

The Freethinker

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ALTHOUGH Easter is supposed to celebrate the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is astonishing to find the festival called after the old Saxon Goddess Eostre. This proves how very difficult it is to change names and customs; for, added to many other pagan rites taken bodily over by the early Christians, is the use of eggs—in their early days, the symbol of fertility, the coming of Spring with the awakening of Nature after the long, arid days of Winter.

Actually, Eostre was the Goddess of Spring and the budding of flowers, but always behind her worship was the idea of fertility. Easter eggs were Easter offerings in Egypt, the Persians used coloured eggs in their ritual to their Sun God and, to this day, the Jews have them in their evening Passover service. Christians had to admit them and dozens of other pagan ideas and customs when they began making converts. Nowadays, the Easter egg custom is so strong that there is always a brisk sale even for *chocolate* eggs and greeting cards with eggs prominently displayed on them. An Easter without eggs of some kind is unthinkable in a Christian community.

Killing Gods

And the idea of God sacrificing himself for the good of others is also a purely pagan idea. Whether the God was "crucified," or died in some other way, is quite immaterial. We even get the sacrificer "mystically" identified with the victim. As one of the principal writers on Hinduism, Monier Williams, points out when dealing with this aspect of the God "sacrificing" himself—"Surely in these mystical allusions to the sacrifice of a representative man, we may see traces of the original institution of sacrifice as a divinely appointed ordinance typical of the one great sacrifice of the Son of God for the sins of the world." Monier Williams was, of course, a firm believer in Christianity.

But it is not the "Crucifixion" of Jesus, but his "Resurrection" after being put to death which is worth reconsidering at this time of the year. This is especially necessary because the Resurrection is now considered by nearly all Christian experts as "the best authenticated fact (or event) in the history of the world." I have heard this over and over again both on the radio and on TV. It is one of the most blatant and unblushing lies ever perpetrated. The Resurrection is not and never has been authenticated. It is as unknown in secular history as the Virgin Birth.

Moreover, the "resurrection" of pagan Gods was a commonplace of ancient religions. Even in the Old Testament we have Samuel "resurrected" by the Witch of Endor for the benefit of Saul. Krishna certainly—at least as certainly as Jesus—rose from the dead, and ascended bodily into Heaven. He was seen doing so by a crowd. As for Buddha, both "Heaven and Earth" mourned him when he died, and "Mahadeo," the supreme God of all, was "so moved to pity" that he exclaimed, "Rise, holy love!" Before Buddha went up, he left some marks on a rock of a high mountain shown as the "last impression of his footsteps on this

earth." In any case, his faithful followers expect him to become, if he has not already done so, "one with the Source of Life."

Zoroaster is another God who got into Heaven when he died. So did Æsculapius—he was known as the Son of God and the Saviour—and so did Adonis. As Dupuis pointed out in his immortal work, *The Origin of All Worship*,

"The death of Adonis was celebrated at Alexandria with the utmost display. His image was carried with great solemnity to a tomb . . . and before singing his return to life, there were mournful rites celebrated in honour of his suffering and his death. The large wound

he had received was shown, just as the wound was shown which was made to Christ by the thrust of the spear. The Feast of his Resurrection was fixed at the 25th of March." The faithful ended the Feast with cries of joy, "Adonis lives and is risen again." Very few Christians know how strong are the parallels between the life of Jesus and the life of Adonis. But whether they like it or not, the celebrations at Easter are partly based on those attending Adonis for centuries before the supposed birth of Jesus.

More Risen Saviours

Osiris was another "Saviour" who was put to death and eventually rose again. As Bonwick says in his *Egyptian Beliefs*, "It is astonishing to find that at least 3,000 years ago, men trusted an Osiris as the 'Risen Saviour' and confidently hoped to arise, as he arose, from the grave."

And needless to add, there was Mithras the "Mediator" between God and man, who also was put to death and rose again. Dupuis insisted "that it was chiefly in the religion of Mithras that we find mostly those features of analogy with the death and resurrection of Christ . . . he was born like Christ on December 25th and died as he did; he had his sepulchre over which his disciples shed tears . . . his funeral ceremonies like those on Good Friday (in Roman Catholic countries) were accompanied with funeral dirges and groans of the priests . . . and one of them would come forward and pronounce 'Be of good cheer, sacred band of Initiates, your God has risen from the dead. . . .'"

In truth, these old religions reek with Saviour Gods who died or were put to death and rose again. There is nothing whatever new in the Christian "Resurrection."

The story of the Resurrection in the Gospels is packed not only with absurdities but with the most flagrant contradictions. Indeed, poor Dean Alford who, last century, produced a very learned Greek edition of the Gospels full of learned notes, had to give up trying to reconcile them. "We must be content," he sadly admitted, "to walk by faith and not by sight." It is at least the confession of an honest man, and not like our modern Christians, who still call the Resurrection "the best authenticated event in history."

Most Christians who talk like this hope that the question of the dates of the Four Gospels will not be questioned. If they are, then they go at once to the Epistles of Paul as if, because Paul believed in the Resurrection, that proved it.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Most Authenticated Fact in History?

By H. CUTNER

Paul got a little mixed up about it in any case; for though he said, "If Christ be not risen then is our preaching in vain and your faith is also vain," he also said, "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body," and "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The point of this is that the Resurrection and Ascension must go together. When Jesus parted from his followers to go up to Heaven—as Luke says, "He was parted from them and carried up to heaven"—he went as a "body" and not as a "spirit." As far as Paul is concerned, you pay your money and take your choice.

Hopeless Contradictions

But if the stories of the Resurrection as given in the Gospels are examined closely, it will be seen that they nearly always contradict one another. You can be sure if Matthew says something is white, John will say it is red. For Gospels which are supposed to be "inspired," the contradictions are amazing and have never been resolved by apologists.

Matthew says that there was a "great earthquake" on the morning of the Resurrection. The other Gospel writers know nothing about it. When the women first visited the tomb Mark says it was "at the rising of the sun." John says "When it was yet dark." Matthew says that they met "an angel" at the tomb. (Incidentally, it must have been dead easy for them to recognise "an angel.") Mark says it was "a young man." Luke went one better and said there were "two men." And, of course, John said there were "two angels." Were they sitting or standing? Luke says "standing." Matthew, Mark, and John say "sitting." Matthew says they were *outside* the sepulchre; Mark, Luke and John say they were *inside*.

According to Matthew, Mark and Luke, Mary saw the "angel" (or whatever was there) when she *first* came to the tomb. According to John, she did *not*. Matthew says the

women *saw* Jesus. Luke says they did *not*. Luke says that only one disciple, Peter, visited the tomb; John says there were two—Peter and John. John says that Peter entered the tomb; Luke says he merely looked into it.

The Gospel writers cannot even agree where Jesus appeared to his disciples. Matthew says it was in Galilee; Luke says it was in Jerusalem. And how many disciples were there then? Mark and Luke say "eleven"; John says "ten"; while Paul actually says "twelve." According to John, *all* the disciples were convinced that Jesus had "arisen." According to Matthew, "they were not."

One could go on and on showing these discrepancies in the "inspired" narratives, but they just bore one. Even such a devoted follower as Dean Farrar, in his very popular *Life of Christ*, had to make the following confession—

Anyone who will attentively read side by side the narratives of these appearances on the first day of the resurrection will see that they have only been preserved for us in general inter-blended, and scattered notices which, in strict exactness, render it impossible, without many arbitrary assumptions, to produce from them a certain narrative of the order of the events. The lacunæ, the compressions, the variations, the actual differences, the subjectivity of the narrators as affected by spiritual revelations, render all harmonies at the best uncertain.

All of which means that the only accounts of the Resurrection we have do not prove in any way whatever that it is the best authenticated event in history. On the contrary.

W. R. Cassels, in his great work—it has never been answered—*Supernatural Religion*, points out "the remarkable fact that, with the exception of the one cry in the first two Synoptics, each Gospel has ascribed different sayings to the dying Master, and not only do no two of them agree, but in some important instances the statement of the one Evangelist seems to exclude the accounts of the others."

Yet 600 millions of Christians still believe the fairy tale!

Speakers' Corner

THE FOLLOWING CORRESPONDENCE has taken place between the Secretary of the National Secular Society and the Ministry of Works, and, as it is apparently the clearest official assurance yet given of the future of the famous Speakers' Corner we are reprinting it.

From the Secretary, N.S.S., to the Ministry, 6th March 1958:

Dear Sirs,

I should like to refer you to our correspondence in April/May 1957 regarding the effect of the new Park Lane scheme on Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.

In your letter of 6th May 1957 you wrote: "The plans for the new roadway have not yet been settled in detail but even if some realignment of the public speaking area is necessary you may rest assured that it is certainly not our intention that the public speaking pitches should be abolished."

I believe the plans have now been settled, and they give definite cause for alarm on this point. If I may quote from my letter to you (30th April 1957): "Not only is the Corner known all over the world, it is a genuine democratic feature of English life." It is not sufficient that your intention be confined to preventing its abolition; the new site should be as large and as accessible as the old one. Furthermore, there should be provision for the sale of literature as close to the site as possible.

We realise that better road facilities are important, but they must not be at the expense of free expression of opinion in speech and writing, freedoms of which this country is rightly proud.

I should welcome a definite reassurance on this matter.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) COLIN MCCALL.

From the Ministry of Works, Lambeth Bridge House, London, S.E. 1. Ref. AD.3260/1, 11th March 1958:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 6th March about the effect of the Park Lane Improvement Scheme on Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park.

The Ministry's intentions on this matter were expressed by the Minister in the House of Commons last week, when he said in reply to a question: "I naturally intend to preserve the facilities traditionally enjoyed by speakers and their audiences in Hyde Park. It may, however, be necessary to move the area of Speakers' Corner a little further into the Park." Our intention is to move the area to the far side of the small glade of trees which stands, at present, behind the speakers, and thus to protect them from the increased noise of traffic in the new Carriageway.

I can assure you that the new Speakers' Corner will be very similar in area to the existing one, and that it will be very much more accessible; the present area can be reached by pedestrians only by crossing the road on the surface, whereas the new one will be served by pedestrian subways from Park Lane, Oxford Street and Bayswater Road. The new area will, of course, be provided with a hard surface as is the present one.

As you know, the sale of literature is not at present permitted within the boundaries of the Park, and the Ministry is not proposing to relax this regulation.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) T. L. JONES.

Love of Woman—or of God?

By G. I. BENNETT

SHE IS A BRIGHT-EYED LITTLE WOMAN with a merry laugh who has been visiting us long enough now to be regarded as a friend of the family. Miss Worth (as I will call her) is an ardent devotee of Spiritualism. She sees me smile and knows that I don't believe in it, but that does not damp her spirit. Genial sceptic and infidel though I am, she is sure that one day I shall come by what she believes is the truth. For a woman in the late autumn of life she displays a lively interest in love in its various aspects. Which, being the type of woman she is, is not altogether surprising, for marriage has passed her by, and she in her heart of hearts regrets it. But she is incurably romantic and her Spiritualist faith apparently encourages her in the belief that in a life hereafter each will find her true love—the one in whose company she was happiest on earth—and personal fulfilment time without end.

Miss Worth was with us the other evening. How the subject came up I cannot remember, but she began telling us about the amorous "goings on" of Roman Catholic priests. It was something that someone at some time had related to her and she—credulous soul—had swallowed it all. There were certain implausible features to the story that would have made me doubt its authenticity, anyway. Waggishly, rather than out of desire for serious argument, I took her up on them, and then found myself launched on a considerable theme. I hold no brief for Roman Catholic clergy, but in fairness to them I feel that they are not in matters of sexual behaviour to be condemned wholesale because of the amorous adventures of relatively few of their number. I point out to Miss Worth that the Catholic priesthood occupy a special position in relation to and in the eyes of the Catholic laity; that they bind themselves solemnly to certain vows, of which one is a chaste celibacy; and that by the standards of their Church (mistaken though non-Catholics may well think them) I am prepared to believe that the majority of priests are on the whole sincere and conscientious men.

But, objects Miss Worth, how can a man bind himself to permanent celibacy, in spirit as well as in name? He is, after all, a flesh-and-blood human being. It is not natural or healthy. If a man wishes to marry, as most men do sooner or later, then he should be free to do so. Love and its physical expression are *life*, are they not? Love brings forth new life, and so it is right and good.

There is, of course, as I willingly concede, something in what Miss Worth says. It is a serious thing for a man in early youth to embark upon a training that will commit him irrevocably to a bachelor existence in which woman shall play no sexual part. Perhaps he may keep his vows of celibacy and chastity—but may he not do violence to his nature thereby? It is true that there are men not temperamentally suited to conjugal life; but this cannot be the case with all men who become priests. And while some undedicated men may remain bachelors by choice, there is this great difference between them and the celibate priest: that the priest is morally bound to maintain lifelong a chaste celibacy, whereas the ordinary bachelor may exchange his single state for that of wedlock, or, perhaps, of a free unwedded union, should he desire to do so.

Miss Worth, believing that men are still men, whatever the Roman Catholic Church may say, and that they will have their love, marriage or no marriage, cannot see reason or sense in perpetual celibacy ecclesiastically prescribed. She does not appreciate the Romanist view that a priest's marriage is to his Church. Love of woman may

be permissible for ordinary unordained men; but for a priest such love would be a rival—possibly a disastrously successful rival—for the love of God. If joy there is in loving a woman, that joy must never enter the priestly sphere. A priest must give himself heart and soul to his spiritual work and the secular duties of his parish without wife or family to lay claim to his affections, to distract him with domestic concerns, or otherwise divide his allegiance. Marriage necessarily implies emotional involvement, which, on the one hand, may bring much happiness, and, on the other, may mean jealousy, mistrust, and hard words, or unspoken anxiety over the loss or threatened loss of a wife's affections. In either case, the Catholic Church frowns upon the idea of married clergy, thinking that marriage is likely to impair a priest's efficiency as a spiritual mentor. St. Francis of Assisi was in the best tradition of his Church when he, believing that the dedicated man of God must be free of the world in order to do his work effectively, imposed, among other things, the discipline of unmarried chastity upon those who joined his order.

Moreover, the Roman Catholic priest is a human being marked out from ordinary mortals by reason of his acting as intercessor between man and God—and what better way is there of raising him spiritually aloft of other men than by having him renounce mankind's common imperious passion to mate? The Roman Catholic Church believes more strongly than do most Christian Churches today that sex is sinful, except for ordinary undedicated folk, and then only permissible for them within the marriage bond where its exercise is assumed to be not unconnected with a desire for children—sex used simply as an instrument of pleasure being anathema to the Romanist.

In all this I see characteristic Roman Catholic shrewdness perfectly understandable and inexorably logical one is mindful of the framework within which Romanist thought moves. And I am at pains to point this out to Miss Worth. But she only laughs. Despite—or is it because of?—her curious Spiritualist notions, she has no difficulty in harmonising sexual love with pastoral and spiritual life. She is, she declares again, all for romance and all for love—love which, she now knows, she will not enjoy in this world, but which she hopes will be hers in another.

Exit

We plough the fields with tractors,
And sow resistant seed:
Our hospitals bind up the wounds
That God has left to bleed.

And in the distant future
When illness is a crime
And crime becomes an illness—
We'll never have the time
To think of "God the Father";
But if we ever should,
We'll look around for "Him" and find
That "He" has gone for good.

W. I. TOWNSEND.

—NEXT WEEK—

A MODERN CATHOLIC SAINT

By F. A. RIDLEY

This Believing World

Not content with "About Religion"—mostly moonshine about religion—ITV now has put on for three quarters of an hour a religious programme for "teenagers" which is cleverly mixed with plenty of skiffle and rock 'n' roll—the Rev. Simon Phipps taking questions. All the teenagers in its first programme were very earnest Christians—but one question was asked which Mr. Phipps was quite unable to answer—"could people be good who were *not* Christians?" and he had to answer yes—but why, completely eluded him. Still, if these people were "tried" in times of adversity—what then? Where would they be without Jesus? But Mr. Phipps could not even answer that one.

★

The Free Church Congress has just discovered—we are in 1958—"that many preachers are not facing the modern world." This was the heart-breaking opinion of the Rev. D. Stewart, of the BBC's religious staff. And he added: "For far too long preachers have been trying to nourish souls with sermons that are sentimental, platitudinous, and moralising." Mr. Stewart even objected to the way parsons attack science as "a dangerous thing." It was not science which should be attacked but "sin." But he did not tell us what this "sin" was, and we suspect that, after all, the "sin" parsons should attack is not reading the Bible.

★

In fact, what Mr. Stewart wants is a "ten year plan to expound the Bible." For once, our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the poor parson. Fancy being *compelled* to force the Bible on to the people again! Fancy the parsons all over England trying to re-educate us in Obadiah or Nahum or some of the incoherent Epistles of Paul or Revelation. Even a Fundamentalist parson might kick at ten years of it.

★

On the other hand, a number of M.P.s, clerics, and advertising men have been meeting as to the best way to advertise Christianity by modern publicity methods—which, incidentally, advertising men have been trying to do ever since the end of World War I. It would mean some very precious heavenly work which would bring in the cash, and be just as welcome as advertising soap or pills. And the slogan? Of course, "Turn to Christ." As Bruce Barton said many years ago, Jesus is the Greatest Business Executive the world has ever known, and if he does not bring in the cash, who can?

★

That Jesus is expected to bring in the cash can be seen in the way "a hundred men canvassers are now in a process of training by a business expert" so that they can call at every "Anglican" home in Knighton, Leicester, whose parish church wants to raise £30,000 in three years. It is, we are told, "the biggest pepping-up process any parish church in Leicester has ever seen." The organiser expects the church's income to be raised in a year or his firm will hand over the difference. So far, in other parishes, the firm has had 96% success record; and now many people are crowded out of the Sunday services. The magic name of Jesus, added to that of modern publicity methods, is a sure winner, and more and more people—in Leicester, at least—believe in Miracles, Devils, Angels, Hell, Heaven, and whatever else Christianity stands for than ever before; and all due to efficient advertising!

★

Pious supporters of the Design Argument must be asked to explain the origin of what the American press describes as "a frightening carcass more than 100 feet long and 15 feet

wide washed ashore in Alaska." No expert knows its origin or species, there is nothing like it in all our knowledge of prehistoric animals and, as it has very thick reddish brown hair all over its body, it has no relationship to whales or elephants. As is well known, many prehistoric animals reached enormous sizes but nothing like this one. Perhaps it is one of the animals God made but Adam forgot to name it, and so it slipped out of existence. Or did it? (At the same time, it is necessary to remind readers that this "news" about a strange animal comes from America. It may be as big a hoax as that of the Russian fliers sighting the remains of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat.)

A Comment on Church and State

MR. STEPHEN SWINGLER'S remarks on Church and State at the National Secular Society's annual dinner appear to have been interesting.

The alliance of a dying religion and a young progressive State is admittedly an anachronism. I wonder, though, if even people like Mr. Swingler realise the lengths to which a genuinely secular State will have to go.

More is required than a mere encystment of the Anglican hierarchy, and the hoary statement that "religion is a private matter for the individual" is more plausible than true. Religion never is "a private matter for the individual," for by virtue of its nature it affects other lives. This, above all, applies to children in religious families—and, of course, not only Anglican ones.

In a truly secular community the question will arise how far secular freedom is compatible with the religious upbringing of children in family or school.

If it can be argued scientifically that religious training deforms the free character—and it can be so argued—then a secular State will be obliged to prohibit such training. A forward-looking group that shirks this problem will be advocating, like the majority of "freedom" movements in the past, a half-baked freedom. It will continue to overlook—like those other movements—the destruction of the capacity for freedom in the young, carried out generation after generation by a moral teaching founded on guilt and fear of hell.

Small children are thus taught in religious homes in every town in the British Isles. Their characters are affected for life. The specious argument, therefore, that the withdrawal of religion to the privacy of the home will do anything significant, cannot be taken seriously.

It would be interesting to learn how Mr. Swingler would approach this aspect of the problem. There are many others—for example, the disentangling of our so-called secular morality from medieval mumbo-jumbo, particularly in relation to the family and teenage sexual freedom.

Far more radical changes are needed than ridding the State of the Archbishop of Canterbury as the National Patriarch, however gratifying that would be as a symbol of progress.

O. C. DREWITT.

OUT OF PRINT!

THE following letter was received by the Pioneer Press the other day:

"Dear Brothers,

We wish to order 200 Memorial Letters for _____ Congregation, Lanarkshire. Yours truly in appreciation of good workmanship to Jehovah's praise,

(Signed) _____"

We regretted that the order could not be executed.

THE FREETHINKER

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

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

F. C. ASHDOWN.—"Sin" is said to be "offending God," whereas wrongdoing is offending man (according to Christians).

P. DARK.—Yes, there are two Bristol Rationalist Groups, the new one being at the University. Mr. Jordan is Hon. Secretary of the older one but is working closely with the University Group, whose first meeting he reported.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

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.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS 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.: Messrs. T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: R. POWE.

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

Notes and News

It was good to see the question of child adoption by non-religious couples aired in the correspondence columns of *The Times* (19/3/58). Mrs. Molly Harrison, of Wokingham, wrote: "A child is given into adoption because, for one reason or another, he is deprived of the care of his own parents. His prime needs are love, security, understanding, and a healthy, happy environment. Do your correspondents really believe that these desiderata are only to be found in homes which are described on a form as 'Christian'?" Mrs. Harrison records that her own adopted daughter came through a Diocesan Adoption Society, who accepted her non-Christian home as "likely to be a happy and suitable one for the child." And Mr. Stanley Reed, of Wanstead, London, said: "As a non-Christian I naturally have doubts whether a Christian home offers an ideal environment, but without provocation I would hesitate, for courtesy's sake, to air such an opinion in print." He did air his opinion because he found no such courtesy in a parson.

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A REQUEST by one of our readers for Mr. Avro Manhattan's *The Dollar and the Vatican* at his local library (Shoreham-by-Sea) was rejected by the West Sussex County Librarian a little while ago. No doubt a Librarian's job in selecting books on a limited Book Fund is often hard, but the reasons for refusing this application (explained by letter) were, to say the least, strange. He examined the book "with some care" and concluded that he couldn't afford 21s., "particularly because its production was not up to standard relative to the cost of the book, and also that the subject matter was of rather limited interest." The

value of a book does not, surely, depend on its binding (of course, a large firm can produce a more impressive looking job than a small firm). And to say U.S. politics and finance, and their link-up with the Vatican is of "rather limited interest" is ridiculous. All books are of "limited interest," but no book like Manhattan's is in existence anywhere today.

★

THE FREETHINKER and National Secular Society offices receive some strange literature, visitors and telephone calls. But the N.S.S. Secretary was especially honoured on Wednesday, March 12th, 1958 (we print the date in full because of its momentousness), when the phone rang and the voice at the other end declared in suitably serious tones, "I am God Almighty." For some time Mr. McCall suspected a joke by a member, but not at all. The owner of the voice was undoubtedly convinced that he was God. "I am Jehovah"—he went on—"specially come to earth to warn you and your fellow office workers. I made the earth in six days and I rested on the seventh." Unable to spare the time to listen to even a précis of the Bible, Mr. McCall, after due warning, rang off. Where the man had escaped from is not known.

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THE North London Branch of the National Secular Society is justly noted for its all-the-year-round outdoor meetings. Its policy certainly pays dividends in membership and income. Continuing its splendid work, during the past year it held or supplied the speakers for 114 outdoor meetings and made £32 15s. profit. Its sale of literature reached a record high. Mr. and Mrs. Len Ebury and their fellow members deserve the congratulations of us all.

★

SOUTHWARK Diocesan Church Magazine for March 1958 prints a message from a missionary in West Africa. "One of our greatest joys in the past few months," it reads, "has been to see the conversion of a young Muslim girl." The conversion meant that the girl had been beaten and persecuted but her answer to it has been, "Nothing you can do can make any difference because I belong to Jesus and even if I die I'll go to Him." Her parents now will have nothing more to do with her because she has rejected Islam. To us the story is a sad one but we look in vain in the message for the smallest expression of regret at the break-up of a home. Christians are ever ready to invoke the sanctity of the family, when it suits them. This time it doesn't.

★

FRIENDS of France, admirers of the great country that has played so vital a role in the liberation and the civilisation of Europe, Freethinkers especially, must deplore the recent interference with one of the essential freedoms—freedom of the Press. That whole editions of newspapers and magazines should be seized because they contain criticisms of the Algerian war is appalling. M. Claude Bourdet's *l'Observateur* has been seized five times, the last time being when it contained an article by M. André Philip, which referred to the French Algerian policy as "suicidal." The January *Les Temps Modernes* was seized because it printed M. Jean-Paul Sartre's thoughtful and disturbing article on torture, which was translated in *The Observer* (9/3/58). We understand that affected publishers intend to sue the French Government. Meanwhile, they have resource to other methods. Among these are photographic and miniature reproductions of the censored articles. The French satirical weekly, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, for example, printed both M. Philip's and M. Sartre's articles in reduced size, with black lines across them. With a magnifying glass the forbidden words became readable.

A. I. D.

By F. J. CORINA

[NOTE: As Mr. Corina is the author of *We Are Sixteen*, a sex-education book for young people, and more recently of a new play, *The Test Tube Impostor*, the following article on the subject of A.I.D. should be of special interest to Freethinkers.]

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH seems to have a fantastic aptitude for getting itself into situations in which, confronted by the need for determining its attitude on questions of social policy and morality, it ties itself into theological knots in its endeavours to make the teachings of the ancient bachelor, Jesus Christ, seem to fit the needs of the modern world.

The two prime examples in this respect are, of course, the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church. The lesser breeds within the theological law, the Nonconformists, seem to exercise a judicious restraint on some of the questions that arise, and occasionally even to relax and concede something to the twentieth century outlook. The lowest, and usually fundamentalist types, seem neither to worry their heads about such matters, nor to concede an inch of the ground. Rocklike in their faith, they stand unshaken in their intellectual illiteracy.

Their elder and greater sisters may worry themselves stiff with consideration of the "laws of God" in relation to modern life, but to the fundamentalist groups there is no such problem. The "word of God" is there, in the Bible; they accept it as it stands. No need, for them, for man-made Canon Law, Catholic or Protestant. God's word is good enough, and that ends the argument—if it ever began as far as they are concerned.

There could be, in this question of sectarian attitudes, a very interesting study of the social and economic make-up of the different divisions of Christianity, but at the moment it must be sufficient to observe that the peculiar position of the Anglican Church, as a definite branch of the Establishment, creates for it special difficulties, not the least of which is that it has to embrace an attitude aimed at mollifying the more educated supporters who pay lip service at the top, while preserving a stern and unyielding face to the less educated at the bottom. This only rarely means conceding anything, theologically. Usually it means no more than a display of intellectual acrobatics by the Archbishops and Bishops in their efforts to reconcile Christian beliefs with the advance of knowledge, or to shield those beliefs against the impact of changing moral concepts.

Few better examples of the predicament of the Anglican Church exist than the fairly recent one of a divorcee being Prime Minister to a Queen who is head of a Church which so frowns on divorce that it tries (not always successfully) to prevent the remarriage of divorcees within its sacred precincts.

In the matter of divorce the Church has turned itself inside out, upside down, this way and that way, yet like Omar, it ever comes out of the same door as in it went. In the case of divorce the Church perhaps has certain Biblical "authority" to support its slothful attitude—though opposite "authority" can similarly be extracted from the same source.

In the past few years, however, a problem has arisen to agitate the clerical grey matter, on which they seem to have no inspired "authority" to guide them in the versatile Old Book—the question of A.I.D., or artificial insemination by means of a donor; and in their recent struggles to justify an "attitude" on this question, the Anglican big boys have tied themselves once more into theological and legal knots.

Personally, I think there is magnificent "authority" for a precedent in this matter to be built on the curious manner of Jesus's alleged conception and birth. If that was not insemination by donor, I don't know what is. But if the Church accepted this argument it would necessarily lead to a conclusion opposite to the one that has been reached. And that was the last thing that the Church wanted, for a variety of reasons. As the method of insemination was by ghost rather than test tube, however, it could hardly be called "artificial" in the present day sense of the term, so no doubt that strictly lets the Church out of this difficulty.

A.I.D. first began to receive public notice about 1945. With its usual readiness to find immorality in anything that does not stem from Catholic sources, the Roman Catholic Church at once condemned it. The then Archbishop of Westminster, Mgr. (later Cardinal) Griffin, said in 1945:

"After the successful experiments of artificial insemination of cattle there are voluntary clinics which are attempting the same experiments on human beings. The very mention of such a practice is revolting. But we must be quite clear what we mean by artificial insemination. I do not refer to... assisted insemination of the wife after normal intercourse with the husband. We are concerned with the practice of the artificial insemination of a wife with the seed of a man who is not her husband. Such practice offends against the dignity of man, sins against the law of nature, and is unjust to the offspring... The donor of the seed is reduced to the status of a stallion and (for the female recipient) has the malice of adultery... Let us face facts... No consent of husband and wife can remove the immorality from the act, or render the child legitimate."

It is significant of the lack of "authority" in this matter that even the Catholic Archbishop makes no reference to "laws of God" in his condemnation of A.I.D. As I said at the time, in a reply to this denunciation, whatever the Catholic Archbishop might say, the question of legitimacy was a matter for the law and not the Church, and Griffin's statement had no more legal value than any other Catholic pronouncement.

The Anglican Church, however, did not at that time attempt to come to grips with the problem. More cautious than Rome, she dithered about, perhaps hoping that A.I.D. was only a passing fashion which would not produce any lasting theological crisis. But in recent months the Church has had a shock. Estimates of the number of A.I.D. cases from 1945 to the present time have been variously made from about 3,000 to 10,000, and it is a safe assumption that there must have been 5,000 at least. It became clear that the problem could no longer be shelved as insignificant. So the Anglican Archbishop recently got busy with his denunciation, followed by the Church-inspired recent Lords' debate in which the Bishops tried, unsuccessfully, to get a decision that A.I.D. should be declared legally adulterous, to conform to the theological attitude, with the consequent assessment of the offspring as illegitimate.

But even the somnolent Lords sometimes see the writing on the wall, and the Bishop's failure still left the matter, for the time being at any rate, in the hands of the judicial gods—the judges. Legally, the position is very obscure, there being no clearly established precedents, but it would seem to be a reasonably safe working rule for the parents of an A.I.D. child to presume legitimacy.

A case in the Scottish courts recently gives a faint clue to what might ultimately prove to be the judges' attitude, in the absence of any legislation. The court seemed to favour the view that an A.I.D. child should be held to be legitimate, but in order to decide the particular issue evi-

dence was required which would satisfy the court as to the truth of the claim that the child was from A.I.D. The wife, who was being sued for divorce on the grounds of adultery, failed or refused to provide the evidence required, and consequently, in its absence, the court had to draw an inference of adultery, and the husband got his decree.

This case illustrates the difficulties of A.I.D. without the husband's consent (a point which arises rather dramatically in my play, *Test Tube Impostor*). The social essence of A.I.D. lies in its secrecy in relation to the child and the rest of the world. That is a valuable factor. But if the secrecy excludes knowledge even by the husband the case comes on dangerous ground, and could have disastrous consequences all round. The Churches may mouth their stigmatising word "illegitimate," but the true peril lies (as in the Scottish case, if the wife's story was true) not in illegitimacy, but in the danger of repudiation.

Naturally, the Churches are concerned to preserve the theological idea of holy matrimony rather than to promote the welfare and security of A.I.D. children, so we need not look to them for any useful social contribution.

My own view is that no child should be conceived by A.I.D. without the husband's knowledge—not necessarily consent. If he objects, but the wife persists, he still knows, and the issue between them can be resolved at once, rather than coming as a shock in later years. With the husband's

consent there should be no greater danger of subsequent "family" difficulties than might arise in any ordinary family. Certainly, in consent cases, the parents should pay no attention to the Church or anyone else. The decision is as much their exclusive right as if made normally in the marriage bed. If they prefer A.I.D. to adoption that is entirely their own business.

Despite the blathering of the Bishops, it would be hard for the Church to tell us what is the difference in status or affection between an A.I.D. child and one adopted through the Church's own adoption organisations. If there is a difference, it does not help the Church, because the arguments must surely favour A.I.D., which entails adoption only by the father of the natural child of the mother.

Turning for a moment to the question of single women, it was refreshing to find Dr. Donald Soper making the very human (but evidently not Christian) concession that if a single woman wanted a child by A.I.D. she should be free to do so. I agree absolutely. But in view of the single woman's freedom from certain of the restraints operating in the case of the married woman, why bother about the test tube at all?

As Elizabeth, the maid, says in *Test Tube Impostor*, "You never know who you are or what you are, and even if you aren't they'll still say so if they don't like you."

So why worry!

Joseph Lewis on American T.V. Again

(Concluded from page 102)

I do not believe that the First Amendment of the United States Constitution ("Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof") was ever intended to exempt from the laws applicable to others the fraudulent activities of the dishonest ministers of religion. Equal rights for all, special privileges to none, is the fundamental basis and principle of our Constitution, and the First Amendment was made part of the Bill of Rights solely to guarantee the rights of conscience and protect all conscientious believers. That and nothing more.

Thomas Paine expressed this principle in *Common Sense*. He said, "As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of all governments to protect all conscientious professors thereof, and I know of no other business government hath to do therewith."

That is what is meant by the commonly used phrase "freedom of religion." It does not, nor was it ever intended to mean the support and protection of every crack-brained thought of the religious fanatic, or the hallucinations of the religiously insane. Religion and insanity are an all too common relationship.

The law must draw the line of distinction between the conscientious believer and the religious fanatic and racketeer. The polygamy of the Mormons, slavery—the keeping of a human being in a state of bondage—the snake cults whose fanatical devotees endanger the lives of the rest of the community by publicly testing their deluded faith with poisonous reptiles, Witchcraft—the bloodiest page in the history of the Crimes of Religion, with biblical sanction equal to that of the Ten Commandments—have all been prohibited as being against public policy, despite the fact that they have the same biblical authority as the faith healing of Jesus.

As I cannot express this truth strongly enough, I want to state with redoubled emphasis that the Bible is not a legal authority in the secular Republic of the United States of America.

To give you special exemption from the Medical Prac-

tices Act is in effect to establish a religion in violation of the provisions of the First Amendment. The exemption which you now claim reverts to the medieval decree of "Benefit of Clergy," when "men of the cloth" could commit "every crime on the calendar," from that of grand larceny to rape and cold-blooded murder and be free from prosecution. If these exemptions for sanctimonious conduct do not cease, the greatest Constitution ever conceived for a free people will slowly but surely be destroyed. If these special privileges do not cease, they will be like rats gnawing at the hull of a great ship until it sinks.

America! Wake up to this great danger! The imminent danger of the destruction of the most important and valuable provision of our Constitution.

We live in a society of laws, laws designed to protect the ignorant and the innocent from such charlatans as you and your ilk. That is why I want to bring you within the reach of these laws and make you subject to their provisions. I demand of our civil authorities that you be made to stand trial for your so-called Faith Healing practices. You know deep down in your heart, Oral Roberts, that you are masquerading under false pretences as being the "representative of God," and that contact with you is a direct line of contact with the healing power of Jesus. You have no more contact with Jesus than I have.

The Bible is no longer a criterion of truth. Thomas Paine said, long ago, "Before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must first be proved to be true."

How despicable can one get? To what depths of mercenary depravity can one fall who preaches that he has personal contact with an omnipotent God who has the power to heal the sick, and relieve suffering? Do you suppose for a moment that by wrapping yourself in the cloak of religion you can get away, with impunity, with this pious scheme to defraud? We shall see.

The Day of Judgment is coming, Oral Roberts—the *Judgment of the Court!* Thank you for listening.

Good night.

CORRESPONDENCE

HANNEN SWAFFER

In the *Daily Herald* Mr. Hannen Swaffer is writing articles on "This is my life," and in one article stated he has had proved to him that life survives the grave.

Now in today's *Herald* he states that G.B.S. returned to him at a seance, and Shaw remembered their arguments about survival, and remarked very seriously, "It would have been better if, instead of wasting time over that silly alphabet of mine, I had listened to you more when you tried to teach me the Alphabet of Life." Now what do you make of this? I should like very much to read your comments in my valuable paper. GEORGE GREEN. [Mr. Cutner will be dealing with Mr. Swaffer.—ED.]

THE EGYPTIAN VOTE

On 22/2/58 the Egyptian Minister of the Interior announced in Cairo the result of the previous day's plebiscite which was held to obtain approval of the United Arab Republic and Nasser's election as President. The Minister solemnly declared: "99.99% of all voters approved the merger and the presidency of Gamal Abdul Nasser."

Commenting on this news, the *Jerusalem Post* wrote: "Not the most cynical of political prognosticators could have foretold Nasser's quite literally fabulous plebiscite results—which outshine even the U.S.S.R.'s customary 98 per cent. Of Egypt's 6½ million persons entitled to vote, only a paltry 116,000 or two per cent. or so stayed at home." Obviously, as the *Post* quite fairly points out, the result indicates not only a remarkable accuracy on the part of those responsible for the compilation of the lists, but points to a remarkable level of political consciousness and voting discipline among the electorate; also, surely, a remarkable proportion of those healthy enough to be available. For, forgetting the high disease and mortality rate in Egypt, we have to bear in mind that when the electorate includes women, a number, at any given time, will be prevented from fulfilling electoral duties by various domestic difficulties and—remembering the high Egyptian birth rate—childbirth.

The *Jerusalem Post* gives the declared figure of 1,884 invalid ballots in a six million vote. Obviously this is completely absurd, as such a figure would denote an astonishingly high level of accuracy even among highly literate and experienced voters. Considering the educational status of the largely illiterate *fellaheen*, hapless victims—by an accident of birth—of one of the world's lowest standards of living, this figure, like the others, I submit, is purely laughable. DAVE SHIPPER.

SEX RELATIONSHIPS

The article of G. H. Taylor in your issue of February 21st, "Chosen Questions," is one with which I hope, and believe, most freethinkers will agree, but while, of course, agreeing with his objection to clerical interference with the practice of A.I.D., I also hold that this cannot be discussed piecemeal but only in the context of a fundamental discussion of the entire sex question. Humanity has tried all kinds of sex relationships, according to current social conditions. This has so far proceeded blindly. Surely the time has arrived when this important social matter should be discussed in the light of the scientific knowledge of today. We dare not neglect to face this question fully and openly, free love or compulsion. Each side must state its case.

J. H. MATSON.

A WORLD POPULATION POLICY

In what I regard as a particularly good issue of your journal I should like to single out two articles admirably relevant to this critical day and age in which we live. I mean Mr. E. G. Macfarlane's "Demography and Nationalism" and Dr. J. Wilson Jones's "Charter for Scientific Humanism." Both are imbued with a spirit and a vision that would set man's face towards a greater, saner, and kindlier tomorrow.

Of course, Dr. Wilson Jones is right when he says that man's salvation lies within himself and that education in its widest sense provides the key. Of course, Mr. Macfarlane is right when he points to national patriotisms for the great evil that they are. Yes, indeed, we want a world population policy, as both he and Mr. G. H. Taylor are agreed. But we also want, as Mr. Macfarlane says, a common government for mankind; this would make a world population policy not only feasible but essential. It has always been my argument that lack of such a policy would bring the best government devisable a-crashing within one or two generations. Such contributions as these two in the current *FREETHINKER* make it still possible to hope that the future may be a better and brighter one than the omens of today indicate.

G. I. BENNETT.

IDEALISM WITHOUT GOD

Mr. Desmond's article, "The Failure of Scholasticism," seems to imply also the failure of idealism. It is simply not true that all idealistic philosophers have made use of God in order to explain the world and ideas arising from the world. Arthur Schopenhauer, the famous German philosopher, was an idealist, and he, certainly, never held fast to idealism through any conception of God. For according to Schopenhauer the world and existence was the outcome of a blind will, and that the "world as idea" was only the mirror for the "world as will." Therefore, ideas for Schopenhauer were only the accidental outcome of a blind will to live, and not to any creator or supreme being. As regards idealism he stated that: "No object without a subject" is the principle which renders all materialism for ever impossible. And this is no doubt true, for outside the human mind there can be no ideas, whether they be materialistic or otherwise, and therefore the materialist explanation of the world is a contradiction in terms, as its aim is to explain an "objective world" existing independent of all mind.

R. SMITH.

N.S.S. Executive Committee Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19TH.—Present: Messrs. Ridley (Chair), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Ebury, Hornbrook, Johnson, Taylor, Warner, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. A favourable Ministry of Works reply on the future of Speakers' Corner was reported (see letters in this issue, page 106). New members were admitted to Bradford, Central London, Edinburgh and Portsmouth Branches which, with individual members, totalled 13. Developments in the Portchester Crematorium case were given; messages to the *American Rationalist* were approved. Mr. Radford's two recent debates were reported and the Committee's congratulations were expressed. It was agreed that the Society should associate itself with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Suggestions from Mr. G. J. Blake were noted with interest. Some of the suggestions were already in operation, others would be carefully considered. It was agreed to finance a Manchester Branch meeting on April 13th. Congratulations were expressed to North London Branch on a very successful propaganda and financial year. Dagenham Branch open discussion with Methodists was announced for March 28th. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, April 16th, 1958.

NOTABLE PAMPHLETS: *St. George and the Dragon* by F. A. Ridley, price 1d.; *Social Catholicism* by F. A. Ridley, price 1d.; *The Religious Revival* by G. H. Taylor, price 1d.; *BBC, ITA and Atheism* by Colin McCall, price 3d.; *Problems of Church and State* by F. A. Ridley, price 4d.; *France and the Vatican* by F. A. Ridley, price 4d. The six pamphlets 1/-, including postage, from The Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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