMAS PRESENT we will send **THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST** by Gerald Massey.

ROME OR REASON? by R. G. Ingersoll.

THOMAS PAINE by Chapman Cohen.

MARRIAGE: SACERDOTAL OR SECULAR

by C. G. L. Du Cann.

ROBERT TAYLOR by H. Cutner

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? by H. Cutner.

Total value, including postage 7/6,

for 5/- post free

PIONEER PRESS

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD . LONDON . W.C.1

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims. By Avro Manhattan.

3rd Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

Price 21/-; postage 1/3.

THE AMERICAN RATIONALIST

A new Illustrated — Militant — Informative Magazine with the international outlook (a bi-monthly)

Published in St. Louis, Mo. (U.S.A.)

Subscribe through THE FREETHINKER, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, at 6/- a year; sample copies, 1/- each