

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

TURNING ON MY WIRELESS RECENTLY, I heard a preacher declaiming on "Modern Witnesses to the Gospel." To my surprise, he included amongst these "Witnesses" the impressive name of that "great Christian," Albert Schweitzer. Now, if Albert Schweitzer really was a defender of Christian orthodoxy, the Church would have something to boast about, for this encyclopædic intellect, New Testament scholar, musical critic, African sociologist and historian of Indian philosophy, is certainly one of the most remarkable men of our time; not to mention his self-sacrificing courage in giving up a brilliant European career to bury himself as a doctor and social worker in "Darkest" Africa. When, however, one turns to the actual critical view of the Gospels presented by this great man, one finds not only a critical view at variance with orthodoxy, but one that is actually exclusive of any permanent Christian revelation. Actually, Schweitzer's conception of the historical Jesus is really as fatal to traditional Christian orthodoxy as is, say, J. M. Robertson's attempt to demonstrate that really no such person existed.

The Quest of the Historical Jesus

Albert Schweitzer has devoted two books to what he calls "The Quest of the Historical Jesus." In his now famous book issued under the above title, Schweitzer traced with immense learning the modern criticism of the Gospels from its beginnings in the 18th century down to the present time. At the end of his book he gives his own critique of the critics by explaining his own conception of "The Jesus of History." In a later book, a less erudite, but in some ways, perhaps, even more original book, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*, he traced this conception exclusively, drawing what he conceived to be the portrait of "The Jesus of History"—the Messiah who preached the approaching advent of the Kingdom of God. From these two books one can gather a distinct and original picture of who his historical Jesus was and what was his fundamental teaching. To measure the modern clerical claim that Albert Schweitzer is a great Christian in the current sense of being an outstanding champion of his contemporary Christian orthodoxy, let us first glance at Schweitzer's own view of his historical Jesus and then let us look at the Jesus of Christian orthodoxy, the Jesus whom the Churches preach today.

The Jesus of Schweitzer

There is no ambiguity at all in the portrait of Jesus as presented by the modern Alsatian critic: Jesus was, first, last and all the time, what would now be termed a "revivalist" who preached that the Kingdom of God was at hand and that the world of everyday existence was fast approaching its end. The teaching of Jesus, says Schweitzer, was an *Interimsethik*; one might translate this striking phrase as purely provisional teaching until the end of the present dispensation along with that of this terrestrial world below. It appears certain, thinks Schweitzer, that

Jesus, like practically all Jews then and now, linked up the end of the world with the arrival of the Messiah, also that at least towards the end of his career, Jesus thought that he himself was the Messiah foretold by the Prophets and that his teacher, John the Baptist, was Elijah returned to earth to foretell the arrival of the Messiah in accordance with biblical Old Testament prophecy. It was as the claimant to the Messiahship as the Son of Man foretold in

Daniel, "coming on the clouds of Heaven," that Jesus was eventually condemned to die by the Jewish priests, the guardians of traditional orthodoxy, who could not accept this Galilean preacher as the authentic descendant of the national hero, King

David, and as the authentic Messiah. The Romans carried out the sentence—rather reluctantly, if there is any truth in the legends preserved by the Gospels—probably on political grounds, since in the stormy period during which Jesus is represented as preaching, the advent of a Messiah was bound up with the coming national liberation from the Roman yoke and every would-be Messiah was, consequently, a potential political rebel. (Joseph Turmel has actually suggested that the prototype of Jesus was none other than Judas the "Gaulonite," who also claimed to be the Messiah and as such led a revolt against Rome.)

Schweitzer's Jesus and the Jesus of the Churches

Such is Schweitzer's Jesus—the Jesus of History? Now let us compare this portrait with that of the Jesus Christ of Christian orthodoxy. It is surely obvious from even this cursory view that not only is there actually little in common between the Jesus of Schweitzer and that of the Churches, but that the two conceptions are, in at least the most important particulars, mutually *exclusive*. For, not only is Schweitzer's Jesus of History a *man* and not a *God*—the term "Son of God" applied to the Messiah is metaphorical only in Jewish theology—but he is a deluded man, obsessed with a belief that the end of the world is about to happen and that his own mission is to prepare for it. What on earth—or in heaven—has such a view got in common with the picture of Jesus Christ as presented by Christian orthodoxy; the infallible and omniscient "Word" of God, the second Person of the Trinity, born of a Virgin, etc., etc.? It is surely obvious that the two portraits of Jesus given respectively by the Christian creeds and by Albert Schweitzer are not only contradictory but mutually exclusive. Equally contradictory is the conception of Christ's teaching formed respectively by Schweitzer and by the Churches if, as our critic asserts, the whole teaching of Jesus was merely an assertion that the end of the world was coming next week and that mankind must devote all their attention to preparing for it, how could Jesus Christ have possibly laid down an ethical and logical system valid for eternity or even for 2,000 years?

We conclude that if Albert Schweitzer is indeed a great Christian, he must be one in a sense entirely different from that of the Churches. It is, in fact, fortunate for him that

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Albert Schweitzer and Christianity

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

he was born in the 19th century and not in the Ages of Faith, when the Church would have made short work of "this great Christian," who teaches, in effect, that the Second Person of the Trinity, the man-god, was a deluded fanatic.

The Jesus of History

Speaking personally, I have no very strong views on the much-disputed question of the historicity of Jesus. That the "God" depicted in the Gospels didn't and couldn't exist, all rationalists will agree. One cannot write the biography of a god! The question as to whether somewhere in the Gospel narratives one can detect some authentic sayings and doings of an historical but *human* Jesus, is a question of quite another order; there is nothing incredible

in such a supposition. It is not a critical dogma, either that such a Jesus existed or that he didn't exist either. Albert Schweitzer may or may not, have succeeded in his "quest for the historical Jesus." But his conception of the first century Jewish preacher of tomorrow's Domsday does not appear to violate historical probability at any point. Like "tomorrow," Domsday never arrived. Personally, I would go further and state that if there was an historic Jesus at the start of the Christian tradition, Albert Schweitzer has got as near to describing him as anyone is likely to do nowadays. But if Schweitzer is "a great Christian," then it must be that Christianity as the Churches teach it, was founded upon a delusion, for it is now 19 centuries after the end of the world was due.

Egypt: The Religious Outlook

By D. SHIPPER

WHEN FAROUK was overthrown and the succeeding militarist junta squashed the fanatical Moslem Brotherhood, one hoped that Egypt could perhaps throw off the religious stranglehold of so many centuries.

The abolition of the Moslem Sharia Law raised hopes even further. However, more recent events have confirmed the suspicion that Egypt, whatever she may become, is hardly likely to develop into a *secular* state. As a freethinker, I am particularly interested in the *religious* background to the political, economic, and ideological clashes. Religion can no more be separated from the problems of the Arab world than from the Irish border question.

Cairo Radio, the mouthpiece of Nasser, justified his anti-Western stand in the name of Allah on August 17th, 1955: "Islam would already have conquered the whole of negro Africa had it not been for the nefarious activities of the Western powers. In particular, it would have spread through all Nigeria and Sudan, bringing the people out of darkness into the light, had Imperialism not intervened." Whether the almighty power of Allah provides brighter illumination than the pillar of fire of Jahweh is a matter for speculation. The choice, we think, is not between Blackpool Illuminations and the Aurora Borealis, but rather between fog and smog.

On December 13th, 1955, Cairo Radio again provided food for thought: "Christianity is an alien element even in Europe. It is like a borrowed garment which can never fit properly." Can a strait-jacket ever fit well?

On January 9th, 1956, Cairo Radio let it be clearly understood that Allah Himself had strong left-wing tendencies: "Have no mercy on the Imperialist enemy. Moslems and Arabs everywhere! Purge your countries of Imperialism and its evils. The Imperialists are enemies of God and the Prophet. They are seeking to destroy Islam with vice." We are forced to observe that if Islam hadn't destroyed itself with its *own* vice long, long ago, no newly-imported vice is likely to do it now! Be reassured! Such suspicious left-wing affiliations might well debar Allah from entry to the U.S.A. (see the McCarran Act!).

We wonder if the Statue of Liberty is preferable to the giant figure of the armed soldier which straddles the main street of Cairo? Another Cairo newspaper, *Ros-el-Yussef*, showed clearly how wide and ancient is the gulf: "Our difference with the West is an essential and primary one. Its roots go back in the past as far as the Crusades. The battle with the West has been going on, and it can only lead to one of two conclusions that allow of *no* compromise: our defeat or that of the West" (quoted on Cairo Radio, May 14th, '56).

In view of the many conjectures which have been made about the possibility of Egypt (and other Arab countries) "going Red," it is interesting to note the opinion of an Arab authority, Nahib Amin Faris, Chairman of the Arab Studies Programme, American University, Lebanon: "Many parallels exist between Islam and Communism and these make a transition from Islam to Communism possible and even natural, once the individual Moslem shifts his emphasis from the spiritual sphere to the temporal." (*Israel Weekly Digest, Jerusalem, 26/12/57.*) One might be forgiven for thinking that enough attention is paid to religion in Egypt to satisfy anyone, but some militant Moslems still feel that Mahomet is not given all the attention he deserves.

On 15/12/57 Radio Amman announced that an Egyptian Air Vice-Marshal, Abdul Muni'im Ra'auf, had been given political asylum in Jordan after being received by King Hussein. He had been sentenced to death (in his absence) by an Egyptian court-martial for being concerned in an anti-Nasser plot.

Interviewed in Amman, our intrepid airman stated emphatically that "Egypt must reoccupy the Gulf of Aqaba and reimpose the blockade on Israel," that over 5,000 people had been placed in concentration camps since "Suez" (*The Black Record*, a booklet published by the International League for the Rights of Man—a body with consultative status at U.N.O.—goes into considerable detail about anti-Semitism and concentration camps in Egypt), that parliamentary life was a fiasco, "the elections had been falsified and many citizens deprived of the right to vote," and most religious Egyptian officers believed "that any revolution that is not based on religious belief is doomed to failure."

We must confess that, in view of the foregoing, whether or not the *next* revolution is religious or not, we see little prospects for the advancement of an Egyptian freethought movement in the immediate or foreseeable future.

A SUGGESTION FROM EAST GERMANY

WE NOTICE that Adenauer's paper, *Der Tag*, is not satisfied with *Neues Deutschland's* opinion that the Soviet Sputniks have proved "that no sign of the existence of a Creator has been discovered." We cannot understand why *Der Tag* is so agitated about this. It ought to be their job to prove the existence of a Creator. Why not let the American Sputnik—once it gets started—establish radio communications with the Creator?

Neues Deutschland (East Germany).

Problems of Demography

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 35)

A weird theory of population increase was put forward about five years ago by a Spaniard, Josue de Castro⁸, who maintained that instead of a surplus population being the cause of hunger, the opposite was the case! He gave the argument a Freudian, or pseudo-Freudian, turn, contending that the psychological effect of chronic hunger was to make sex compensate emotionally for the shrunken nutritional appetite. Sex and feeding instincts being in competition, the retreat of one is accompanied by the advance of the other. This is alleged to account for the rapid increases of population in areas of hunger. The only "evidence" which de Castro adduced was in fact the circumstance of over-population where there is under-nourishment. But as this is explainable on other grounds, such as lack of knowledge of birth control methods and of facilities, de Castro is left with literally nothing but a piece of Freudian magic whereby the "libido" goes from the mouth to the sexual organs. Such cannot be seriously dealt with these days as a sober contribution to science. It was duly demolished in these columns by Mr. Cutner⁹ and has since been dismissed somewhat contemptuously in scientific circles. Both Sir Charles Darwin and Prof. Hoyle have estimated exactly the opposite effect from that imagined by de Castro¹⁰, while Dr. Henry H. Villard, Professor of the Economics Department at City College, New York City, estimates "the average rate of intercourse in such countries as India, where malnutrition is rife . . . at less than once a week."¹¹

There is thus no escape from the problem *via* de Castro, much as it would be to the wishful thinking of the political theorists. Nor will the old argument of "improvement of tools and technique" solve the problem. Tools don't make the ground richer. The potential yield is unaffected by the application of a mechanical instrument in place of a scythe.

At most, the impending danger might be held at bay just a little longer, Hoyle considers, by the cultivation of the marginal lands just beyond the present reach of communications. Tropical Africa and S. America; Siberia and N. Canada; these could repay cultivation, but could only feed current increases without touching the main issue.

In his *Man and Materialism* Hoyle considers the newly proposed agricultural methods, the growth of *algae*, single-celled plants that grow in water in huge shallow ponds. Here again the most he can offer is a little extra breathing space before the final curtain.

The population increase *will* be adjusted by fair means or foul. Taken to the point of absurdity, in 5,000 years the mass of human life, at the present rate of increase, would exceed the mass of the earth itself. Population *must* be adjusted either by voluntary human agency or by the grim means of famine and war.

Hoyle sees two main groups of opponents: the Communists and the Catholics. What they have in common, says Hoyle, is that they both argue from dogma. The fact that R.C.s are forbidden to limit their families means that they tend to increase in proportion to non-Catholics, while the Communists, for their part, are cravenly afraid to face up to the population issue because of the loss of prestige that they might suffer in the great Asiatic countries. Communist policy seeks to infiltrate into the Far East by ascribing the low oriental standard of life to Western ineffi-

ciency and exploitation. To admit that the low standard arises from too high a population and that the standard will go still lower as populations continue to rise, would destroy this Communist policy. Thus, it seems that both Communists and Catholics are determined to plunge the world into further misery, both for what are essentially the same end—an increase of their own power." (*ibid.*)

Nevertheless, there are signs that even these groups, Catholics and Communists, are waking up to the danger. "Communist China is clearly coming to recognise the need for contraception, while at the same time trying to reconcile it with Communist doctrine. In an editorial in Peking's *Kuang Ming Jih* (3/8/56) it is admitted that 'the voice of the masses demanding contraception knowledge is now heard far and wide.'¹² With the Chinese population increasing at 12 millions a year¹³ it is to the credit of the Government that they have reversed their position of five or six years ago, when they declared that "Communism could cope with any population." Even now, the Peking editorial mentioned above talks of "the capitalist poison of Malthusianism." This is obviously the mere paying of homage to doctrine. It is the stereotyped language of officialdom, not the spontaneous comment of a Chinese student. The belated acceptance of a national birth control policy rather points to the Five Year Plan having failed to produce the surplus expected.

The Chinese Service of the BBC some months ago gave talks on "Population Pressure and Family Planning," using speakers of the quality of Bertrand Russell, Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders and Prof. W. C. W. Nixon. Hong Kong re-broadcast the whole series.

I surmise that Chinese governmental recognition is merely catching up with popular practice, for the birth-rate in Peking has now been showing a decline for several years.

Similarly, the Soviet Government have now caught up with the widespread practice of abortion in Russia. It has been legalised to prevent its clandestine procurement under inexpert conditions. Since the official ban was lifted there has been a sharp increase in abortions and the hospitals can hardly cope with the situation. The Health Minister, Maria Kovrigina, said birth control services were overdue and called for a vigorous campaign to spread information and thus reduce the toll of abortion. It would be an anti-Marxist heresy to represent such a campaign as having as its object the limitation of population.

In fact, some Iron Curtain countries are officially encouraging the birth rate. In East Germany Prof. Mehlan of Rostock announces that the government "is offering financial incentives to women, whether married or unmarried, to have children, presumably with the intention of replacing the two million men lost in the war."¹⁴

According to one authority, Dr. Stone, there are actually more abortions than live births in Yugo-Slavia, while in Austria "the financial rewards for becoming pregnant, whether in or out of wedlock, are such that certain irresponsible women almost make a profession of pregnancy, following it up by an abortion which is paid for by the insurance companies."¹⁵

(12) I.P.P.F. Bulletin 52.

(13) *Population Index*, October, '56.

(14) I.P.P.F. Bulletin, December, 1957.

(15) *ibid.*

(8) *The Geography of Hunger*.

(9) THE FREETHINKER, 10/4/53.

(10) *vide* International Planned Parenthood Federation Bulletin No. 52, February, 1957.

(11) I.P.P.F. Bulletin 55 (May, '57).

(To be concluded)

This Believing World

The way in which true Christianity can change men's lives is particularly evident in three recent cases before the courts. First, there is the very proud convert, L. G. Carter by name, who accepted Christ Jesus at one of Billy Graham's meetings and, so we are told by the *Daily Express*, immediately "stopped swearing." Unfortunately, he eloped with somebody else's wife to Canada six weeks later, and as a result his wife was given a divorce. Then there is the case of a particularly religious barman who went into a church, piously said a prayer, and proceeded to steal a silver box, incense, an altar cloth, and two bottles of wine from the sacristy. He got six months—though it is doubtful if he (or anybody else) had stolen similar things from an ordinary shop, he would have been sent to prison at all. He might have been fined 2s. 6d.—but stealing from a church is almost a capital crime!

★

In France a Roman Catholic priest admitted killing a girl he had betrayed, to say nothing of a few others who might well have shared the same fate. He admitted also that psychiatrists had declared him "sound of mind and body," and that "there were no extenuating circumstances in his favour." That is, his Christian upbringing had not the slightest effect in preventing his sordid life and infamous crime. Yet these people are just the ones who, according to Christian teaching, should have been "saved," for they all accepted Christ as their Saviour. The ordinary, placid person would act always much the same, Christianity or no Christianity.

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Canon Southcott of Halton believes if people won't take Holy Communion in church, then the Church must go to the people. So he performs the magical ceremony on the kitchen table, uses the sink as a font, and the mantelpiece as the altar—and the trick is done. According to the *Daily Sketch*, he goes to his "working-class parishioners"—but what a pity he has to limit his visits this way. Why not try visiting some instructed Freethinkers for a change? It would prove exciting, if nothing else, especially if the visit could be televised. But we have an idea that wild horses would not make the Religious Directors of our television services accept our suggestion. It would be far too dangerous.

★

No one will be surprised to learn that a Roman Catholic headmaster wants parents to ban TV for children as some of the programmes "are definitely pagan." He probably includes in this all Protestant programmes as well. But has Fr. Rickett ever seen a TV programme? We understand that he has not, but that does not matter in the least. He knows "doubtful jokes" are broadcast, and even jokes about the priesthood! The only way out is for the Roman Catholic Church to insist on vetting all TV shows—or be allowed to broadcast the threat to our immortal souls watching them entails. After all, there are more than three million Roman Catholics in Britain, and that certainly gives them the right to object to anything wanted by the other forty-seven millions. Or does it?

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The latest papal delivery is another attack on Birth Control—always a "news" item for the Pope when other news keeps him out of the picture. He now—more or less—admits that population increases may swamp all efforts to obtain a higher standard of living for the less developed peoples on this planet, but what about the other planets? Will they not solve all our population problems? Once we

get space travel fully going, "Who can predict," he asks, "what unthought of resources our planet conceals, and what surprises may be contained outside it, in the admirable achievements of science, which have only just started?" This touching reference to "science" no doubt will hide the way in which the Roman Church did its best to smother all science and kill off all scientists as far as possible in the past. However, never mind about population increases—God and his Precious Son will provide all the food we need from other planets!

Catholic Education

IT IS NO DOUBT TRUE that Americans are sensitive—even hypersensitive—to external criticism. It is equally true that they are their own sternest critics. And an amazing example of this admirable quality was reported by *Time*, December 30th, 1957.

For 30 years—said John J. Cavanaugh, former President of Notre Dame University—evidence has been accumulating that "the intellectual prestige of American Catholics seems lower than the intellectual prestige of Catholics in any other country in the whole Western world." In 1927 the *American Mercury* found that for every 100,000 Jews in the U.S.A., 20 were listed in *Who's Who*; for every 100,000 Seventh Day Adventists, there were 11 listed; whereas for every 100,000 Roman Catholics, there were only seven. Corroborative evidence cited by Father Cavanaugh came from the *Scientific Monthly*, where: "Out of 303 names chosen for their eminence in science only three were found to be Catholics. And a 1952 study of *American Men of Science* showed that of 50 institutions turning out most scientists, not one was Catholic."

"I certainly take no delight in disturbing your minds with such humiliating evidence," said Father Cavanaugh; and then proceeded to add to the humiliation. Of 96 Senators, only 10 were Catholics; of 50 business leaders, only two were Catholics—and one of these, Henry Ford II, was a convert. "Even casual observation of the daily newspapers and weekly news magazines leads a Catholic to ask, where are the Catholic Salks, Oppenheims, Einsteins?"

The Father would have no truck with those who trotted out excuses about minority groups, immigrants, modest homes. What about the Jews? They were a minority group, an immigrant people, and often from modest homes, yet they were "producing leaders far out of proportion to their numbers." "I am a member of the board of the Fund for Adult Education of the Ford Foundation," he continued. "In the last six years we have given away \$29 million. . . . Not a single Catholic programme of liberal adult education has, so far as I can remember, received a dime. This has been due, not to bigotry, but to the fact that there has not been one request made which meets the reasonable conditions that the Fund lays down."

Many Catholic alumni were merely scoffing and doing nothing, declared Father Cavanaugh in scorching terms. Really, though, he is too hard on them. As an ex-President of the most famous Roman Catholic university in America, he should know the difficulties: the difficulties of reconciling the modern outlook with an antiquated creed. What likelihood is there of Roman Catholic universities producing a greater percentage of scientists than Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Johns Hopkins? None, I should think.

The alumni might well plead in defence: the fault, dear Cavanaugh, is not in ourselves, but in our Church, that we are underlings.

C.McC.

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

J. LAKE.—The address of the *Truth Seeker* is "Truth Seeker Co., Inc., 38 Park Row, New York 8, U.S.A." No doubt its Editor can give you the address of *The Jewish News Letter*.

A. BARLOW.—Please don't expect us to accept your dream as our revelation!

E. BANNER.—Yes, the Oxford Union is a progressive society. For instance, it recently carried by 406 votes to 250 the following:

"The oppressive political influence of the R.C. Church in many countries and its unreasonable social doctrines justify our condemnation."

S. FAYE.—It is ironical that science, which the Christian Churches held at bay, has given them the new technique of propaganda—cinema, radio and TV. Whether these media prove their salvation or their undoing remains to be seen.

F. J. DECOURT.—The French film *L'Auberge Rouge*, which poked fun at religious ceremonies, came, for that reason, under the L.C.C. ban in 1952.

HY. WHITMARSH.—Long before the official setting up of the Holy Inquisition there were laws against "dangerous thoughts," enforced from about the end of the fourth century, when the death penalty for heresy was officially put into operation by the secular power working for the Church.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, February 9th, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, 5 minutes Edgware Road Tube).—Sunday, February 9th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Germany, East and West."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, February 7th, 7.30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER, "The Archbishop and A.I.D." Tuesday, February 11th, 7.15 p.m.:

E. ROYSTON PIKE, "Scientific Humanism—a Critical View."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 9th, 6.30 p.m.: R. S. H. FINNEY, M.S.C., "The Case for Visisection."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, February 9th, 2.30 p.m.:

Prof. A. J. AYER, "Contemporary British Philosophy."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant).—Sunday, February 9th, 7 p.m.: V. G. SALDJI, "Capitalism, Menace or Blessing?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 9th, 11 a.m.: J. B. COATES, "A Challenge to Christianity."

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.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £304 1s. 9d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; W. E. Huxley, 5s.; A. L. Rowlatt, 10s.; Beryl Booth, 10s.; R. Hartley, £1; Mrs. S. Winckworth, 7s. 6d.; T. Walmesley, 5s.—Total to date, January 31st, 1958, £307 0s. 3d.

APPRECIATIONS

"I am still enjoying my weekly FREETHINKER enormously."
(Brisbane.)

"I hope to send more from time to time."—(Birmingham.)

"Although I've only been a reader for six months, I have become most interested in your publication. Formerly a fervent believer, I realise now how stupid is the whole idea of the supernatural, and have obtained a much wider outlook on life."—(Leeds.)

"One takes other journals; one loves THE FREETHINKER."
—(London.)

Notes and News

WE are pleased to record again that the tickets for the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on February 15th are going extremely well. In spite of this, however, we hope all who wish to attend and have not yet sent for tickets will do so forthwith. It is necessary to know well in advance how many people will attend, and particularly how to allocate seats. The General Secretary will do his utmost to bring together parties but he must know in advance. Full particulars will be found on the back page.

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THE debate "That this House deplores the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church," held at Guy's Hospital on Friday, January 24th, was a big success. The largest attendance ever (250 or more at one time) listened to the General Secretary of the National Secular Society and two supporting speakers for the motion, and Father Crehan, S.J., and two supporting speakers against. There was a "no nonsense" air about the audience; metaphysical niceties about the nature of the fires of hell carried no weight; Father Crehan's suggestion that there was "no problem of overpopulation" evoked loud laughter. Mr. McCall packed a large array of facts from R.C. sources into a speech of half an hour and ended to loud and prolonged applause. Contributions from the audience followed, and then the vote. The result was 153 for; 57 against, with 7 abstentions—a notable victory.

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SAN FRANCISCO's Judge Horn has his own idea of making the punishment fit the crime. He recently sentenced five lady shoplifters to sit through the film of "The Ten Commandments" and write essays on the film's moral lesson. The Judge regularly teaches at a Sunday school and no doubt appreciates the severity of the sentence.

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ALSO in San Francisco, a Captain Hanrahan was asked—during obscenity proceedings against a book of poetry—if he thought the Bible ought to be confiscated for obscenity. No! he said; but added: "Let me tell you, though, what King Solomon was doing with all those women wouldn't be tolerated in San Francisco!"

★

MIDLAND readers should note the special attraction offered by Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society this Sunday at 2.30 p.m. The occasion is the Cosmo's Diamond Jubilee, the speaker will be Professor A. J. Ayer, of University College, London, and the subject is "Contemporary British Philosophy." We are sure this popular member of the BBC Brains Trust will fill the Co-operative Hall. N.S.S. Vice-President, Mr. T. M. Mosley, is Hon. Secretary of the Cosmo.

Mr. Du Cann and Jesus

By H. CUTNER

IN THOSE EARLY (and now far-off) days when I loved nothing more than a discussion with an earnest Christian, most of my opponents, in general much older than I, used contemptuously to tell me that nobody could possibly be an Atheist, for a very simple reason. It was that *all* Atheists had a God—the God of Atheism, as Mr. Du Cann so triumphantly reminds us. I cannot be surprised at this, in spite of his denial now that he was ever a “true” Christian. It may well be that he was never a “true” one—but the late Chapman Cohen told me that when he asked Mr. Du Cann to write for us, he did so though he was a Christian. And those who heard Mr. Du Cann at one of our dinners a few years ago, will remember how delighted he was to tell us that he certainly was *not* a Secularist. As there are about 683 Christian sects, it would be impossible for me to say to which he belongs. And as Mr. Du Cann is now most anxious for us to accept *his* Jesus as our Saviour, our Freethought Saviour, of course, I feel I was perfectly in order to refer to him as a Christian.

Moreover, Mr. Du Cann writes like a Christian. Unable to do anything worthwhile with some of my arguments, he fills up his attack with the usual Christian “personalities.” I am a “bigot,” I repel “the ordinary person” by my bad manners, my “literary style” is that of “a common scold,” I am “bound and fettered” by my Atheism, my “god” is the “atheism” I have accepted, dangerous to “its besotted worshipper,” I am “hidebound”—indeed, I am a “godite,” I am guilty “of many counts of inexcusable inaccuracy,” and I have been finally executed—ought it not to be “liquidated”?—once for all by Mr. Du Cann’s golden “Cartier,” whatever that is. Jesus the Freethinker appears to have had surprisingly little influence on Mr. Du Cann’s own precious manners. It would be a most interesting speculation how Mr. Du Cann would have described me had I precipitously accepted his Jesus as my Freethought Saviour; for if I am at the moment “vigorous, provocative and industrious” (as he says), these qualities and others would have been trebled at least. It just shows how much I have lost for daring to challenge a reverent—well, whatever he is; and the sentence of death I have had to submit to for my unbelievable temerity was a just punishment.

And first as to “definitions.” I do not accept Mr. Du Cann as a lexicographer, and I had a perfect right to go to a first-class dictionary like Chambers which, in spite of his silly repudiation, is not “superseded” by the Oxford or any other dictionary. There is room for many dictionaries, and I went to Chambers because it happens that I often use it. Its date is 1953, and the latest I have consulted. I could go to dear old Nuttall (1894), edited by the Rev. James Wood, which says a Freethinker is “one who spurns the trammels of orthodox religious belief”; Webster, which gives, “One who forms opinions independently, esp. of the authority of revelation or of the church.” Its synonym is “skeptic, unbeliever,” and it sends us to the word “infidel.” And what does Webster say about “infidel”? “One who does not believe in the (understood) religion; a non-Christian”; he is also a “freethinker, skeptic, agnostic, atheist, deist,” and there is plenty more about the word “infidel.” It was up to Mr. Du Cann to give us the Oxford definition, and not to get out of the mess I plunged him in by pretending that his absurd nonsense about Jesus being a Freethinker is “not one of dictionary definition.” It certainly would have been if the dictionaries had agreed with him and not with me. As I pointed out, he was (and still is) thoroughly confused over the very clear distinction

between “Freethinker” and “free thinker.” What the words meant centuries ago has literally nothing to do with the discussion. When Foote called his journal THE FREETHINKER, he had a definite meaning in his mind, and so had the majority of his readers. How many of them agree with Mr. Du Cann (even after my execution with his Cartier) that Jesus was a Freethinker as envisaged by G. W. Foote?

Mr. Du Cann asks me where have I read that Jesus was the Greatest Gardener that Ever Lived? Well, in the past 60 years or so, I must have read or heard at least 1,973,658 allusions to Jesus, all (except a very few) presenting him as the Greatest Ever that came from Heaven down to Earth. How can I possibly trace them? We are told that Jesus said, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Any pious gardener would insist—I have heard some who did so—that this marvellous description of the lilies of the field makes Jesus easily the Greatest of all Gardeners. Over and over again, I have protested in these columns against similar credulous idolatry.

As for the boy Jesus (more or less) “confounding” the old rabbis by his wonderful knowledge, take the picture by Giulni Campi in Shaw Sparrow’s *The Gospels in Art*. There he is, laying down the law in the centre of the painting, and completely overwhelming thirteen (at least) of them. Or take the picture by de Ribera in which Jesus is obviously “wiping the floor” with eight of the old gents. Or, again, the modern picture by Bida, where Jesus is doing the same with nine of them, astounding Joseph and Mary by his marvellous precociousness. There is not, of course, the slightest evidence for this nonsensical myth, but it is believed by all Christians; so I am not surprised that Mr. Du Cann, following them in most things Christian, should also believe it.

Again, it has always amused me to see how Jesus so often never means what he says—according to Christians. When Jesus attacked lawyers—and, my God, what an attack! Mr. Du Cann hotly denies he means lawyers such as he. And when I say that the Churches have civilised Christianity, he sends me to the Inquisition, the fires at Smithfield, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Yes—but the Churches were *then* Christian, they followed Christ. Even Mr. Du Cann indignantly complains “there are no Christians” *now*: that the Churches have betrayed their Christ. Of course. They dare not these days follow the teachings of Christ in all their fullness. They have had to insist (more or less, of course) that Jesus never meant a real Hell, forever burning, for example, or that we must all forthwith hate our parents. The fires of Smithfield as a Christian necessity have gone for ever.

In his article “The God of Atheism,” there is not one word which answers my contention that anybody who believes in a “Father in Heaven” cannot be a Freethinker. Indeed, Mr. Du Cann finds it easier to complain about my “bigotry” and my “Atheism” than to answer my arguments.

I can’t really blame him.

—NEXT WEEK—

U.S. BISHOPS ANSWER THE CASE

By COLIN McCALL

REVIEW

What is History?

By G. H. TAYLOR

A Million Years of Human Progress, by Ira D. Cardiff. Pageant Press, New York. 146 pages. \$2.50.

THIS, in American phraseology, is an up-dated re-write of a work put out by the author in 1942 as the outcome of his protest against the old-fashioned history text-book which elevated the sensational at the expense of what is truly progressive.

This protest, however, is itself old-fashioned by now, and still the dispute goes on as to what is the best way to present history ("the most dangerous concoction yet devised by the chemistry of the intellect"). What is history? Is the best historian like a photographer? Or an artist? Or an interpreter? Or a propagandist (for progress)? Should history be taught forwards or backwards (from the present back to the past)?

There is no evidence that our author has been troubled with these questions at all, for he has his own method which is a model of simplicity: it is to pick out all the nice things that have happened and ignore the others. The author's camera trained on the garden of events, manages to take the flowers and suppress the weeds. A pretty picture, perhaps, but hardly a real one. It is no doubt intended as a corrective to balance out the sort of history book which concentrated on gaudy kings engaged in gaudy battles. No such books, however, have been published (in English) for many years.

As a Rationalist writer in American freethought journals, the author gives scientific and other secular progress full credit and omits the Churches, who have contributed nothing.

His method of presentation is that of the short reference, each subject being treated with extreme brevity, often to the size of a snippet. Thus, waterproof sewing, articulate speech, the wheel, logic, Norman invasion, soap, Bill of Rights, fertilisation, etc., etc., follow in rapid succession, and the reader is caught in a series of mental hops right through the book.

This method is perhaps most unfortunate when dealing with, say, Modern Philosophy, which he dashes off in a couple of pages comprising a quotation from McCabe about history, one from Dewey about bad men and one from Russell about fear. These three quotations have no connection with one another and still less with their ambitious title, "Modern Philosophy." This curious concoction could have been labelled Acid Drops with equal relevance. There are others like it—and mercifully short.

One cannot feel enthusiastic about his uncritical acceptance of Psycho-Analysis or his "innate artistic sense" in animals, or his indifference as to who Shakespeare was. He realises that of all claimants to the Shakespearean works, William of Stratford must be the first to be eliminated, but then takes the usual lazy line: "It doesn't matter who Shakespeare was." On that argument we could wipe the names of Foote and Cohen from THE FREETHINKER'S history and stick any two non-literary contemporaries in their places.

Some of Dr. Cardiff's matter, especially on biology, is quite helpful, but a book of this kind is always immeasurably improved by illustrations and time charts, both of which are lacking. As the book is handsomely produced, one must ask what happened to the ha'porth of tar.

Flopping

By A. R. WILLIAMS

"BUST ME!" says Jeremy Crunched. "If she ain't at it agin!"

So are others. Travellers who take a tour through Roman Catholic countries dwell on certain social aspects, poverty and dirt and squalid dwellings of the inhabitants. Some get æsthetic about them, though they would be disgusted at the same conditions in England. They notice the tendency of the natives to flop, that is, drop on their knees before images and relics of saints. Do these travellers really think flopping a virtue, and do the floppers too? Except that they have been indoctrinated to it from infancy.

Better if they stood erect and demanded of Church and priests, government and society and wealthy people who batten on them a fair share of the products of their labour. One could quote to them: Christians and camels take their burdens kneeling.

Religious people watch for opportunities, not only to flop themselves but to advocate others doing so. At the outbreak of the European War in 1914 Sir William Robertson Nicholl filled the *British Weekly* with insistent cries that the whole British nation should flop. He declared that other nations were on their knees; why wasn't Britain? We should never win the war without doing so! Perhaps he was trying to counterbalance the *Got Mit Uns* on the buttons and badges of the Kaiser's Army. Wartime prayers are the white man's equivalent of African savages dancing round their Mumbo Jumbo and screaming for victory over their enemies.

More recently a Press photographer secured a picture of nurses in a hospital kneeling round a table in the middle of a ward. They were praying. Some captions had statements that they were invoking the help of the Great Healer or Divine Healer.

This is one of the most amazing aspects of the prayer practice. Think of the thousands who suffer every day, needing the work and devotion of nurses and doctors. The Divine Healer or Great Healer is presumably almighty, so it is not expecting too much to ask him to make some signal action on behalf of the disease-stricken. Apparently he does not, for the doctors and nurses continue their arduous labours. The only help they get is from man, as when Fleming discovered penicillin, which saves thousands of lives, transcending all supposed miracles.

Much emotional prose and verse has been written about prayer, as "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire." That statement raises so many implications as to necessitate long treatment; or to be swept away as meaningless. Psychologists could tell us much about the mentality of prayerfulness. Most likely it is a form of self-hypnosis, or indulgence of a weakening habit.

Amusing, too, are the Breviary and Book of Common Prayer, readymade forms whose use is akin to the Prayer Wheel of Tibet, the latter less trouble and more repetitive, which is one of the imputed virtues of praying.

CORRESPONDENCE

AN OPINION?

In what was on the whole a deficient article on Christ as Free-thinker, C. G. L. Du Cann stressed one important point—a point which his opponent H. Cutner refused a little *too* emphatically: "Western institutionalised Christianity would have stunk in his (Christ's) nostrils."

Mr. Cutner, I think, refuted this argument rather from a subjective hope than a desire for the truth: he says, "I insist that Jesus was *exactly* what the Churches have made of him." This is his conviction. "But that which convinces is not necessarily true on that account."—Nietzsche (*Der Wille zur Nacht*).

I quote two other aphorisms of Nietzsche which both show his

profound insight into the origins of a religion and its evolution. "The Christians have done exactly what the Jews did before them. They have introduced what they conceived to be an innovation and a thing necessary to self-preservation into their Master's teaching, and woven his life into it."

"Christianity has become something fundamentally different from what its Founder wished it to be."

(How can one reconcile Christ's open pacifism with the Papal wars?)

J. THURSTON.
[Mr. Cutner writes: Mr. Thurston substitutes a Nietzsche "conviction" for my own.—ED.]

A NOTE ON ENGLISH POSITIVISTS

Whilst agreeing in substance with G. H. Taylor in his estimate of Comte and Positivism, I would like to make a comment concerning the small group of English Positivists. Frederic Harrison was a prominent figure among them and was certainly far from being an aggressive secularist, even though it was his article in the *Westminster Review* which sparked off the famous controversy over the broad church volume, *Essays and Reviews*. The group was essentially middle class and intellectual, whilst many of them came from Wadham College, Oxford, where they had been inspired by Dr. Congreve, who gave up holy orders and tutorship alike to become the high priest of English Positivism. But they had a strong social sense which they had derived from Comte and which appeared in, among others, the worthy Dr. J. M. Bridges, of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, and Professor Beesley. The volume of Positivist essays, *Essays on International Polity*, to which Bridges and others contributed, shows an enlightened concern with foreign affairs. Professor Beesley was of great assistance to the rising trades unionism, whilst the small Positivist brotherhood could always be counted upon to support any effort for social amelioration following the academic example of Comte himself, who has been called the father of sociology.

F.H.A.M.

SCIENCE FICTION

It is interesting to note that in the whole wide field of modern science fiction there is little mention of God. The unfortunate crews of ships stranded beyond Arcturus do not grovel on their knees in prayer, they rely upon their own efforts. If the younger generation is reading this today, then it is a hopeful sign.

Incidentally, why is it so generally taken for granted by the public that there is life on other planets? In Du Nouy's *Human Destiny* he calculates the probability of the formation of a protein molecule as one in 10^{321} .

H. A. ROGERSON.

PERCEPTION

One must admire Mr. Broom's courage in attempting a description, let alone a refutation, of the principles of Locke, Berkeley and Hume in the space of one page, but the inferences he draws were not supported by those philosophers. Berkeley, indeed, expressly writes: "That the things I see with my eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist, I make not the least question." The statement hinges on the definition of "existence," and here one must agree with Berkeley that the only existence of which we can be perfectly certain is our present sensation—all the rest is inference, based on varying degrees of probability. In this Berkeley is in line with Karl Pearson's famous dictum that what we call scientific law is merely a statement of an event that will happen with a high degree of probability.

I see a chair now, and I have not the least doubt that I see a chair. I close my eyes, and on re-opening them I see the chair again. What happened to the chair while my eyes were closed? I do not know; neither does the Realist. He boldly says that the chair was there all the time. But my dear Hume and I are more cautious: we cannot be quite sure: we cannot be as sure as we are that we now see the chair; somebody may have removed and

replaced it whilst we were not looking—anything may have happened. From my previous experience of the chair and the habits of the household I am prepared to admit that it is highly probable that the chair remained there; but there is a world of philosophic difference between this scientific caution and the certainty I experience on seeing the chair.

Further, will not Mr. Broom tell us how he distinguishes between a perception and the act of perceiving? I cannot. Hume and Berkeley did not. When I see a chair I am not aware of any act of perceiving, apart from the sensation. I suspect that the distinction is one of words only, a danger against which Hume so constantly warns his readers.

HENRY MEULEN.

"MARIOLOGY"

With reference to your article of January 10th, may I ask you, please, where one can find the *original* Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke? As far as I know, these *originals* do not exist. We only have copies of them, and in these (the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, etc.), the virgin birth of Jesus is *obviously known to the authors*.

Secondly, you are quite wrong in stating that Mary as "co-Redemptress" would be classed as *pure divinity: the fourth person of the trinity*. I suppose you are not one of those ignorant people who think that we Catholics consider the Virgin Mary as a Goddess? She was a purely human creature like all of us. She was redeemed through Christ, who is the only Saviour of us all. Her immaculate conception was a special privilege of God in view of her predestination to be the Mother of our Saviour. The term "co-Redemptress," if taken in your sense, is heretical. One is our Redeemer. In the Catholic sense Mary may be called "co-Redemptress" because she had suffered with Jesus, and her intercession for us sinners is very strong before God. She is perhaps our last hope.

So you are quite misleading your readers when you cite Solomon Reinach's gratuitous and ridiculous assertion about "a new trinity... J.M.J." Please don't make us laugh by speaking of Mariolatry, which does not exist. Mariology should be the term.

(Rev.) G. M. PARIS, O.P., Editor *The Faith* (Malta).

FOR NEWCOMERS

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