

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS and disquieting phenomena encountered in the 20th century is the racist dogma which ascribes an inevitable superiority to a particular race or colour. For, despite its inherently unscientific character and its implicit denial of evolution as a universal characteristic of mankind, the dogma of the Chosen Race has played, and is playing today, an important political role in the world. Yesterday it was Hitler and his Aryan Swastika and we know the result of *that!* whilst in the Far East a generation ago, the famous Tanaka Memorandum set forth in detail the Divine plan for the "chosen" Japanese race to conquer the entire world under the leadership of their Divine Emperor, the consecrated offspring of the Sun-Goddess. Now we have the revival of the "Chosen Race" amongst its Biblical progenitors in the revived State of Israel, where a recent notorious case revealed that the children of mixed Jewish-Gentile marriages cannot even be interred in ground consecrated according to the Mosaic ritual. And by an ironic coincidence, just at the very time that the British Commonwealth based on equality of race and colour, appears to be superseding the old, now discredited, Imperialism, we find racism rampant in what is still nominally the Dominion of South Africa.

## Calvin and Apartheid

Having so first-hand knowledge of German politics as well as some personal acquaintance with actual participants in the drama of the rise and fall of the Nazi Empire, I have never taken the view that Hitler and Company were products of Christianity merely because some of them were baptised Christians. In so far as Nazism had a religious root, it is not difficult to trace its origins to the old Nordic Paganism which the Nazi prophets extolled. Anything cosmopolitan which included both the Catholic Church and Communism was obnoxious to the protagonists of the German Christianity. In contemporary South Africa, contrarily, racism, with its present practical result in apartheid, represents a Christian racism; more exactly a Calvinistic one. The famous dogma of Predestination, preached by Calvin with legal precision at Geneva, is now rigorously applied with legal precision by the apostles of apartheid, who dominate the Union of South Africa. Just as Moses is still the effective legislator in the contemporary State of Israel, so Calvin represents the effective legislator of South Africa. We are still ruled by the dead hand of the remote religious past.

## Christ and the Colour Question

It is common knowledge that racism in both the U.S.A. in the past and in South Africa in the present, extends to religion. The "master race," which is white, assembles in church to worship a white Christ. And by the logical corollary of this state of things, it follows that the black Christians, or at least an increasing proportion of them, assemble in their separate churches (for apartheid applies rigorously in the religious sphere) to worship a black

Christ. It would be as unreasonable to expect black men segregated under apartheid to worship a white Christ as it would be to expect those devout disciples of Calvin to kneel in adoration before a coloured Christ. As has often been indicated by rationalists, our critiques of Heaven usually reflect our critiques of this terrestrial earth below. Incidentally, the Roman Catholic Church nowhere reveals its worldly wisdom more clearly than when, both in America and in South Africa, it refuses to accept apartheid. At a recent Catholic Congress, the quite possibly epoch-making decision was taken that Christ may be represented in sacred art as a coloured man. The same permission apparently extends to the

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## The Black Christ

By F. A. RIDLEY

Virgin and the Saints. Rome evidently realises the growing importance of the coloured races and is making a bid for their future support; a much more far-sighted policy than that of our South African Calvinists.

### Black Christs

In a most interesting volume written by a former Lutheran missionary, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* by B. G. M. Sundkler, we learn that a whole group of churches now exists in the Union formed exclusively of members of the black races. Several of these preach a kind of inverted racism which confines access to Heaven exclusively to black men; some officially proclaim the dogma of "The Black Christ," a dogma more openly stated, but perhaps not more sincerely believed, than the quite definite assumption of their Dutch Calvinist masters that Christ was a white man.

### Ethiopian and Zulu Christianity

The racial antecedents of most of the Bantu churches described by Mr. Sundkler are clearly indicated by the name and/or their racial origin. Several describe themselves as Ethiopian churches, thus claiming kinship with the oldest indigenous Christian Church in Africa, the Coptic Church of Ethiopia, which has existed since about the fourth century. But as the author indicates, the strength of Negro Christianity is largely drawn from the Zulu race, and shows clearly the nostalgia for the vanished glories of the Zulus. It is an exclusively Negro Christianity and has an exclusively black Christ.

### A Zulu King David

Perhaps the most instructive episode noted in the above connection is the fact that one rather important Zulu church actually finds its human ideal in the Zulu warrior chief, Chaka, who created Zulu military power in the early 19th century and whose descendants still reign over Zululand as local rajas under the white man's rule. The historic Chaka—familiar to readers of Rider Haggard's novel *Nada the Lily*—was a brilliant soldier and a ruthless military despot who devastated South Africa before the coming of the white man. Now, however, he is apparently being transformed into an idealised saint, the acme of human perfection, in a manner similar to the transformation of the Biblical King David—according to the older

traditions a bloodthirsty old ruffian, probably very similar to the real Chaka—into the sweet singer of Israel, the national hero. Evidently Negro Christianity has its own contribution to make to the still-evolving science of comparative religion.

#### "Prester John" and the Black Christ

If the roots of the contemporary Negro cult are ultimately racial, may not the same be true of its future? Indigenous

religious movements like the Tai-Pings in China and the Mau Mau in Kenya, have played an important part in past colonial revolts. The late John Buchan, in his novel *Prester John*, predicted a black Messiah to lead a Negro revolt against the white man. In the seething cauldron of South Africa, Negro Christianity is an obvious rallying-point for the disinherited Negro majority. Perhaps neither we nor the Boer Calvinists have yet heard the last of the "Black Christ."

## REVIEW

# The Rationalist Annual

By JACK GORDON

I HAVE ONLY ONE COMPLAINT about this book\*—the title. A newcomer might well infer from the title that the contents would probably consist of anti-religious articles written from the traditionally Rationalist viewpoint. In fact, what our hypothetical newcomer will find is a well balanced collection of essays on various aspects of modern culture written by authors whose names would figure prominently in any survey of modern thought. Those of us who are acquainted with the present-day policy of the directors of the Rationalist Press Association will not be surprised by the non-polemical content of this book; no doubt the description "Rationalist" will soon be dropped now that the substance has vanished.

John Allegro gives us an interesting survey of the Dead Sea Scrolls—a decade having elapsed since their first finding. On their bearing on Christian origins, Mr. Allegro is of the opinion that the main difficulty is the absence of first-hand Semitic manuscripts of the first Jewish-Christian communities to make adequate comparison with the Scrolls. However, Mr. Allegro is hopeful that such Jewish-Christian records may yet be found, but whether they will be greeted with joy by the orthodox Jewish and Christian bodies is another matter.

Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, a familiar contributor to the *Rationalist Annual*, and well known to Rationalists of old, contributes an amusing piece about the reasons which have prompted him to emigrate to India.

Prof. Benjamin Farrington gives us a translation from the Latin of Thomas Hobbes's *Autobiography*.

Of considerable interest is D. J. West's *Report on Lourdes*. Dr. West submits the Lourdes Medical Bureau to a critical examination. He analyses the standards of evidence accepted by the bureau and marvels at the many instances where "miraculous" cures were recorded when perfectly normal explanations would have sufficed. As an illustration, Dr. West tells us the story of one Mme. Rose Martin, who was reportedly cured of cancer by miraculous means, but who, if medical examination means anything at all, had nothing more grievous than severe constipation! Dr. West asks: "How can scientific men indulge in such farcical rationalisations?" Perhaps the answer is to be found in the concluding sentence of Dr. West's own essay: "For in spite of all the bias and ineptitude, I am not yet convinced that nothing happens at Lourdes." If Dr. West can write that, after providing evidence which proves that one would be justified in rejecting miracle cures altogether, it is not hard to understand the wishful thinking and inadequate diagnoses of the Lourdes doctors. Either Dr. West is unable to see the logical consequences of his own arguments or he is motivated by certain unstated fancies incapable of scientific verification. Prof. Anthony Flew defends his position in "Determinism and Validity Again," while F. H. George contributes a thoughtful essay on some possible consequences of automation.

Donald Macrae writes knowledgeably about Religion in West Africa and ends with a plea for humane and tolerant behaviour in a superstitious world.

Finally, for those who like really to exercise their "grey matter," there is "After the Revolution in Philosophy" by J. W. N. Watkins. Mr. Watkins begins by reviewing the book called *The Revolution in Philosophy* and continues where the book left off. We are given some very interesting glimpses of such comparatively recent disciplines as linguistic analysis and of the light they shed on some traditional philosophic problems, and perhaps pseudo problems. Mr. Watkins draws some clever comparisons between these new techniques and empiricism in modern physics. There seems to be an interesting tie-up between the operational approach of the modern quantum physicist and the linguistic philosopher, both of whom can easily annihilate any statement not referring to some conceivable state of affairs. Since there cannot be finality in either science or a scientifically designed philosophy, we may leave modern philosophy to develop in its own way, confident of its ability, and grateful to the many giants and some lesser known geniuses of the past who have charted, at least, some of the way ahead.

\**The Rationalist Annual*. Watts and Co. Paper 3s. 6d.; Cloth 5s.

## A RUSSIAN VIEW

A BRITISH UNITED PRESS report from Moscow, dated January 9th, quotes the official organ of the Russian Young Communist League, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* as saying that the Dead Sea Scrolls offered "conclusive proof" of "the mythical character of Moses and Jesus."

The newspaper says the Scrolls were written in the first and second centuries before Christ and enabled scholars to conclude "that the image of the 'Divine Messenger' existed among the Essenes long before the New Testament writes of the birth of the mythical Christ. The principal traits of Jesus were, consequently, developed before the appearance of Christianity."

Describing the New Testament as a "new variant on old fables," the paper said: "The so-called Holy Scriptures are of earthly, not divine origin. These books were not written by a mythical Moses under divine inspiration, nor by Christ's apostles under the dictation of their teacher."

"The Dead Sea Scrolls have backdated the Bible by no less than 1,000 years. This explains the list of contradictions and absurdities contained in the Holy Writ. These contradictions are so numerous that they evoked smiles from educated people, even in the Middle Ages.

"Religion has lost all foundation in our country, where only unpleasant memories remain of the exploiting classes. However, some part of our people retains faith in the holiness of the Bible. The new scientific discoveries have dealt a crushing blow to these backward views."

# Problems of Demography

By G. H. TAYLOR

IT WAS GOOD to see the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers devoting itself to the discussion of a problem of world-wide significance instead of to matters of only regional urgency. The population problem had a thoroughly good airing and papers on the subject were reproduced in these columns. There was a brilliant paper by Jean Cotereau<sup>1</sup>, who began by drawing attention to the new science of demography, the statistical study of problems arising from the growth and distribution of world population. Several leading universities of the world, we may note with pleasure, have now given official recognition and encouragement to the new department of science: a course of study is, for instance, now offered at the famous Johns Hopkins University.<sup>2</sup>

THE FREETHINKER also contained the gist of papers on the problem in China and India respectively from Prof. Kahane<sup>3</sup> and Prof. Chandrasekhar<sup>4</sup>. The latter founded the Indian Institute for Population Studies, which has recently acquired an organ, *Population Review*, edited by Chandrasekhar himself.

So far unpublished in THE FREETHINKER is the following message to the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers (Paris, 1957) from Sir R. Paranjpye:

"The main subject before the Congress, *Freethought and Population*, is one of the utmost importance to the world in general and to India in particular. Unless this question is satisfactorily settled, all our attempts for the progress of humanity are bound ultimately to fail. We in India are already feeling that our numbers are too large for a happy, healthy and useful life for the mass of our people. The rapid increase in our population will make the raising of the standard of living quite impossible. Religious injunctions, perhaps reasonable enough in old times, are altogether unsuited to our present conditions, and a wide spread of rationalist thinking is the only remedy for this danger. I hope our governments will do their best to rouse the people to a realisation of this impending disaster."

Since man discovered, and began to use, inanimate energy, world population has rocketed to alarming heights, and graphs of this rise are fearsome to look upon. Their message is clear: if the trend goes on, no rise in the general standard of living is possible and the future is just one huge cloud of famine and war.

The population menace is regarded as even more serious than the threat of the hydrogen bomb. This is the view of the most eminent investigators, such as Huxley and Hoyle. The H-bomb may or may not be dropped, but there are no two ways about the other. This "bomb" is being dropped and its results are calculable. The H-bomb is spectacular and noisy, and makes an appeal to millions who cannot be bothered to notice this slower, inexorable process of extinction through over-population. It does not threaten to make a big bang. It cannot show a mushroom of smoke on the screen. It shows statistics, facts and predictions based on them. The population menace will therefore be appreciated only by the more thoughtful. Huxley (a former Director-General of UNESCO) has described it as "the most serious threat to human welfare," H-bombs included.

In 1955 there were 400 people in the world for every 300 in 1930.<sup>5</sup> World population, in other words, has increased

by one third in 25 years. Death rates between 1945-56 fell more rapidly than in any other decade recorded in history.<sup>6</sup> The facilities for obtaining these figures are good, and hampered only in such cases as Iraq, where people do not trouble to register births but are obliged to register deaths in order to obtain burial licences.

The steep rise in world population has been facilitated by the unlocking of inanimate energy, but the margin of expansion has now been practically used up and the danger is so near as to make imperative the putting on of the brakes without delay.

Any suggestion of controlling the number of births meets with religious opposition at once. Life is "sacred," "God-given," even apparently when prolixity spells disaster. Support for this view comes from certain political theorists who provide secular "reasons" for not applying birth control. It has been said, for instance, that industrialisation on a world scale will lift living standards and be accompanied by a steep decline in the birth rate: stability will be restored and the situation saved. For such theories Hoyle has the utmost disgust. He says:

"It would be difficult to match these statements in their absurdities. It would also be difficult to devise any other nonsense so potentially dangerous to human welfare."

In any case, by the time the world could get fully industrialised the blow would have fallen in the shape of starvation. Supplies are not yet available for world-wide industry. Hoyle estimates that if the whole world consumed oil at the rate of the U.S.A. there would be none left after 30 years. Of countries not industrialised, only China is efficiently placed for full industrialisation, but her coal would give out in two centuries if used at the U.S.A. rate. Even if we assume the quickest possible transition to nuclear power (say 50 years), the population problem would by then constitute, in Hoyle's words, an unparalleled disaster.

Moreover, as Hoyle points out, excessive industrialisation could defeat its own objects, with every people wanting to exchange manufactures that nobody wants, for food that nobody has. A wholly industrialised world could easily become populated by starving billions.

(To be continued)

(6) Population Bulletin, March 1957.  
(7) *Man and Materialism*, 1957.

## I.T.V.'s New Job

ITV greeted the New Year with wonderful news for teenagers. They were to get their own special religious programme! Starting in February, "Facing Tomorrow" will be shown weekly on Sundays from 6.15 to 7 p.m. Titbits will include modern arrangements of popular hymns, stories from the Bible in the form of plays, and a quiz on Bible knowledge. That TV religious stalwart, the Rev. David Shepherd, and singer Frankie Vaughan have been mentioned in connection with the programme, but what is particularly wanted is "a new TV personality—a sincere young man who can 'enthuse and inspire.'" The aim of the programme—said ABC Television's Managing Director, Mr. Howard Thomas—is "to do a real job to help Britain's youth." But hymns—even in "modern arrangements"—will hardly have the appeal of Jack Jackson's music (which immediately precedes "Facing Tomorrow") and Bible playlets are a little corny these days.

(1) THE FREETHINKER, October 4th.  
(2) *Catalog* (1957-58) of the School of Hygiene of Johns Hopkins University.  
(3) THE FREETHINKER, December 27th.  
(4) THE FREETHINKER, September 13th.  
(5) United Nations Statistical Yearbook for 1956, quoted in *London Times*, 8/4/57.

## This Believing World

**Other Roman Catholic countries** have always been jealous of Lourdes, that great business and money-making marvel in France, so we hope that the Syracuse "Weeping Madonna"—just a foot high cheap plaster-cast of the Virgin Mary—will do for Italy what Lourdes has done for France. The little statue with tears in its eyes not only stopped the pains of a pregnant girl, but has already cured as well a man with a crippled arm, a little girl suffering from polio, and an 18-year-old dumb girl who, after the Madonna began weeping, suddenly spoke. Then the Roman Catholic-sodden people woke up, and the statue was carried in procession with 30,000 of the devout following; it was sealed up in a glass case topped, of course, with a cross, and now thousands of pilgrims, headed by 72 bishops and three cardinals have flocked since to the shrine.

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**To enable it to compete successfully** with Lourdes—which never had a "weeping" Madonna anyway—the people at Syracuse are building a wonderful new home for the Statue, with twelve acres of land, a great theatre as the Shrine, and "a latticed pagoda" which will hold 20,000 pilgrims, and which will in turn have 36 little chapels attached to it. We were always inclined to look upon Jesus as the greatest Business Man that ever lived, but it looks as if the Virgin has actually displaced him as a big money getter.

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**Thousands of books are written every year** about Jesus, almost the only Bible hero who gets this honour, but we note that at last a book has appeared in America about Abraham, by Dorothy B. Hill. All we know of this completely mythical personage is in Genesis, but that is no reason why imagination should not be allowed full play in writing a book about him. Not a line has ever been discovered by archaeologists anywhere in the least degree substantiating the Genesis story of Abraham or Sarah or even of Lot—but these little facts never disturb the ultra pious. That is why, no doubt whatever, Miss Hill's book will have a great success, and if it catches the eye of Mr. Cecil B. de Mille may even be sumptuously screened.

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**The American magazine "Time" admits** in its review that Miss Hill "draws on imagination," and naturally sees no harm in that. But no matter what she has said, the fact remains that the story of Abraham, the son of Terah (Terra?), is said to have come from Chaldea, and originally had no more to do with Judaism as such than the story of Aladdin. Abram (his first name) really meant "Father," and when the word was changed to Abraham it quite possibly meant "Our Father which art in Heaven"—an *exalted* Father. He was meant to be the Father of *many* nations, but only those people who call themselves Jews now seem to claim him.

★

**Why has Christian truth failed** to permeate "the secular order"? The answer is given by a stout Christian, Prebendary Linsley, director of the Industrial Christian Fellowship, who objects to the way God is depicted "as an old man with a beard sitting on a throne," and "Jesus as a frail and pale Galilean floating through life with his feet off the ground." Mr. Linsley appears to think that these pious pictures have prevented God and Jesus from taking their true place in democracy, but this is Christian nonsense. No matter how God and Jesus could be depicted by artists, the result in this age of ours would have been the same. Every Christian would have worshipped just as fer-

vently, and every anti-Christian would have contemptuously dismissed Christianity just as he does now. Why the latter? Because Christianity is not *true*.

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**ITV staged a delightful discussion** the other Sunday between two Fundamentalists—Mr. J. Betjeman and Fr. R. Raynes, on "Immortality"—Mr. Betjeman rather bewildered as to "Eternal Life," and Fr. Raynes *quite* sure of "bodily" resurrection. In fact, Fr. Raynes had no truck with "spirits" inhabiting the other world. When Holy Scripture says "bodily," it means a *real* body and personality, easily recognisable by friends when they pass over. Fr. Raynes's extensive knowledge of God and "our Lord" and what they both think and want us to do was terrific; and delighted Mr. Betjeman seemed overwhelmed with joy at being reassured that he would live again in all his earthly glory in Heaven.

## The Rising Generation

### XXVIII—GOD THE FATHER

**ALL CHILDREN** are taught at school, at least during the religious lessons, that the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man are purely Christian conceptions; and if it had not been for Christianity, nobody would ever have thought of them.

This is sheer nonsense. God the Father is merely a new way of describing the "Heavens"—Jupiter, Zeus, Jehovah, are "Father" Gods, but the names never meant anything but heaven.

In just the same way, by the term, the Mother-God, was always meant the Earth—our Earth, from which everything springs. No matter what name was given to this Mother-God, it never meant anything else. Of course, you must not expect in these ancient conceptions everything to be logical, that is, everything to be consistent. Many names of the Mother-God were transferred to the Moon, who was called the Queen of Heaven (like the Virgin Mary) or Istar or Isis and so on. But it is our Earth which is the source of everything, the fertile Mother of us all.

Thus, it is perfectly natural to say "Heaven and Earth," just as we say "Dad and Mum," for to the ancients, Nature meant "Heaven and Earth." The heat, the light, the rain from the sky, made things grow on earth; and we can well understand why the coming of spring was celebrated in the past and is now—at Easter—because they produced the wonderful harvests which meant so much in the way of food to primitive man. To put it another way, it was the discovery of what we call agriculture, the realisation that from the earth could come everything man needs, which first gave rise to "civilisation." And so we cannot wonder at the wonderful "personifications" which early poets and storytellers produced, with names complete, so abundantly found in pagan literature, and which were taken bodily over by later religions and given new names and sometimes slightly different conceptions.

God the Father, that is, a "Being" resident in the sky, is a myth. But "he" can well be a poetical "personification" of the Sun which, under all sorts of names, was worshipped all over the world for probably thousands of years. Krishna, Osiris, Horus, Prometheus, Adonis, were all worshipped as Gods, but they really represented only the Sun. And even Jesus actually said of himself, "I am the Light of the World." That is, the Sun. H.C.

—NEXT WEEK—

ALBERT SCHWEITZER AND CHRISTIANITY

By F. A. RIDLEY

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

PAUL VARNEY.—The Normans were not "woad painted barbarians." They combined the best of contemporary Norse and French culture. It was the Picts who used the blue dye of woad (a thousand years previously). However, the main point is for you to give a reliable reference, with chapter and verse, to prove your statement that "Burns died drunk."

C. MILLER.—Catholics are now about half a million strong in Morocco, their press is strong and the R.C. Church operates schools which are also attended by Moslems.

GRACE HARDING.—The "Under-Cover Girls" of Catholicism, who are referred to, are members of R.C. "Secular Institutes," working for the Church in their everyday activities. They take a vow of chastity, poverty and obedience, and were officially recognised by the Pope in 1947.

S. HULME, G. MORRIS.—We can get statements of atheism by the dozen: we are only interested if you have anything new to say. It is the same with the "free will" issue.

F. CARTER.—The articles we appreciate most are not directed ruminatively towards the past, but are forward looking and perhaps sparked off by some current events or issues.

S. G. PORTER.—Baptists officially believe in angels, demons, Satan and Hell; and in the Bible as "the inerrant word of God."

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, February 2nd, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, 5 minutes Edgware Road Tube).—Sunday, February 2nd, 7.15 p.m.: M. LOWENGARD, PH.D., "Parapsychology."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 4th, 7.15 p.m.: Lady EVA BALFOUR, "Food, Health, and Soil Vitality."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 2nd, 6.30 p.m.: W. PAUL, "Pavlov and Modern Science."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (International Club, 64 George Street).—Saturday, February 1st, 3 p.m.: Prof. H. LEVY, "The Crisis in Human Values."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, February 2nd, 2.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Confessions of an Atheist."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 2nd, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Hypocrisy—a World Power."

### 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 and CORSAIR. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK and 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.

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

## ZETA

"WE LOOK forward to this year as one of perhaps epoch-making scientific progress, which we trust will be directed to the well-being of mankind."

Last week we published the above as part of a New Year statement. Within hours of its appearance the news from Harwell amply confirmed our hopes. Here is the answer to those religious elements who emphasise the dangers of scientific advances and play down the advantages.

ZETA takes its place in the history of mankind as the outstanding example that man's greatness lies in his earthly accomplishments and not in his Heavenly aspirations.

## Notes and News

TICKETS are going well for the National Secular Society's Annual Dinner and Dance to be held in the Mecca Restaurant, 11/12 Blomfield Street, London, E.C.2, on Saturday, February 15th, and a good attendance is expected. As usual there will be many visitors from the provinces, and the gathering is likely to have an international flavouring. In addition to the Guest of Honour, Mr. Stephen Swinger, M.P., and Mrs. Swinger, Mr. O. C. Drewitt and Mr. Avro Manhattan, those banes of Roman Catholicism, will be present. Please write for tickets (17s. 6d. each) now.

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MR. G. H. TAYLOR'S FREETHINKER article, "The Religious Revival: Born 1955—Died 1956," has been reprinted, and is now available in pamphlet form for 1d., plus 2d. postage. It is a good propaganda item and quantity prices may be had on demand.

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MR. JOHN ALLEGRO, author of the Pelican book on the Dead Sea Scrolls—who spoke on the subject to the Manchester Branch N.S.S. some time ago—told Mr. Gordon Reece (*Sunday Express*, 12/1/58) that "There has been some quite inexplicable delay in the publication of some of the findings in the Dead Sea Scrolls." "Some of my colleagues," he said, "are apparently reluctant to make some of the findings public." At present, he added, "there are five Roman Catholic priests, two Presbyterian, and one Lutheran minister, and only one agnostic in the team." The hold-up is hardly surprising. Mr. Edmund Wilson incurred the wrath of the religious when he indicated that orthodox Jews and Christians had a "spiritual" vested interest, as it were, in keeping the truth about the Dead Sea Scrolls from the public. Now Mr. Allegro, "the only agnostic in the team of experts," is quite understandably disturbed. "No material is made available to the other editors until Father de Vane [a Dominican friar] or his deputy, Father J. T. Milik, has seen it first." We agree with Mr. Allegro that more archaeologists who are not religiously committed should be in the team.

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WE are pleased to hear of the formation of a new Rationalist Group at Bristol University. Mainly responsible is Mr. Brian W. Blackwell, of 6 Cornwallis Crescent, Clifton, Bristol 8. We wish Mr. Blackwell every success in his venture and hope that he will be able to work co-operatively with the Bristol Rationalist Group under the Secretaryship of N.S.S. member, Mr. Peter Jordan, of 18 Pembroke Road, Southville, Bristol 3.

# Papist Propaganda in Ceylon

By COLIN McCALL

A READER IN CEYLON has sent me a pamphlet which forms part of the Catholic Literature Crusade in that country. It was handed to him by a member of the Legion of Mary, whose activities—he tells me—are being closely followed by the Buddhists. The pamphlet is entitled *God: Does He Exist?* and is written by the Archbishop of Colombo, the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Cooray, O.M.I., as a “guide to such as seek in spirit and in truth”—a somewhat obscure description to me, but no doubt meaningful to some. Considering its purpose—which I take to be favourably influencing and possibly converting the heathen—I am rather surprised at its style, for it makes very little concession to Asian readership. Only two pages, in fact, out of thirty.

The remaining pages contain some pretty puerile stuff. “Does God exist? Who has seen Him? Not I nor anyone else. Can we accept what no one has seen? One may ask another question. Who has seen the wind? Is it white or black or red or yellow or blue or green? Does the wind exist? Do atoms exist?” This, it must be admitted, is far from an inspiring start, and it goes on for several pages. The end, of course, exalts the Church of Rome, to which “Christ gave power to preach His doctrine with infallible fidelity.” But the Archbishop’s own fidelity would seem to take second place to expediency in his final paragraph, when he quotes: “He that believeth shall be saved,” but omits its less attractive concomitant, “He that believeth not shall be damned.”

For the moment, though, let us return to the beginning. The Archbishop recounts a dream. He seemed to be in Rome, talking to another man about St. Peter’s. “Do you know who made this?” he asked. “Made!” exclaimed the other, “no one made it. It is there.” “But if no one made it,” continued the dreaming Archbishop, “why is it here?” Came the answer: “Here were the most favourable conditions: the stones from the mountains and elsewhere, the mortar and cement, and water and all that was needed. And the forces of nature set all these in motion and they whirled and whirled round and round and one fine day out came St. Peter’s in Rome.” “He was a scientist”—we are told.

Now this is very close to the worst drivel I have ever read: it is worse than Billy Graham, and that’s saying something! I don’t expect pearls of wisdom from archbishops, Protestant or Papist, but I do expect a little better than this. Turning a few pages brings a slight improvement. There is, at any rate, an *attempt* to present a case for design. It is a failure, of course, but it is slightly more readable than the foregoing. “There is order and purpose in the Universe, in every object that composes it. . . . There is an intellect behind.” This is familiar enough. But if I am not prepared to give credit to the Archbishop again, I must do so now for this one critical remark: “From this, however, it does not immediately follow that the Mind behind this Universe created it—brought it out of nothing.” True, he recovers from his critical lapse immediately, by asserting that it can be proved that the Intellect that designed the world is also its Creator, if it can be shown that the world had a beginning—which doesn’t by any means follow. But credit where due!

Perhaps Dr. Cooray ought also to be congratulated on answering his title question—Does God exist?—on page 4; but this is by no means unique in Christian literature, so I will forbear. Besides, it might prompt the question: doesn’t this make the rest of the pamphlet superfluous? I can only answer: no more so than the preceding. How-

ever, superfluous or no, there *are* more pages, every one, it seems, containing “take an example” or “take an illustration.” The formula is that of countless similar pamphlets. There are no new arguments: inevitably one knows what is coming next.

That an argument is old, is not, of course, sufficient to condemn it. If it is good, its age is unimportant. But when the same old arguments are set up again and again after being demolished a thousand times, it really does become a little tedious. Perhaps the Archbishop’s “examples” and “illustrations” will not be quite so familiar in Ceylon; there they might have an air of novelty. Be that as it may, I cannot see them carrying much conviction. It is possible, no doubt, to hide the inconvenient hell-fire teaching, as mentioned above; to talk of Jesus being “obedient to his mother” (writer or printer has neglected his capitals here!) when—according to the Gospels—he treated her with scant respect; perhaps to pass Peter off as the first Pope. But the conversion of Buddhists surely requires more than this.

How does Dr. Cooray attempt to woo the Buddhists? “Is it not a rather striking point that 2,500 years of Buddhism have not been able to obliterate from among Ceylon Buddhists the idea of God that they inherited from their Hindu ancestors?” he asks. And, “according to a fairly common view, Buddha did not directly deny God the Creator. He only refrained from speaking about Him.” Perhaps one difficulty—Dr. Cooray continues—“may have been the notion that people in his time had of many gods—some of these gods being personifications of the worst human vices.” Whether jealousy ranks among these vices is not stated. But, in condemning the worship of such “strange gods” (a nice touch this!), Buddha was “perfectly right.”

About God the Creator, however, Buddha “appears to have been silent.” “Loke vishaye Achintiya”—it is beyond comprehension, it is a mystery—is his alleged reply when asked to explain the origin of the world. Buddha is an “enlightened person,” but only because he condemned polytheism. Denying many gods meets with the Archbishop’s approval. But the “solution to the tangle is not in denying God altogether”; it is “in purifying man’s notion of God and going back to the Creator, the One True God. . . .”

Scarcely has the Most Reverend led his readers out of one tangle, however, than he leads them into another. Scarcely have they imbibed the one good idea than they are faced with the trinity. And here I feel genuinely sorry for Dr. Cooray, as I do for all Christians doomed to try to explain that unique super-arithmetical equation,  $3=1:1=3$ . Dr. Cooray tries to get it over as quickly and painlessly as possible, viz., “He is not only One God but One God in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—not three gods, but one only God.” But he realises he can’t just leave it at that. Something more is needed, though God knows what! Dr. Cooray plumps for candour—and the result is disastrous. God’s revelation—he confesses—“is, perforce, still shrouded in mystery,” and pending the day of Eternity when “we shall see Him face to face and understand, the mystery remains.” Which isn’t so very different from Buddha’s “Loke vishaye Achintiya.”

After that it seems rather pointless to invite the Buddhist “into the very bosom of God,” into the “One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church.” He might just as well remain baffled outside it.

# The God of Atheism

By C. G. L. DU CANN

SOME ATHEISTS are broad-minded and some narrow-minded. Mr. Cutner seems to belong to the strictest and strictest sect of pharisaic Atheism whose bigotry harms its own cause more than that of religion and whose aggressive attacks too often repel the ordinary person by their bad taste, ill-manners, and the literary style of the common scold.

However, he concedes that Jesus was a free thinker. But not (he says) a Freethinker. This to me is mere childish and unreal trifling. If such capers as these have any real meaning, why not try spelling it with two ff's like Sir Arthur fford and Mr. Ffoulkes? The Queen's English of it is that the word (whether written in one or two parts, or with, or without, its capital) has more than one accepted meaning; and I gave my own definition.

The word freethinker has been used in England for about 250 years. The first English writer to use it spoke of the "new Religious Fraternity of Freethinkers," which had its location in the City near Leathersellers' Hall. That was about 1690. It was the Deists, not the Atheists, who so described themselves. Later the Atheists stole the word, but they never succeeded in confining it to themselves. Indeed, Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair* in 1848 twice uses the word not in connection with religion as where he writes of "a sad freethinker on the points of poaching and game-preserving" and of a woman's ways as "shocking free-thinking ways." In 1874 John Morley could write in *Com-promise* that "The modern Freethinker does not attack Christianity."

One could give other examples from English literature. Mr. Cutner cites Chambers for a dictionary definition. But Chambers has long been superseded by that monument of scholarship in 13 volumes, the Oxford English Dictionary. But the matter is not one of dictionary definition. The real point of Mr. Cutner's untidy strictures (though this point is not very clearly or skilfully made) is, I think, that he wants to limit the word Freethinker to mean atheist. It won't do at all. Most especially it is not applicable to my article where I defined freethinker in a very different sense.

It might be seriously argued that an atheist is an inhibited rather than a free, thinker, bound and fettered by the atheism he has accepted, not to indulge in thought that might conflict with Atheism. In this respect his god is more respectable than an idol of silver or wood and even more dangerous to its besotted worshipper than any of the conventional religions. The hidebound Mr. Cutner is a god-ite without knowing it, and agnostics, indifferentists and other free spirits may well smile at him.

So much for Mr. Cutner the religionist. Now for the controversialist. However, credulous the world and I may be, neither of us can accept the statement that he has come across articles where Jesus is described as "the greatest Gardener." Let him name but two of these extraordinary articles giving the paper which published them. There was nothing horticultural recorded as done by Jesus, and someone must be confusing him with Adam.

It was never claimed that Jesus "pulverised Jewish rabbis in argument." (That is Mr. Cutner's own slipshod and inaccurate travesty of the Biblical story.) All St. Luke says is that the Boy "heard" and "asked questions" and "his hearers were astonished at his understanding and answers." Mr. Cutner heavily sneers at me for believing

such "naïve nonsense," as he calls it. But why should I not believe that a Jewish boy had ears and a tongue and a brain clever enough to surprise older people? We have all met such boys; and indeed, I was such a boy myself. Indeed, this is nothing to that done by the infant Mozart, the infant J. S. Mill, and some present-day child-prodigies.

It is quite false to say that I am "always protesting" that I am "a true Christian." In the whole course of my life, I have never made such an immodest and egregious claim; and I hope I am incapable of making it, except ironically. On the contrary, I have written a pamphlet, *There are no Christians*. The sole foundation for this misrepresentation is that I frequently do contrast the Christianity of the Biblical Christ with the Christianity of modern Churches as truth with falsity, in my articles.

No reader of ecclesiastical history can have much patience with Mr. Cutner's statement that "The truth really is that the Churches have civilised Christianity." By means of the Spanish Inquisition, the English fires of Smithfield and the French Massacre of St. Bartholomew, I presume. It would be much truer to say that free thought has civilised, is civilising, and will continue to civilise the Churches.

It is another mistake to suppose that I "want us to believe that Jesus is a genuine freethinker." I do not want anybody to believe anything; people can only believe what they can, or what they wish to believe, however much they are induced towards belief by any outside agency. I wrote only to stimulate thought, my article being expressly interrogatory and exploratory. I said that "for my part" on a definition of "freethinker" which I set out, I "was prepared to classify Jesus as a freethinker." A very different intellectual position from that now wrongly attributed to me by my assailant!

By a small but strange piece of ignorance, Mr. Cutner imagines that the "lawyers" whom Jesus attacked were the equivalent of modern English lawyers, and therefore he gratuitously drags in the modern professional. But the first were, of course, ecclesiastical expositors of the Mosaic ordinances and not judges, barristers or solicitors of the secular *Lex Romana*. There was a Bar at Rome, of course, famous to this day, and most deservedly so; and I have always thought that if a promising young pupil of Quintilian had been briefed to defend Jesus before Pontius Pilate, he would have secured an acquittal. Failing that, he would have appealed from the Procurator in Jerusalem to Caesar at Rome. One useful ground of appeal would have been that the appellant Jesus Christ was "Caesar's friend," as evidenced by his words to the multitudes of "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's." The Emperor might easily have quashed the conviction or sentence.

The moral of this is that freethinkers of all sorts should always be competently defended by a professional and not allow their defence to go by default as Jesus did. But, defended or undefended, no right-minded jury of readers can possibly acquit Mr. Cutner upon my indictment containing so many counts of inexcusable inaccuracy. Therefore he is convicted. It only remains to consider the sentence.

The proper sentence is a long course of "Corrective Training," but having regard to his years and his long record of similar offences for which he has hitherto

escaped punishment, as his readers know, severer punishment is called for. Therefore I have stabbed him to death with my indignant pen. But in view of his long services to his God of Atheism, just as noblemen of old were hanged in a silken halter, I have killed him with no common ball-point or even a quill such as lawyers use, but with an 18-carat gold Cartier masterpiece of a pen, and I hope this mercy will console him in his grave.

May he rest in peace and not resurrect in next week's issue. And may his God have mercy upon his soul, if he has a soul, as to which I desire to express no opinion, since the evidence before us only shows a vigorous, provocative and industrious mind animated by one steadfast purpose of devout religious worship of his god, Atheism.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### ARE WE KIND TO ANIMALS?

Your correspondent, Robert F. Turney, expresses the view that on the whole the English people's attitude to animal life is one dominated by kindly feeling. Owing to various factors, I think it is difficult to determine this question accurately, but the deeply felt anger displayed over the space-dog shows that our hearts are probably in the right place!

At the same time there is undoubtedly much deliberate cruelty being practised. I read that Victor Yates, M.P., proposes to introduce a Bill to ban stag hunting. Why limit it to the stags? All cruel sports should be banned.

Monkeys are being used to an increasing extent in laboratories for experiments of all kinds. In the *Animals' Defender* for the current month, Stephen Hobbhouse refers to the dreadfully large numbers of monkeys involved, up to 100,000 or more passing through London Airport annually. There is an immense trade in them from India.

Mr. R. Swain writes that he worked for some time in a hospital where cancer research was carried out. His job, he says, was to empty the dustbins, and each morning they were full of all types of animals. Some of them had their eyes burnt out; others had copper wire pushed through their bodies. A large dog had carbolic acid forced down its throat. A cat's body was opened and filled with soil before sewing up. Mr. Swain, and many other people, are of opinion that any money given to cancer research is used for torture of defenceless animals.

It will be realised from the foregoing that there is a deplorable amount of cruelty and torture being caused to animals for the supposed benefit of mankind. Medical students, who are called upon to watch and perform these experiments, at first become sickened in the process. Later, research work becomes customary and part of the usual regime of the profession. The list of diseases claimed to have been cured is long, but the statistical returns show that people still persist in dying of them as if vivisection had never been heard of!

Other forms of cruelty made almost respectable by custom proceed from the hunting of animals, hook fishing, shooting birds, etc. The ladies wear hats and clothing often obtained by the callous extermination of our fellow creatures, and animals are purposely trapped for their fur.

It is time a special public inquiry was held into all these questionable practices, with a view to the statutory prevention of cruelty to animals.

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

### FREETHINKER OR FREE THINKER

Much enjoyed set-to re "Was Jesus a Freethinker?" I hold the view that although we are all free thinkers, free to think as we do, that does not entitle us to the term Freethinker, which I think, only applies to atheists. How otherwise can we differentiate between free thinkers—everybody—and Freethinkers?

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

### N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8TH.—Present: Messrs. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Barker, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Arthur, Corstorphine, Taylor, Warner, Mrs. Trask and Mrs. Venton. Sympathy was expressed on hearing of the deaths of J. F. Kirkham and Sir Ernest Kennaway. Mr. Ridley explained his recent absence from E.C. meetings: Mrs. Ridley was ill in hospital. New members were admitted to Bradford, Central London, North London, Wales and Western, and Working Branches which, with Individual members, totalled 10. Birmingham Branch request for two speakers was approved. Glasgow S.S. was combining with the R.P.A. for visit of ex-Father Drewitt on February 23rd. San Juan Branch's progress was noted with satisfaction. Memorandum (instigated by the Humanist Council and Cambridge Humanists) for submission to BBC was approved. Secretary's press controversy in the *Manchester Guardian* and Mr. J. Radford's case in the debate at Slough were noted with satisfaction. A press statement on the Sputnik (THE FREETHINKER, 24/12/58) was approved. Study classes would be held again in the autumn. Classification of E.C. representation areas was undertaken. It was agreed that the London area should be the London postal district; Portsmouth and Worthing should be in the South-West (this for convenience, the Branches having worked together frequently), Dagenham and Kingston in the South-East. Other areas were pretty well clear. Annual Dinner arrangements were made. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, February 19th, 1958.

### FOR NEWCOMERS

#### AS AN INTRODUCTION TO FREETHOUGHT

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

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