

The Freethinker

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IF ITS record were such that it was a byword for self-denying goodness, then Christianity, in spite of historical obscurities, would at least have moral worth deserving of respect. But, no! Every day we see the gulf that exists between the alleged teachings of Jesus — strange as in some ways they are — and the habitual thinking and modes of life of declared Christians; between Church preaching and Church practice; between the primal Christian contempt for the things of this world and indifference to material well-being and the very noticeable preoccupation with these matters of priests and ministers in the Christian Church today.

There are those who argue that this is no condemnation of Christianity as such; that the blame should be planted where it lies, upon those who call themselves Christians. But in very truth, this apology for Christianity is really worse than no apology. If the great majority of practising clergymen and the rank and file of professing Christians are so far from the "true spirit" of Christianity that their witness to the Faith is a travesty and a mockery, then we may ask, What living force can Christianity be said to manifest? What kind of Faith is it that makes so small an impact upon its professors? Where is its inspiration to the higher life of man?

A Test of Religion

It is reasonable to judge a religion by what it has achieved, what standards it has set, what influence it has brought to bear upon the lives of its devotees in particular and upon the world in general. The payment of lip-service to certain ideals of conduct, to certain principles of human behaviour, is not enough. Unless we honestly endeavour to practise what we believe, we better not talk at all about our belief. Thus shall we at least avoid hypocrisy.

But in the first place, is there such a thing as a Christian code? Are there moral values that are distinctively Christian? Is there a species of moral life, to which we can only apply the word Christian, that marks a man out from his fellows? We shall look in vain at the moral counsels given in the New Testament for that which is specifically Christian. Christianity did not bring brotherly love — the love of man for fellow-man — into the world, although from Christian apologetical literature one might gain the impression that it did. Personal altruism, which is what love of man for fellow-man really is, existed long before the advent of Christianity; it will most certainly outlast Christianity.

Nothing that Jesus was ever reported as saying by way of moral exhortation has not been said by others who have laid no claim to Christian allegiance — nay, who have lived and thought and died, we may say, in the centuries that preceded the birth of the Christian religion. Nothing, I think, with but one exception: the commandment to "love them that hate you;" and if words mean what they say, this surely is the most impracticable ethic ever given to the world. One may show great tolerance, one may show great charity and understanding, and, in particular circumstances,

even try to help those who hold one in despise. But love, with all the tenderness and warmth and affection that love implies? This is impossible. It is psychologically unsound. No one has ever really loved an enemy, and it seems safe to say that no one ever will.

There is no need to discuss, in the light of their being peculiar to Christianity, the exhortations to self-renunciation, to unworldliness, to humility, meekness, and mercy.

They are not, however often they may be proclaimed to be, virtues (if they may be so regarded) exclusively Christian. They had their votaries several centuries before Christianity came on the scene; they have had them since in men who have looked elsewhere than the

Christian religion for inspiration and light.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

The Two Christianities

By G. I. BENNETT

The Christian Hotchpotch

Christianity, therefore, has no distinguishing ethical characteristics. Judged as a theology, doubtless it differs from other faiths and creeds, and it is only in matters of theology — of apocalyptic and eschatological belief — that it can lay claim to be a religion in its own right. So while there is, in effect, only one kind of Christianity specifically Christian — a redemptionist and salvationist theology in which no virile and independent mind can have faith now — there is, loosely and popularly passing as Christianity, a conception of life that may be said to affirm the pacific, self-effacing, altruistic ethical verities of which we have made mention. And yet, what paradox! The real Christianity, which is an emphasis on doctrinal belief, is a worthless and cluttering hotchpotch of concepts and rituals outdated by almost two thousand years of human progress; and that which, strictly speaking, is not Christianity at all — an affirmation of ethical principles and an altruistic regard for others — alone possesses validity. And even this latter outlook on life is vitiated by association with elements of the Christian salvationist creed.

"There is no great merit," wrote Winwood Reade, in his famous *Martyrdom of Man*, "in taking care of one's own interests, whether it be in this world or the next. The man who leads a truly religious life in order to go to heaven is not more to be admired than the man who leads a regular and industrious life in order to make a fortune in the city."

There are people about us today who are deficient in moral and social sense, whose lives only religion with its offer of reward for virtue can apparently touch. *But they are not representative of truly civilised human beings.* Beyond a certain level of culture I see Christianity, not simply as a valueless survival from an intellectually unemancipated past, but as a crutch that must be cast aside if men are to walk unaided in the broad light of day, and to behold a brighter, clearer, more exalted and courageous vision.

Christians Deceive Themselves

There are, of course, good men and women of Christian profession. In their small religious communities as well as in the greater world, we may believe, they honestly try to bring a little more kindness and love into the often mean and sordidly selfish alleys of life, and to live in a way that cannot call forth a reproach. But because they live in a Christian community, take some part in Christian worship, and associate in private life with folk of the same basically Christian persuasion as themselves, it is to Christianity that they attribute any inspiration they may feel to good life and good deeds. And in this they deceive themselves. If their Church were a purely ethical Church upholding a purely ethical religion or philosophy, these good people would be just as happy, and perhaps happier, to serve it, and their lives would be no less kindly. For there are men and women in whom there is true warmth of heart, a real fount of positive goodness, a compelling desire to enter into fellowship with others for the realisation of a common humanitarian end or purpose, and be a source of encouragement and help to those in need of help. In some cases an organisation is all they want, and the co-operation of people similarly disposed, for their strong social sense to find expression.

A Dated Creed

Yet the fact remains that no one practises now the ethical Christianity (if I may for convenience so describe it) of primal days. It was not intended for us in our place and time but for a primitive desert people separated from us by nearly twenty centuries of turbulent history. And even for them, if Schweitzer is to be believed, the code that

Jesus enunciated was but an "interim ethics" to be practised in daily anticipation of the end of the temporal world. In the twentieth century no one in the Christian West feels the urge to tread the stony places of the earth as an ill-clad, ill-fed, mendicant missionary. It is not in the fashion.

Meaningless Doctrines

Moreover, there are many in the Christian Church who make a generous, and even more than generous, living out of preaching the Gospel from comfortable and, in some cases, luxurious ecclesiastical residences. What do they know of simplicity, humility, and world-renunciation? These men might well emphasise belief in the creeds and say so little about the practical Christian life allegedly taught by Jesus and enjoined upon — nay, joyfully accepted by — early witnesses to the Faith. In their position it would ill-become them to do otherwise. But this doctrinal Christianity is really meaningless to most people today, although the majority of them will not say so. They repeat by rote words and phrases that now signify nothing, literally or symbolically (if ever they did) — words and phrases that are, indeed, quite dead. Not even the most eloquent preacher can fire new life and meaning into them.

And so, while what we will again call ethical Christianity lies in ruins, theological Christianity is in a not much better condition. The Christian Church has long been a waning influence in the affairs of men. Intellectually and morally, all things show, it no longer counts for much. Will any of us now living witness its final eclipse? Perhaps not. But who surveying the prospects today can doubt the ultimate certainty of that?

My Recent Visit to Moscow

By KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS

A FEW weeks ago I was one of a party who visited the USSR by coach, our route going through Dover, Brussels, Hanover, Berlin, Poznan, Brest, Minsk, Smolensk to Moscow. At the invitation of Mr. Taylor I am setting down some of my impressions for THE FREETHINKER.

First, I'll never forget the way we crossed the Polish border. We had been told to put our cameras away, but I thought this rather silly. I got out of the coach on the border and took pictures of the guards. They shook hands with me and said they hoped I would send them a copy! The compliment was returned later on the Russian border. Just as we were leaving a Russian press photographer took a picture of me coming out of the Ukraine Hotel and I have since received his promised copy. An English language newspaper also interviewed us. This is read by many Russians learning English. Their reporter spoke of "the friendly desire of ordinary British people to understand what they see and hear in our country."

Well, I certainly had complete freedom to speak with whomsoever I wished during the visit. Ordinary people in the shops or in the street stopped to speak to us, and many knew English. A recurring question from them was whether the average Britisher felt friendly towards them. I could only say, frankly, that some did and some didn't. But the enduring impression I formed was their earnest desire for peace. If I had any doubts before, I know now that the ordinary Russian genuinely wants peace.

The queues lining up at the tombs of Lenin and Stalin in Red Square were very long, but we tourists were allowed to walk straight in and were even cheered as we did so. We also went to several theatres and exhibitions, as well as a

circus and (at my request) an atomic experimental station. What they told us here did not mean much to me, but outside we saw some enormous new trains. The Russians told us they were experimenting on using atomic energy for trains.

As a former ballet dancer, it was of especial interest to me to visit the Metropolitan Ballet. A visit to a puppet show dispelled any illusion that Russians do not laugh.

I did not see any women doing manual work but I understand they *can* do this work if their doctor is satisfied. I was told a 48-hour working week was the general rule. Once I saw some workers building at night. I was told this was voluntary work, such as is done when people in an area want to build a library or a community centre. They just get together and arrange to do the work in their spare time.

There are privately owned shops and farms in Russia: in the latter case a certain percentage of the produce must be sent to the Government for distribution.

I made a point of noting the Russian attitude to religion. No churches receive state aid. One young man said to me: "I just cannot conceive religion." This seems to be the typical attitude of the young. He told me any group could have a church if they wanted and would meet with no opposition provided they did nothing against the strong popular feeling for peace.

—NEXT WEEK—

NO SPUTNIKS FOR CHRISTMAS?

By G. H. TAYLOR

America's Deceptive Revival

By LEON SPAIN (U.S.A.)

WHEN THE POWER and prestige of Fundamentalist religions were on the wane, crusaders went forth on their behalf to bring the straying sheep back into the fold and even to gain converts as part of their crusade. Within modern times, particularly in the U.S.A., church and synagogue membership had declined considerably. However, since the close of World War I the major organised religious bodies have concerted to increase the total membership of their combined bodies, if not their particular churches or synagogues. The statistics compiled in that regard were seemingly impressive and formidable, since the power of numerical strength has the effect of overawing those unable to stand alone with their opinions. Serious doubts, however, have been cast upon the claims of those who maintain that increased church membership necessarily indicates a spiritual reawakening and a quickened interest in religion, by various religious instructors and acknowledged church leaders.

"The Growing Doubts About Our Religious Revival," written by William Peters, in the November issue of the popular and fashionable ladies' magazine, *Redbook*, casts a revealing light upon the current religious revival which is supposedly sweeping America today. Comments and statistics which he gleaned from his interviews with religious authorities, and other researches pertaining to the issue, should be meaningful to readers of THE FREETHINKER. While the article by Mr. Peters fairly bristles with pertinent data on the subject, only a fair cross-section of his interviews and findings is possible within the limited space of this article.

Dr. Ronald E. Osborn, Professor at the Butler University School of Religion in Indianapolis, Ind., while addressing a meeting of executives of the Disciples of Christ last July, conclusively stated that increased church membership does not necessarily imply a genuine return to religion. Since it has been represented by religiously minded politicians that the church is one of the accepted parts of the pattern of the supposed American way of life, and since conformity has become synonymous with loyalty, it is difficult to distinguish whether an applicant for membership is desirous of salvation or social respectability. "In effect," Dr. Osborn stated, "Christianity has become the prevailing cult in America, and receiving baptism is a routine act of social conformity."

A Roman Catholic priest, Rev. Robert Welch, who is a Professor of Iowa State University School of Religion, stated in effect that religion had become a form of "social respectability," and that the current religious revival was really a social phenomenon and not what he deemed a return to religious teachings.

During the month of September, 1957, the Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. made the announcement that church and synagogue membership had reached the record figure of 103,224,954, that is, 62 per cent. of the population. In that announcement the accompanying statistic was mentioned, that about 40,000,000 individuals were registered in Sabbath or Sunday schools.

A recent public opinion poll revealed that 95 per cent. of the American people past the age of 18 declared that their religious affiliations were either Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. Construction of religious edifices, denominational contributions, the sale of religious literature, and the distribution of Bibles have undoubtedly increased. 96 per cent. of the population, according to a 1954 Gallup poll,

believe in God. A survey by *The Catholic Digest* indicated that 92 per cent. of Americans pray to God, 77 per cent. believe in a post-mortem existence, and 86 per cent. believe the Bible to be the "word of God."

However, there are contradictory aspects and paradoxes in the religious statistics and questionnaires. Will Herberg, author of *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, pointed out that "when nearly 30 outstanding Americans were asked not long ago to rate the hundred most significant events in history, first place was given to Columbus' discovery of America, but Christ, His birth or crucifixion, came 14th, tied with the discovery of X-rays and the Wright brothers' plane flight." A further paradox is the disparity between the record distribution of the Bible and the ignorance as to its contents, as revealed in the following instance. Between 1949 and 1953, the distribution of the Bible in the U.S.A. reached a record of nearly 10,000,000 copies. However, in 1950 a Gallup Poll was conducted, during which those interviewed were asked to name the first four books of the New Testament, and more than half of those who were interviewed could not name one.

Dean James A. Pike, of New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, significantly stresses that, while church membership has increased, it has not affected behaviour in any important aspect. The following quotation by Dean Pike beyond a doubt shows the utter hollowness and sham-like façade of what is reputed to be a religious revival:

The divorce rate continues to be disturbingly high, juvenile delinquency continues to be on the increase. . . . Mental and nervous breakdowns continue to be on the increase; aberrations such as homosexuality, dope addictions and alcoholism are more evident. There seems to be no surcease in corruptions—in high places and low. Our Church membership is now so strong that, if it were committed to the professed aims of the organisation as fully as, say, business executives to the aims of a corporation, many of the evils of our common life could be wiped out, or, at least, checked, overnight.

The trend toward housing in the more desirable residential areas of American cities, and the new development of numerous suburban areas in parts of America, have had a significant bearing upon the increase in nominal or actual church membership. Some of the causes of suburban religious activity which is on the upward trend are treated at length by the Rev. Gibson Winter, a member of a Protestant Episcopal School training lay workers in Wisconsin. In an article in *The Christian Century* the Rev. E. Winter earnestly comments: "In one generation there has been a swing of power to suburbia which is touching all aspects of American life, and the churches are no exception. In fact, it can be said that suburban church life has become the controlling force in American Christianity." Dr. Winter does not view this tendency with complete indifference, for he further observes: "Suburbia has introduced its concept of success into the very centre of church life. Advancement, monetary and numerical extension of power—these are the criteria by which suburbia measures all things. Most church programmes are now burdened with endless haphazard activity of success so defined. . . . Despite a nominal church background, this is an unconverted, untrained mass of people."

It will be seen that the seemingly imposing fabric of American religious life is of the flimsiest texture, a texture which disintegrates easily in the light of a critical analysis. To a considerable degree, although there may be other facets to evaluating the upsurge in organised religious

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

Most people have had an uneasy feeling that Science and Religion have always been at loggerheads—that is, *genuine* Science and *true* Religion. But it is always an inspiring sight when a fervent believer in true Religion discovers some genuine scientist who also has some glimmerings of religion; for that proves unequivocally that Religion was True, that God Almighty really existed, and that Man was Immortal. This is the attitude of a Mr. G. Bocca who, when he can, fills the London *Evening Standard* with columns of slush about the way scientists are now beginning to feel “there is something in it”—meaning religion.

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Let any scientist—no matter how obscure—say a good word for religion, and he is received with whoops of joy from religious believers. It proves how Science *must* make way for God Almighty. Even the *Daily Express* scientific expert, Mr. Chapman Pincher, who claims that 50% of astronomers, physicists and mathematicians believe in telepathy and clairvoyance is dragged in to prove that there may be “a life after death.” Mr. Bocca in the *Evening Standard* triumphantly brings in the late Prof. Gilbert Murray as a believer in telepathy—what for? To prove that there is, that there *must* be, “a life after death.” Otherwise, why did Prof. Murray believe in telepathy?

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The truth is, of course, that a belief in telepathy proves nothing but a belief in telepathy. So far, the “fact” is not proven by a long way, but in spite of our spiritists, telepathy, even if proved true, is purely materialistic. It requires two material brains to work it, and it has no more to do with immortal life than roasted chestnuts.

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Another proof of “immortal life” comes from the stigmata on the hands of a Bavarian peasant woman called Therese Neumann who, though now nearly 60 years old, is called by Mr. Bocca “an honest, church-going girl.” Of course, stigmata have appeared on St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Gemma Galgani. But these were of such “saintly” reputation, that it is quite impossible for them to have faked the miraculous marks. On the other hand, no one has proved that Fraulein Neumann has ever had the audacity to fake her stigmata; so—concludes Mr. Bocca—the marks prove the “existence of Heaven” or if not, “they most powerfully indicate the existence of Hell.” Obviously, either way proves “a life after death.”

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Until one brings real evidence of stigmata—and on this, the testimony of illiterate Roman Catholic peasants is quite hopeless—it is useless to discuss them, so we can leave the immaculate Therese to her Catholic worshippers. But what about the “soul” or, as Mr. Bocca puts it, “Can Science Discover the Soul?” and for this he goes not to Science, of course, but to a Jesuit scientist, Fr. Leroy, who is a biologist.

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It goes without saying that the distinguished priest tells us that he can see no conflict between “genetics and the Christian faith,” which once again proves beyond question that there is life after death. Fr. Leroy tells us also that “man is a spirit whether he likes it or not. He is a religious animal all over the world and he has a soul.” That settles it, or should settle it. Unfortunately, the scientific Father has to admit that Science cannot discover the soul, at least, not with a scalpel, which is most heartbreaking. But he and everybody “witnesses its (the soul’s) manifestations endlessly.”

So now we know that Man has a Soul and Fr. Leroy wants all scientists to “realise that they are actually doing the work of God.” In that way, Religion can be saved, and Immortality be proven, and all will be right not only with the Jesuits but with the Roman Church. This sheer drivel is given publicity in one of our foremost national journals. Is it any wonder that Freethought has such a struggle to keep going? Most of the people in this country are apathetic where religion is concerned but what can they do against this kind of thing?

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It was really pathetic to listen to the Abbot of Downside trying to explain to children in a school broadcast the absolute necessity of a “Creator.” He admitted that there were millions of stars and suns and planets in the Universe, some of them thousands of “light years” away, but they all *must* have had a Creator. He did not, naturally, tell us how the Creator created the Universe in any way, but that is a small matter when a right reverend gentleman gets on to the exploded “Design” argument. It is surprising how often it turns up with the Creator as the Designer, and how often we are implored to worship him. No doubt children are impressed, but how many adults who have emerged from childishness are still impressed?

THEATRE

The Biggest Thief in Town, showing currently at the Unity Theatre, 1 Goldington Street, off St. Pancras Road, London, N.W.1. THE aims and objects of the Unity Theatre Society are: “To foster and further the art of the drama in accordance with the principle that true art, by effectively presenting and truthfully interpreting life as experienced by the majority of the people, can move the people to work for the betterment of society.”

These laudable aims not being such as would commend themselves to the big commercial theatres of the West End, it is hardly a matter of surprise that, although talent is on the stage, the wolf is at the door.

Their production of Dalton Trumbo’s play will, I am sure, be to the liking of freethinkers. This Hollywood script writer, around whose activities there seems to be an air of mystery, has written a first-rate farcial comedy, and one overlooks a few pedestrian passages in appreciation of the play as a whole, which, besides being good fun, offers a commentary on social relationships. The liberal use made of the Bible, with chapter and verse, for the purposes of crime, is of high entertainment as well as instruction. The cast varied from competency to excellence.

The next production here will be *Robin Hood* (Dec. 20). This, I imagine, will be a pantomime with a difference. If I mistake not, there will be some interesting conflict between varying philosophies of land ownership.

Unity Theatre has also an interesting bookstall.

G. H. TAYLOR

AMERICA’S DECEPTIVE REVIVAL

(Concluded from page 395)

activity, it cannot be denied that the current uptrend in denominational statistics is a social phenomenon induced by social trends in which conformity has played a major part. Despite constitutional assurances as to personal liberties and the right and privilege of expressing religious or non-religious differences, the stampede toward conformity in matters where the utmost freedom of controversy should be permitted has played a pernicious role. In historical eras of the past it has been noted that the closest interplay of mutual support existed between the altar and the throne, and in America today it is evident to close observers of the social scene that the apparent rebirth of religious activity has the fullest political support and sanction.

THE FREETHINKER

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

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

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

T. WRIGHT.—One of the very best ways of helping THE FREETHINKER is to get a newsagent to take a dozen copies and display one of them, guaranteeing to buy any remainders.

ERIC MORE.—See reply above.

FRANK HOUGH.—The description of the Indian as "adoring his own helplessness before nature; bending in adoration before Hanuman the sacred monkey; and before Durga the sacred cow" is by Marx.

J. WOODHAM SMITH.—The "Agreed Syllabus" (known in the teaching profession as the *Disagreed Syllabus*!) is still unsatisfying to many "hot" Christians. Whatever we may think of it, at least it curbs the fundamentalist teacher (presuming he or she pays any attention to it).

AGNES STACEY.—You say God is "the Being who first switched on and then left the set running." Who switched God on?

A. J. BANNER.—The Mormon Church, though it was founded by a semi-literate fanatic and launched by a gross fraud, is still a political institution to be reckoned with in the State of Utah.

L. PERCY (Mrs.).—The admission of women as members of London Borough Councils was voted against by Bishops.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, December 15th, 6.45 p.m.: H. NEWTON, "Youth and the Future."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, W.1).—Sunday, December 15th, 7.15 p.m.: J. ROBINSON, "Anarchism and Religion."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 17th, 7.15 p.m.: Miss K. M. JOHNSON, "Should Humanists Tell Religious Stories to Children?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 15th, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Christian Ethics and Modern Problems."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, December 15th, 2.30 p.m.: Councillor W. G. E. DYER, "Is the Social Structure Secure?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 15th, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "Many Kinds of Thinking."

West Ham and District N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, E.11).—Thursday, December 19th, 7.45 p.m.: P. TURNER, "Further Talks on Astronomy and Thinking."

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.

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, £272 1s.; A. Hancock, 2s.; Mrs. S. Brooks, £2 2s.; A. E. Stringer, 12s.; Anon, 3s.; W. H. Hawks (South Africa), £1 4s.; A. W. Harris, 2s. 6d.; T. H. Grimley, 5s.—Total to date, December 6th, 1957, £276 11s. 6d.

Notes and News

THE Roman Catholic Church owes a great deal to its influence over women and, hence, over their children. But Bishops and Archbishops fulminate in vain against "the immodesty of dress which is manifest to all and undoubtedly a dangerous occasion of sin." Dr. William Godfrey, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, is the latest to do so (in his pastoral letter for Advent) but the example could be multiplied a thousandfold. Its prevalence indicates its ineffectiveness. Even Roman Catholic women are beginning to realise that a celibate priest is not the best adviser on fashion, and in this matter they follow the House of Dior rather than the House of God.

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THE "spirit of worldliness" is not only seen in feminine fashion, however; "it invades our homes through wireless and television screen," writes Dr. Godfrey. "At times"—he adds—"there are to be heard the broadcast voices of men and women whose complacent agnosticism and positive unbelief form, we believe, a disproportionate part of the material that reaches the ears of a nation still boasting the Christian name." For Papist arrogance this could hardly be improved and, in the light of Mrs. Knight's and Mr. Kingsley Martin's revelations about the Catholic Radio Guild, we must conclude that the Archbishop of Westminster is following the old maxim, the best form of defence is attack.

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STILL, there is some encouragement to be derived from this typical pastoral letter. It reveals once again the intellectual bankruptcy of the Church of Rome and its fear of the free expression of opposing views. "We are of the opinion"—says Dr. Godfrey—"that some of the programmes broadcast underestimate the intelligence and good taste of the saner part of the population." True as this is of many programmes, it hardly fits those that the Archbishop has in mind—the Brains Trust and the like. The rational ideas of Dr. Bronowski and Professor Ayer offend neither intelligence nor good taste; they might well stir religious doubt. That is precisely why they offend Dr. Godfrey.

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WE are sorry to learn that the Merseyside Branch of the National Secular Society is having difficulty in finding a suitable indoor meeting place. The sale of one hall and the enormous increase in rental of another have taken both outside the Branch's reach. It is regrettable that Liverpool, with its splendid outdoor site on the Pierhead, should have nothing to offer inside, particularly as the Branch had prepared an interesting syllabus to supplement its valuable open air activity. If anybody can help please write to Mr. T. Hogan, 1 Lenthall Street, Liverpool, 4.

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HEARTIEST congratulations to our Freethought poet—Bayard Simmons, whose 75th birthday occurred on December 9th. Mr. Simmons is still active "poetically," and is a Director of G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd. We are sure all readers will wish him many happy returns of the day—and more poetry.

A Note on Josephus

By H. CUTNER

IT IS ASTONISHING how often we "veterans" of the Free-thought Movement are asked questions on subjects as if they had never been asked before, and had never been dealt with by anybody at all.

As one precious example, a very angry reader has taken me to task because I said that the famous passage in Josephus about Jesus Christ was a forgery. There it is, *printed* in his copy of the works of the famous Jewish historian — and therefore, how could it possibly be a forgery! This particular gentleman obviously believes if something is in print, it *must* be genuine. Moreover, when I sent him exact references to famous Christian and other writers who all declared the passage was a forgery — like Dean Farrar and Robert Taylor — I was assailed more angrily than ever. The British Museum library hadn't anything by a Dean Farrar — was he an obscure American? — and Taylor has nothing about Josephus in his *Diegesis*.

But we can leave this gentleman severely alone. It is not really worthwhile bothering with anybody who is not willing to learn. There are naturally all sorts of things about which Freethought has no answer, but this passage in Josephus, about "Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man . . . He was the Christ . . ." is not one of them. If there is one thing indeed we can be quite sure about, it is that the whole of the paragraph in which the above occurs is, as Gibbon — considered by Cardinal Newman as the greatest of ecclesiastical historians — says, "The passage concerning Jesus Christ, which was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery" He gives a number of authors as his authorities. Even Dean Milman, who tried his best to soften Gibbon's contemptuous attacks on Christianity in his edition, was obliged to admit that "this passage is not altogether a forgery but interpolated with many additional clauses." These "additional" clauses were thus "not altogether" forgeries; they were merely "interpolations."

Farrar in his *Life of Christ* — perhaps the most widely read of all "lives" of Jesus — says, "The single passage in which Josephus alludes to Christ is interpolated, if not wholly spurious." And in an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, he said, "That Josephus wrote the whole passage as it now stands no sane critic can believe."

But the Rev. S. Baring Gould in his now forgotten work — it is possible that it helped to lose him any chance of preferment so outspoken it is — *The Lost and Hostile Gospels* bluntly says, "It is somewhat remarkable that no contemporary, or even early, account of the life of our Lord exists, except from the pens of Christian writers." This paragraph begins chapter one of his book, and for the next 42 pages he comments on the lamentable fact, doing his best to give reasons for (as he heads the chapter) "The Silence of Josephus." It is "not to be wondered at," he says, that we have no contemporary records by Greek or Roman writers — "but it is singular that neither Philo, Josephus, nor Justus of Tiberius should have ever alluded to Christ or primitive Christianity." Here we have a very candid Christian, a learned parson, (far and away above most of his contemporaries in the Church) frankly admitting the truth, and not sheltering himself behind the chicken-hearted "interpolations" theory. Of the particular passage in Josephus, he says, "That this passage is spurious has been almost universally acknowledged." And he adds: —

"One may be, perhaps, accused of killing dead birds, if one again examines and discredits the passage; but as the silence of Josephus on the subject which we are treating is a point on

which it will be necessary to insist, we cannot omit as brief a discussion as possible of this celebrated passage . . . That Josephus could not have written the passage as it stands, is clear enough, for only a Christian would speak of Jesus in the terms employed. Josephus was a Pharisee and a Jewish priest; he shows in all his writings that he believes in Judaism."

Dozens of other Christian writers have said the same thing, and only a very few — I cannot remember *one* off-hand — insist and give "evidence" that the passage is genuine. But of course, when confronted with this undeniable fact, the Christian or reverent Rationalist who is so distressed at the absence of any contemporary allusion to Jesus, falls back upon the second passage in which Jesus is mentioned in Josephus. In it, the Jewish writer refers to James, whose brother "was called Christ." Of course, Christians convicted of one flagrant forgery would never be capable of two; so this passage *must* be genuine. Baring Gould thought otherwise, for he bluntly says, "This passage is also open to objection." Nearly all the Christian authorities who reject the first passage reject this clause which was probably a late marginal note put in by a scribe, and then accepted as Gospel truth by the Christian Church.

And here it should be added that almost contemporary with Josephus was another Jewish historian, Justus of Tiberius, but his *History* has been "lost." It was in all probability, destroyed by Christians because, as Photius, a ninth century Christian writer who had read the work, says, "This Jewish historian does not make the smallest mention of the appearance of Christ and says nothing whatever of his deeds and miracles."

One can well understand the rage of Christians, then, faced with the fact that two contemporary Jewish historians, writing of the time when Jesus went about with twelve Apostles "doing good," and giving innumerable sermons on conduct, was completely ignored by them. Baring Gould laboured hard to show why Josephus was silent — it was done *deliberately*, he declared; but his arguments are not convincing. At least I did not find them so.

In actual fact, there can be only one reason why Josephus and Justus never mentioned Jesus, and that is, that there was no Jesus to mention. It would have been quite impossible for the two historians to have passed over in silence all that happened, not only while Jesus was alive, but all the wonderful and miraculous events so graphically described in the Book of Acts after he was dead. There is nothing whatever in Josephus about Peter and Paul and Barnabas and the wholesale conversion of Jews and the preaching in the synagogues. Josephus knew literally nothing about Peter standing in the midst of his disciples (as Acts says) "the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty." Nor did he know anything about the "Holy Ghost." He did not appear to know even that Jesus was "prophesied" in the "Scriptures" as Peter is reported to have called the Greek Old Testament.

Nor did he know anything about the murder of Ananias and Sapphira or the stoning of Stephen. It would indeed be almost a miracle if he could have left such extraordinary events out of such a detailed history as he left us.

But if we look into a Christian work entitled *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* written by Justin Martyr about the year 150 AD, we would not be surprised at the "silence" of Josephus. For in that work, the young and learned Trypho categorically tells Justin that he does not believe a word about Jesus, for he says: —

"But Christ if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere, is unknown and does not even know himself and has no power until Elias come to anoint him and make him manifest to all. And you having accepted a groundless report invent a Christ for yourselves and for his sake are inconsiderately perishing."

Here we have a Jew roundly telling Justin that Christians had "invented" a Christ — that he "is unknown." And this, after all the marvellous happenings described in Acts, and accepted by all Christians as the early history of the Church. Trypho says in effect, "You have invented it all."

Joseph Lewis on American T.V.

(Continued from page 391)

GORDON: Sir, here's a question you don't have to answer if you don't want to . . .

LEWIS: It is perfectly all right. Ask it.

GORDON: . . . because it's personal. Have you ever been psychoanalysed?

LEWIS: No, sir, I have not.

GORDON: Well, the reason I asked is that you're very obviously (from what you've written) a very brilliant erudite man and you carry on your crusade with such great zeal. I took the liberty today of talking to a local psychiatrist. The psychiatrist said (and I want to say that all he knows about you is what I have given him from the information I had—the records) that the reason for your ardent atheism is a very simple one. He said, "Mr. Lewis was forced to quit school when he was nine years old. He seemed to have lost his parents at that time. He had to go to work, and in all probability, the shock of it set him to thinking, 'Why am I chosen to suffer all this injustice? Why was God so unkind to me?' Consequently, Mr. Lewis, unable to find a satisfactory answer for his problem, began seeing the world as wrong as hostile. And to strike back at the world, he became a disbeliever and, eventually, an atheist. If Mr. Lewis had had nice warm relatives who would have cared for him, he never would have gone the way he went." Would you say, sir, there was any basis for this explanation of your becoming an atheist?

LEWIS: Absolutely none. It contains just about the same amount of nonsense that you generally find in psychoanalysis. I made a long study of it and I wrote an article not very long ago, the title of which was "If Freud had read Shakespeare, psychoanalysis might never have been born." Because Shakespeare knew more about dreams than Sigmund Freud, he knew more about the motivation of human conduct than the founder of psychoanalysis. I did not lose my parents when I was nine years old. I happened to live in Alabama; in Selma, Alabama, when there was a terrible epidemic of yellow fever. The place was devastated—people were dying like flies; business conditions were very bad, and we had to suffer like everyone else, and that's the reason I had to quit school at nine years of age and go to work. It was perhaps the worst economic period the South had ever suffered, and we were some of the victims. We overcame this terrible period without any faith, without a belief in God. Never once did I see or hear my parents pray or call for help from the Myth of Heaven. My parents sheltered me and I lived with them under a great deal of loving care, so you see that the psychoanalyst is entirely wrong.

It is typical of the nonsense that they foster upon people. If what you say is true, then every child who is forced to go to work at an early age would become an atheist—or a rebellious member of society. On the contrary, many have become our leading citizens, and have achieved distinction in many fields of endeavour. Psychoanalysis is the primi-

There is only one reason for the silence of Josephus — he knew nothing whatever about the early Christian Church as described in the New Testament. But he did know a lot about the other various Jewish sects of his country and faithfully describes them. And none of these is Christian.

I have an idea that some angry reader in a year or two will write an indignant letter to our Editors and ask, how dare we say Josephus never mentions Jesus; and if so, why don't we write an article about it giving the evidence? It is so much easier to do this than find out the truth for oneself.

tive superstition which Frazer called "Sympathetic Magic" and put into a modern dress.

GORDON: Sir, if he's wrong in his premise, it's because the information that has been written about you has been wrong, because I gave it to him.

LEWIS: Even if he had the correct information, his premise is wrong because psychoanalysis has no basis on which to base anything that is truthful, in my opinion. I urge him to read my article. I will gladly send him a copy.

GORDON: All right, sir, if we may go on for a minute. During the past twenty-five years there have been two great religious faiths. I refer to Judaism, Christianity, and the countries Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. Millions of people were slaughtered in these countries and countless numbers were purged in slave labour camps. In both of these countries, the dignity of man fell to its lowest level. Don't you feel that it's ironic that these atrocities were perpetrated by men who were atheists and had no belief in a Supreme Being?

LEWIS: In the first place, I don't believe that Hitler was an atheist. Hitler was a devout Catholic. In fact, it is generally believed that a priest helped Hitler to write *Mein Kampf*.

GORDON: Well, he renounced the Church or the Church renounced him.

LEWIS: On the contrary, he made a concordat with the Pope the moment he came into power.

GORDON: But I'm speaking of the last years after he had broken with . . .

LEWIS: Yes, but it was his intense religious hatred that caused him to be an anti-Semite. He had no knowledge of atheism. He was not a philosophical atheist, nor did he have the intellect to comprehend the philosophy of atheism. The eradication of prejudice is one of the basic principles of atheism.

GORDON: Well, he did everything to destroy Catholicism and Judaism.

LEWIS: He did not do everything to destroy Catholicism at all. Most of his associates were Catholics. He arrested a few priests over there but he . . .

GORDON: Well, let's talk about Russia, then.

LEWIS: Russia and the Church presents an economic situation and has nothing to do with intellectual atheism. There they look upon the Church as a vested interest, and it has been a thorn in the side of the world for a great many years. It happened to be one of the things they had to take action against, similar to what was done in many other countries. France drove out the Church. England had to break the power of the Church. And the Russian Revolution had cause to break the power of the Church because it had a stranglehold upon the people, but that was not philosophical atheism. Atheism does not believe in wars of aggrandisement. Atheism and Communism are in conflict. Atheism maintains that the individual's rights in society

are supreme. Communism believes in the supremacy of the State. Communism opposes the Church on economic and not intellectual grounds. In fact, if I am not mistaken, in those countries under Communist domination, the Church is now subsidised.

GORDON: Would you agree that the dignity of man is at the highest level here in the United States of America?

LEWIS: Yes, I do say so. It is because of our Constitution. You mustn't forget we have the greatest Constitution that was ever written.

GORDON: Well, don't you think it's ironic that where the dignity of man is the greatest, it is in the country that has the largest churchgoing population in the world?

LEWIS: No. We only have the largest churchgoing population in the world because of the large population that we have. But the largest churchgoing population is in Italy, where the Church is strongest by proportion. The greater number of people (if you take the percentage) in Italy far outstrips the United States in churchgoing people. So every other religious country—take the South American countries—eighty-five per cent. of the people are churchgoing, probably ninety per cent. Here only forty per cent. attend church.

GORDON: Well, I'm still not speaking in terms of percentages, but in terms of numbers.

LEWIS: Yes, I know, but you have to take the percentage. If a country has a hundred and seventy-five million people, naturally there are more people going to church; but you must use percentages to be fair. Take a country that has thirty million people and twenty-five million go to church, that percentage is larger than ours as to the number of churchgoing people. If we have such a large churchgoing population, why are the preachers shouting over television and radio for people to attend church? Churchgoing is a failure in the United States. We . . .

GORDON: Mr. Lewis, in the *New Yorker Magazine* . . .

LEWIS: We have the largest secular number of people of any country on the face of the earth. That's because we have a secular republic. And one of my great desires in this fight is to keep the Churches out of the body politic, prevent them from getting special privileges and to make them pay their rightful shares of taxes. If we succeed in that, the Church will collapse. It cannot exist without state support.

(To be concluded)

CORRESPONDENCE

SCOTTISH SUNDAY

Paul Varney's letter (6/12/57) is characterised by his usual dogmatism and inaccuracy. My article was principally directed, not at the Sunday closing of public houses in Scotland—it is not hard to get a drink on the Sabbath, though the licensing laws are silly—but at the Councillors' antics over Sunday cinemas, dancing and fun fairs. Having initially failed to understand me, Mr. Varney tells us that the Scots, like the Welsh, "are Celts, and are more prone to violence than the more phlegmatic English." What does this mean? The Celts are not—and apparently never were—a homogeneous group, but a fusion of diverse stocks. There is no Celtic physical or mental type in any scientific sense. There were Celtic cultures in the past over most of Europe including Britain, but the term is now best confined to languages. And the majority of Scots do not even speak a Celtic language. Gaelic is confined to the Highlands. As for the Scots being prone to violence, whereas the English are phlegmatic: these generalisations are about as useless as that of the "dour" Scot.

Whether Burns "died drunk" or not does not lessen the value of his satirical writing (particularly as drink was not the main topic of my article). In fact, though, Burns died of a rheumatic heart, and overwork on the farm was probably the largest contributory factor to the disease. Dr. David Daiches has shown that he was still discussing the writing and revision of songs on his deathbed.

But Mr. Varney really goes to town—to Glasgow or Cardiff, that is, but presumably not London, Birmingham or Manchester—in testifying to the "terror"; "the sickening, all-pervading odour of

beer, garlic, and onions from the drunken morons who fill the streets" on Saturday nights. What an absurd exaggeration! It is worthy of the Calvinism that Burns satirised so well. I am sorry for Mr. Varney: it must be sad to be so superior to mean, sensual humanity.

COLIN McCALL.

IS THERE A GOD?

As four correspondents have commented on my letter (September 27th) I will make brief replies to each.

W. Bevin, instead of answering my letter, which he cannot, suggests I am a psychological case. Why waste his time with such "woolly" comments? I stressed the fact that this earth is not an independent unit but all life upon it depends upon what comes "from above." James 1:17. I ask him, if not from "God the Father of lights," then from whom, or from what? There must be a reason why, too.

R. V. Sturgess suggests that the law and order we daily experience has arisen in course of time "out of an infinity of chaos"! If that is so, will it continue, and for how long; or may there be a reversal later? If life evolved, what about death? It seems to me as confused as aimlessly drawing continuous lines on a piece of paper by a child. "Law and order" and "chaos" are two opposites.

C. V. Symes asserts that to him "the idea of God is unthinkable" and considers it to be more difficult to believe in a universe maker than otherwise, though he agrees that to be difficult also. Why should he? Man as the maker of anything, is greater than the thing made. So it is with God and the universe. But to say law and order is responsible for the existence of life, and that "man evolved because of it," is quite contrary to my reason. Did law and order evolve?

R. G. Forster complains that I refrain from giving my definition of God. I have not undertaken to do so. All I can do is to give my conception of God based upon the Bible and nature, as stated in Rom. 1:19. I am satisfied that it is sensible.

W. MILLS.
[Perhaps we had better leave Mr. Mills at peace with his God.—EDITOR.]

MISSING BOOKS

Like Mr. Jordan (THE FREETHINKER, November 22nd), I successfully applied for that wonderful book, *The Dollar and the Vatican* at my local library in Bradford, and was the first borrower. I have since checked the racks to see if it was being read, but it has not yet reappeared. I shall now follow up Mr. Jordan's procedure, because, after its perusal I prophesied to my neighbour that it would soon be spirited away.

S. DAWSON.

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