

# The Freethinker

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THE ASSOCIATION between the Christian religion and the world-famous Smithfield meat market goes back to the 16th century and is, indeed, chiefly celebrated for the tragic drama which gave rise to the phrase "The fires of Smithfield." For, upon a spot near the present market, a commemorative plaque set up by their co-religionists marks the precise spot at which many Protestant martyrs suffered death in the reign of Bloody Mary, England's last Catholic Queen. Whilst death by fire still remained the prescribed penalty for religious heresy, down to the reign of Charles II, the Marian Martyrs, victims of persecution in the last Catholic reign in this country (1553-8) have acquired a unique, melancholy celebrity. They perished for religious liberty, in their own opinion, and for the good of their souls in that of their Catholic persecutors. Modern Catholic apologists of the kind so frequently found, nowadays, will perhaps try to persuade our more credulous contemporaries that they were burned solely for the benefit of the timber industry in Tudor times!

## Past Horrors

The Protestant martyrs, whose courage, even if prompted by religious fanaticism, can never be sufficiently admired, are not actually the only victims of arbitrary violence to be commemorated on that melancholy spot. For, near the memorial to "the servants of God" who perished there at the stake, there now stands a memorial erected by Scottish Nationalists to Sir William Wallace, who, in 1304, suffered all the horrors—hardly less terrible than were those of the stake—associated with the medieval law of high treason. The illustrious Scottish rebel underwent the hideous ritual of hanging, drawing the bowels of the still-living victim, and, finally, decapitation as a release from his torments. Viewed in its sombre memories, then, Smithfield represents a melancholy reminder of "old, unhappy things, and battles long ago."

## A Sidelight on Creation

However, human beings are not the only animated and warm-blooded creatures to die in Smithfield. For here is perhaps the most famous meat market in the world, and an untold number of oxen, sheep and other animals, who at first sight might seem worthy of a better fate, have perished, not for any religious or political heresy, for such aberrations are, as far as we can judge, alien and incomprehensible to the mentality of the animal world—but to satisfy the more sordid requirements of the economic law of supply and demand. Vast numbers of God's creatures perish annually at Smithfield. The reasons for this daily holocaust are to be found in man's necessities, or—as our vegetarian friends would probably qualify it—in man's supposed necessities, rather than in any ethic founded on theology. We are here confronted with "nature red in tooth and claw" and with its ruthless solution in the "survival of the fittest," in this case, of mankind. Nevertheless, one would expect that Christianity would have

something to say on this practice, particularly since we are expressly told in Holy Scripture that God both made the animals and blessed them when once he had made them. Surely this casts a curious sidelight on creation, when we find that an all-powerful, all-knowing God, has deliberately created numerous animal species for no other apparent purpose than for providing his "favourite son" man with a more varied diet than the Garden of Eden could afford. (c.f. the primitive statement made in contemporary Catholic text-books of moral (*sic*) theology: "The animals are made for our use; we have no duties towards them.")

## Genesis and Smithfield

However, that is precisely what Jehovah did. For, as

one enters the covered portion of Smithfield Market, one sees, prominently displayed, an emblazoned quotation from none other than Genesis, which runs (I translate literally from the original Latin inscription): "He hath placed all sheep and oxen beneath thy feet." Genesis, 1: 26. Or in set terms, All sheep and oxen—not to mention such sidelines in divine creation as turkeys, etc.—were created for the special and precise purpose of furnishing the sinful descendants of Adam with a plentiful supply of meat. Presumably, when the Trinity created turkeys, they (or should it be he?) had our future redemption on Christmas Day in mind. Certainly that unfortunate bird has no reason to salute the advent of the Son of God! The above inscription from Genesis inscribed on the portals of the world's greatest meat market, gives the Divine approval in explicit terms to the historically tortuous and bloody process by which God—or Evolution?—has placed "all sheep and oxen," not to mention the rest of the animal creation beneath the feet of *Homo sapiens*.

## Genesis and Evolution

As and when viewed from the standpoint of evolution, the whole process by which man gradually came to occupy his present role of master of our planet appears in a dry light. It does not call for much ethical self-satisfaction on that part of mankind which has become capable of serious and critical thought. As was so vividly demonstrated a few years back in the Dome of Discovery (in the Festival of Britain), primitive man was for long an obscure and rare animal, lurking amid forests, and in no way seemingly cut out for eventual domination of the earth and all its furred and feathered denizens. That proud role was not achieved by any divine fiat, but by a prolonged and, ethically, extremely disedifying process, during which the evolving human species hunted down and often exterminated many other species. So badly, in fact, has *Homo* treated his more backward evolutionary brethren that, as an unusually intelligent Christian theologian once reminded us: "If the animals were capable of inventing a religion, they would certainly imagine man as the Devil." Very probably so? From a more secular point of view, George Orwell expressed the same thought in his brilliant satire, *Animal Farm*. There is little to be proud of in man's past—or

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## Christianity in the Meat Market

By F. A. RIDLEY



present—dealings with the lower animals.

### Evolution and the Meat Market

Historically, it would, we imagine, be correct to call man the master of the planet, not in virtue of any prehistoric divine decree, but thanks to the biological fact that, in the struggle for existence, man has proved to be more intelligent than the physically stronger animals, and stronger than then more highly organised ones, such as ants and bees? As a result, mankind has emerged the victor, he is monarch of all he surveys, with no foe to fear except his own, at present, strongly marked suicidal tendencies! Certainly he has nothing to fear from sheep and oxen! They, contrarily, have everything to fear from him! One cannot now survey the complex ethical problems which will arise if man is freed from the religious myopia which has so long distorted his view of the evolutionary process. On the essential barbarity of blood sports—killing animals for pleasure—we assume all Freethinkers are agreed; other problems are more complicated. But whatever one's views may be on meat-eating as, perhaps, a necessary evil in the current phase of human evolution, I think we must all agree that, when the habit becomes unnecessary, this will constitute a notable advance in human ethical evolution. Smithfield, and all that it stands for, will then have become as obsolete as its inscription from Genesis.

## Science Front

### Recent Developments

By G. H. TAYLOR

#### Atomic Fall-out

Although ionising radiation has been part of our planet's behaviour ever since it was formed, bringing with it certain dangers to life, the *recent* behaviour of man has added to the dangers, and probably seriously. Atomic explosions, nuclear reactors, the use of X-rays and quite a variety of minor instruments and apparently innocent gadgets are being blamed for a large share in the rise in the incidence of the form of blood cancer known as leukaemia, while radio-strontium (Sr90) is alone responsible (according to Prof. C. H. Waddington of Edinburgh) for an expected serious rise in bone cancer. With regard to strontium 90, its effects on sheep in Wales in several districts which have recently been under intense study, form the subject matter of a special pamphlet based on the reports of Prof. Glyn Phillips of University College, Cardiff, which I intend reviewing in these columns soon.

In Britain in 1920 the death rate from leukaemia was 11 per million, and in 1954 it was 49. Many Japs who were exposed to the implosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki died of the disease anything up to ten years later. The number cannot be taken against the background of the total casualties, of course, for those in the immediate vicinity of the fire ball were vapourised at once without a trace.

Prof. Rotblat in the *New Scientist* has distinguished three sorts of fall-out: (a) Local, soon after the explosion; (b) tropospheric, coming down after a stay of a month or so in the troposphere; (c) stratospheric, coming from fragments taken up into the stratosphere and then gradually deposited over many years all over the globe.

It has been found that clams are expert trappers of radio-activity owing to the vast amount of water that passes through them. (Even a small one filters over 100 gallons a week.) The U.S. Navy Research laboratory found that after nuclear tests in the Pacific, clams were 2,000 times more radio-active than the water in their environment.

### Organic Chemistry

Knowledge about the origin and mechanical equipment of living matter is proceeding apace with researches on viruses, phages, bacterial capsules and other low forms in the "No-Man's-Land" between living and non-living matter. Chemists and biochemists are studying the arrangements of atoms and atom-groups in specially organised molecules of sugars and nitrogenous compounds, followed by higher-level grouping of these molecules into patterns which can reproduce themselves.

#### Hypnotism

It has long been supposed that a hypnotised subject can only be made to perform things which he would be prepared to do in full waking consciousness, and will not do anything morally repugnant to him. Prof. H. J. Eysenck (London) in his *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology* throws doubt on this and details experiments which strongly suggest it may not always be true. This would appear to be good news for brain-washers. Incidentally, the phenomenon of brain washing is now receiving some systematic scientific study.

## Lourdes Again

By DR. J. V. DUHIG

LAST YEAR I wrote an article on the Lourdes swindle, in which I said that the "miraculous" water came from the Gave de Pau, the river which runs through the town, and that the Catholic Church had admitted as much. My main authority was a despatch from Lourdes to *Paris-Match*, the well-known Paris weekly magazine, the date and text of which I could not, at the time, recall. After a search, I have unearthed the cutting. It was published in *Paris-Match*, No. 218, May 23rd-30th, 1953, under the rubric *Télégrammes*, a regular weekly two-page feature.

For the benefit of my French readers, especially Dr. Guy Valot, who ridiculed my suggestion, and said that the water came from an underground spring in or near the grotto, I reproduce the French text as published.

*"Inquiétude à Lourdes: Electricité de France veut capter les eaux du gave de Pau entre Saint-Pierre, Lourdes et Saint-Pé.*

*"Si ce projet était réalisé, les piscines où se plongent les fidèles venus chercher la guérison miraculeuse risqueraient d'être tarées.*

*"De nombreux élus de la région ont pris position contre le projet. Mgr. Gerlier, primat des Gaules, sur appel de Mgr. Théas, évêque de Lourdes, est intervenu auprès des autorités civiles et de l'E.D.F."*

For the benefit of English readers, including Mr. Crowley, who, in a quasi-judicial article, found my case non-proven, I give a translation which, being literal, has no pretence to literary elegance.

Translation.—"Anxiety at Lourdes: E.D.F. wishes to impound the waters of the Gave de Pau between St. Pierre, Lourdes and St. Pé. If this project is realised, the pools in which are plunged the faithful come to search for the miraculous cure risk being dried up.

"Numerous elected persons (politicians) have taken up a position against the project. Mgr. (Cardinal) Gerlier, Primate of the Gauls, on an appeal from Mgr. Théas, Bishop of (Tarbes and) Lourdes, has intervened with the civil authorities and with E.D.F."

Quite clearly, the "miraculous" water comes from the river, as I originally said, and the intervention of Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons and Bishop Théas is an admission of the fact by the highest national Catholic authorities.



# A Young Atheist and her Critics

By COLIN McCALL

EARLY IN DECEMBER 1958, a young lady, Miss Peta Riley, wrote in the *Newcastle Journal* saying that she had ceased to believe in Christianity and had become an Atheist. And, in the words of the *Journal*, "she certainly started something." The letter bag, it seems, was overcrowded, and the paper asked the Rev. John Prophet, Vicar of St. James and St. Basil, Fenham, Newcastle, to reply to Miss Riley. But before dealing with Mr. Prophet, let us take a look at the ideas of the *Journal* readers.

Among the silliest was one from C. R. Morrissey, who thought that humanism had been "totally discredited by two world wars within twenty-five years," and held humanism responsible for Hiroshima and Hungary. He didn't say why, but, confessing that he failed to see the logic of Miss Riley's argument, he explained to her that "reality of faith," "certainty that Christianity is right" are "not inevitable corollaries of either baptism or confirmation." They are, wrote Mr. Morrissey, "the products of a life prayerfully dedicated to God." Mr. Morrissey, by the by, has as yet only been able 'prayerfully' to dedicate 19 years to God, even assuming he started in the cradle, so perhaps we can overlook his limitations.

Miss B. R. Hutton may also be young, but she has "discovered" that it is the "truth" about Jesus Christ that counts, not the "truth" about religion. And she urged Miss Riley to go direct to the words of Jesus: "Ask and it shall be given you," etc. "Jesus Christ wants our faith and obedience," Miss Hutton told Miss Riley authoritatively, "and then we receive understanding." But don't expect to understand first; you are sure to be disappointed. Your mind must be "prepared to believe and obey. . . ." Miss Hutton shares this idea with the Roman Catholic Church, which now wants the country to pay 75% of the costs of schools established for this very purpose. And she believes that many mentally and physically mature people are "spiritually stunted." I don't profess to know what she means, but offhand I can't think of a better description of mental stunting than "a mind prepared to believe and obey."

A—presumably mature—man, Mr. J. C. T. Robinson, adopted a patronising tone towards Miss Riley. She was in her early twenties, "young people of that age frequently rebel," and this is "not an unhealthy sign." But "as we get older we realise the more we learn the less we know, and that the control of the universe is in hands other than ours." He failed to explain how, with his decreasing knowledge over the years, he had discovered the presence of the Almighty Controller. Mr. R. Hall rather rudely advised Miss Riley to "have another good think." Mr. G. L. Langley found her confused. Her big "mistake," he said, was in not realising that we, "as individual human beings," are the "cause of the horrors in the world." Yes, it's as simple as that! We are "one and all causing and perpetuating the pain afflicting the mind and body of mankind." I don't know whether we can excuse Mr. Langley, as we did Mr. Morrissey, on grounds of youth. He didn't give his age.

What a relief to turn to a letter from a Freethinker, Mr. W. Walker, of Gateshead, who shared Miss Riley's inability "to reconcile the hideous suffering from natural catastrophes with a God of love," and who earned the bold headline that "Supernatural belief is 'proved myth, superstition.'" And Mr. R. C. Proctor, though he believed in a God, found Miss Riley's article "refreshing." "We have a great deal to thank the unbelievers for," he said, and he urged the press to give more space to their views.

But it is now time for us to turn to the views of the Rev. John Prophet. Not that they deserve any special consideration, on logical grounds, from those of the Christian correspondents I have quoted. But he is a professional, and in religion, unlike cricket, professionals take precedence over amateurs. And at least he started off on a note of modesty. He didn't presume to think he would convince Miss Riley that she was wrong. It was because he thought it "tragic" that any man or woman should lose faith in God that he was writing. And being a professional clergyman, Mr. Prophet is rather more experienced in the ignoble art of innuendo. His shadow boxing must indeed be admired but, like all such displays, it fails to land a blow, let alone a knockout.

During Miss Riley's period of doubt, "Did she go on praying, ever more earnestly for guidance?" he asks. Or "Did she invite scepticism? Did she secretly wish to become an atheist?" It seems to him that she had "fixed her mind on unbelief rather than belief at the very outset." Well, supposing she had; supposing Miss Riley—in the Vicar's silly words—did "secretly wish to become an atheist," what about it? Her arguments still need answering. But what answer can you expect from a parson who regards atheism as wish-fulfilment? A very inadequate one, at best, I suppose. In fact, we don't get any at all!

Mr. Prophet proceeds with his imaginary questioning. Who hasn't shared some of Miss Riley's doubts? "Do we ever stop to think that in God's sight our unbelief is our greatest loss. . . ." and so on. The nearest he gets to making contact is on the problem of evil. And at least he is honest enough to admit that he cannot see why God allows tragedies to happen. A good deal less assertive than Mr. Langley, it will be noted. Mr. Prophet tells us, however, that his inability to see why God permits suffering, doesn't make him "turn from God and say, 'I'll be an atheist.'" Now, this shows a complete lack of understanding, not only of religious belief and disbelief, but of human psychology. It is treating a developed mental attitude as the equivalent of that of a petulant schoolboy who refuses to eat his dinner after a tiff with his mother.

All Mr. Prophet can offer in answer to the question, why does God allow suffering? is that we should remember, "God never promised immunity from trouble as a result of serving Him." And, "He suffered." The parson thinks this recollection is "wise and helpful." I find it neither. Apart from the gratuitous assumption of the truth of what is in dispute (the religious beliefs of Christians), it should be mentioned that neither the absence of a divine promise of immunity from trouble, nor divine suffering itself, in any way affects the argument. "God never promised immunity," and "He suffered," are not answers to the question, why does God allow suffering?

Mr. Prophet ends with a statement of his belief that, if Miss Riley "tried faithfully to learn of Him [Christ] rather than be content with stories about Him, she would eventually be drawn by the perfect stature that is His, and that would restore her faith in God." It is idle to point out to Mr. Prophet that he knows nothing about Jesus that is not derived from "stories," in the Gospels or the many imaginative "lives." He may, of course, think he has had mystical experience of his Saviour. It would be equally futile to refer him to psychological explanations of mysticism, in view of the lack of acquaintance with elementary psychology indicated above. Mr. Prophet is (I cannot refrain any longer!) a dead loss.



## This Believing World

What a pity it is that an excellent actor like Mr. Alec Guinness (who fully deserves his popularity), just because he has been converted to Roman Catholicism, has to write nonsense about Atheism, a subject he knows nothing whatever about. In *The Observer* he describes his part in the late Joyce Carey's film, "The Horse's Mouth." He plays a drunken reprobate of an artist who is, we are assured, "an atheist"—but, continues Mr. Guinness, "like all good atheists, Gully (the artist) is a God-fearing man. . . ." Why do Catholic converts so often picture "atheists" as "God-fearing" men? Has Mr. Guinness ever met an Atheist who was "God-fearing"? Does he know what he is talking about?

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The only people in the world who are really "true" Christians—they say so themselves—are Jehovah's Witnesses, so it is really astonishing to learn the reactions of those who have not embraced that Divine creed. For example, a well-known tenor sax player, Don Rendell, and his wife were converted to the Witnesses' creed and baptised; and to Mr. Rendell's astonishment, he told a reporter the other day, "People think we are crackers." This is truly painful, and we are wondering what the head of Christianity in England, Dr. Fisher, thinks of this secular judgment? Are the members of the only genuine Christian sect in the world really and truly "crackers"?

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There is no doubt that both Islam and Buddhism are gaining converts from disgruntled Christians, but exactly why we are by no means certain. Christianity and Islam are Oriental religions, while Buddhism is Asiatic. All three are packed with utter absurdities in which grovelling takes a prominent part. In his survey of Buddhism in a Sunday paper, Mr. Bernard Harris gives a photo of a Buddhist man and woman who look scared to death, and, with hands clasped, seem to be imploring Buddha to save or intervene for them. Buddhists claim that they do not believe in a "personal" God, but they certainly believe in an "after life through rebirth," a concept as silly as the Christian one of "Eternal Life" in Christ Jesus.

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Believers in Islam must accept a God called Allah who resides "up there," and the "prophet" Muhammad as his "servant or messenger." They have also to hit the ground with their heads at the many calls to prayer every day, which is in reality a little more grovelling than when a Christian kisses a cardinal's ring. Although the Islamic converts are always proving how superior Islam is to Christianity, it is most difficult to get a reply from them when asked why are Muslims still the most inveterate slavers in the world, as they always were in the past? Slavery was ever an Islamic institution.

★

As all Christians are obliged to believe in "immortality" (of a sort) they cannot utterly deny the Spiritualist claims of contacting dead people through a medium. All the same, many Christians, like Mr. Hole, of the Society of SS. Peter and Paul, in his book, *Spiritualism in Relation to Science and Religion*, thinks that the "Communicators" are very probably "non-human beings," which is quite true if they are actually "spooks." And he insists that, against the Roman Catholic claim, "spooks" are not really "diabolical"—whatever that means. This is bound to be good news, however, for those Christian Spiritualists who don't like to think that their own particular spooks are from the Devil whose veritable existence they

are forced to recognise. These distinctions are all so divinely beautiful!

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Through the skilful questioning of Robin Day, of ITV, the other Sunday, the Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr. Heenan, gave a delightful exposition of Roman Catholic theology. His Church came from God, and as such all its pronouncements must be incontestably right. There was, for example, no more difficulty in believing in the "Assumption" of Mary into Heaven than the bodily Ascension of "our Lord," which was, of course, accepted by all Christians. And so with many other dogmas of the Church—all of them rested on the authority of God Almighty. No doubt now, even ITV must have come from God for allowing humble Dr. Heenan such a magnificent opportunity to publicise his Church.

## U.S. Christian Science Case

JOSEPH LEWIS, Secretary of the Freethinkers of America and Editor of *The Age of Reason*, has campaigned for many years to have faith healing declared an illegal practice of medicine. Three years ago he brought a criminal action against Jack Coe, a faith healer, of Texas, who persuaded the mother of a three-year-old polio victim to remove the child's braces, with the result that the child collapsed and had to go to hospital.

Now Mr. Lewis has offered to supply legal aid to Edward Whitney, 58, who shot a Christian Science practitioner, William F. Rupert, in Chicago. Whitney told the Chicago police that Rupert "killed my daughter" by persuading the family to stop giving her insulin injections. She was 11 years old, and died in 1937.

Here is Mr. Lewis's statement to the press:

Deplorable as we consider all acts of violence, we nevertheless feel it our duty to offer legal assistance to Edward Whitney for his felonious attack upon a Christian Science practitioner. Under the stress of having lost a daughter because of the ill advice of this practitioner, he was obsessed with the primitive impulse of revenge.

It is not easy to forgive one who is responsible for the death of a child. This irreparable loss preyed upon the mind of Edward Whitney. This case far transcends that of one angry man seeking revenge for a great wrong. Its fundamental premise is whether anyone masquerading under the cloak of religion can practise medicine without a licence to the detriment of the community. This Christian Science practitioner had absolutely no right to give medical advice. He is not qualified. When he advised Edward Whitney to discontinue the treatment of insulin for the child suffering from diabetes, he was prescribing medicine in violation of the Medical Practice Act, and should be punished for this gross violation of the law.

An adult may do as he pleases with his life provided he does not injure another, but a child is the charge of the State in the matter of disease. Only recently, in the City of Philadelphia, parents were arrested, charged with involuntary manslaughter for refusing to follow the advice of the physician who had prescribed insulin for a diabetic child. The parents, Christian Scientists, followed the advice of their religious practitioner—the child died.

Another recent case was the forcible taking of a child suffering from tuberculosis, from its parents and put into a local hospital for treatment, by the health authorities. These parents were also fanatical Christian Scientists. These cases are becoming too numerous to be ignored by the proper legal authorities.

How long must the people of the United States—in this year of great scientific progress, permit fanatical religionists to cause untold suffering and even death upon innocent victims and, at the same time, imperil the health of the community?

The Christian Science practitioners are no different from the Jack Coe and Oral Roberts type of Fake Healers.

We stand ready to have the Courts determine the legality of practising medicine by utterly incompetent and unqualified people under the guise of religion.

JOSEPH LEWIS, Secretary, Freethinkers of America.



# 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

WM. SHANNON.—Ballymena: So glad Mr. Shannon liked my story of the Orangeman. Sorry I misspelt the name.—N.F.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.
- London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.
- London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and 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.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, February 22nd, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
- Central London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, February 22nd, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, "Christianity and Social Progress."
- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 24th, 7.15 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, M.A., "Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*."
- Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, February 22nd, 3 p.m.: G. STONE (Editor, *Socialist Leader*), "Politicians, Playboys and the Press."
- Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 22nd, 6.30 p.m.: C. SHUTTLEWOOD (Secretary, Leicester Astronomical Society), "The Sun."
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (N.C.S. Public Relations Hall, Broad Street).—Sunday, February 22nd, 2.30 p.m.: C. ROBERTSON, "America: A Welfare State?"
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, February 22nd, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Moral Man and Immoral Government."
- Study Circle.—Friday, February 20th, at 7.30 p.m., N.S.S. Office, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.: "Religion's Mark on History," a course of six talks by F. A. RIDLEY, with full discussion. Fifth: "Some Modern Religions." Fee 1/- per meeting. Non-members invited.

## Notes and News

Any publicity is good publicity, they say, and this applies to the National Secular Society as well as film stars. It so happens that film stars Heather Sears and Aldo Ray shared the publicity with the N.S.S. in Leslie Mallory's "Show-piece" column in the *News Chronicle* on January 27th. It seems the two stars were throwing boomerangs on Hampstead Heath, and Mr. Mallory set the scene: "Beside the pond on Hampstead Heath, the speaker from the National Secular Society had set up a brave little strongpoint of

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £108 15s. 6d.; C.E.R., 5s.; J. Donnelly, 2s. 6d.; M. Byrn, 10s. 6d.; C. J. Cleary, 5s.; Leicester Secular Society, £5; J. Barlow, 10s.; Slough Humanist, 11s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.—Total to date, February 13th, 1959, £116 2s.

rationalism, which consisted of a folding step-ladder and a strident green banner saying: 'Religion—or Reason?' " One of Mr. Ray's boomerangs then whirled over the meeting, fell on the road and was run over by a car and broken. The National Secular Society—says Mr. Mallory—"relieved to learn that another world wasn't watching it after all, cast stony looks at Mr. Ray and returned to its agenda." Well, considering that Mr. and Mrs. Len Ebury, of the North London Branch N.S.S., held meetings at Hampstead when V1s and V2s were falling on London, a few boomerangs are neither her nor there, even when thrown by the brutal sergeant of the film, *The Naked and the Dead*.

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"PEOPLE of the West Country for Disarmament and International Co-operation" is the rather long name of a new movement whose aims are "simply to do our utmost to promote World Peace, and the banning of all weapons, both nuclear and conventional." It is open to people of all political and religious beliefs, and Mrs. Kathleen Tacchi-Morris, of Longs, North Curry, Taunton, who sends us details, will be pleased to do the same for anybody in the West Country who is interested. Mrs. Tacchi-Morris also says she will be in London on Friday, February 27th, and intends to take a party to the Players Theatre, Villiers Street, where Victorian-style Music Hall is being presented. Anyone wishing to join the party should write to Mrs. Tacchi-Morris. Seats are 7s. 6d., and it is hoped to have supper à la carte in the theatre afterwards.

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NON-CATHOLIC Londoners who wish to know something about the Church of Rome can do so—through the help of the Legion of Mary—at the convent of the Holy Child Jesus, W.1, on Wednesday evenings, and at The Grail, S.W.1, on Friday evenings. Everything will be informal, priests will welcome questions, and in each case, tea and biscuits will be provided free. If you want to hear about that very special biscuit which glories in the name of the Blessed Sacrament, the respective dates are February 18th and 25th at the Convent; March 6th and 13th at The Grail. On the other hand, if you really want to learn about the Roman Catholic Church, we suggest you attend Mr. F. A. Ridley's talks on Friday evenings at the National Secular Society head office. No biscuits, we're afraid, consecrated or otherwise, but plenty of food for thought.

★

WILL National Secular Society members please note that all motions and nominations for the Annual Conference must be in the General Secretary's hands by Monday, February 23rd.

**NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY**  
**53<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL DINNER**  
**SATURDAY, 28th MARCH, 1959**  
 (Day after Good Friday)

ALL  
**WELCOME** at the **PAVIOURS ARMS**  
 PAGE STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1  
 RECEPTION 6.0 P.M. DINNER 6.30 P.M.  
*Vegetarians catered for Evening Dress Optional*

*Guest of Honour:* **C. BRADLAUGH BONNER**  
 (President, World Union of Freethinkers)

TICKETS 21/- each from the Sec., 41 Gray's Inn Rd., W.C.1



# The Increasing World Populations

By G. F. BOND

"It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishment the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul."

THUS, OF COURSE, wrote the poet W. E. Henley, 60 years ago. At any rate, given a sufficiently secular slant, there is much encouragement in the thought that Man, and not some moody God, is truly the master of his fate. Especially, in modern times, when medical and general science seems to be giving a tremendous fillip to the rapidly increasing populations of what have, hitherto, been regarded as "backward" parts of the world and where, in the past, the ravages of the mythical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, War, Death, Famine and Disease, have been expected to "do their stuff" and keep the world safe for "white" civilisation. Indeed, experts at United Nations Headquarters, and others, predict that the world population will most likely treble during the course of the next hundred years. All of which has had the effect of resuscitating the Malthusian "bogey".

Thomas Robert Malthus, a Church of England parson, published his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population, etc.*, in 1798, and his theory that the rate of increase in the world population would always have a tendency to far overtake the rate of increase in food production has influenced a number of eminent thinkers. In fact, it inspired Herbert Spencer to originate the phrases "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest". Both of which, in their turn, helped Charles Darwin to formulate his theory of "natural selection". Incidentally, Malthus also inspired Francis Place's pioneer work in the field of birth control and, in Francis Galton, the idea that human "breeding" could be improved by *Eugenics*. (In this connection one should mention Charles Knowlton, the publication of whose famous pamphlet on birth control by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant led to their prosecution and eventual acquittal by the High Court in 1877.) Most of these people either disagreed outright with the horrible Malthusian predictions or, in so far as they conceded some measure of validity, they applied their minds assiduously to discovering ways and means for the human race to avoid the horrid prescriptions of, be it noted, a man specially trained in the understanding of the inscrutable and all-merciful mind of God, the one who had created these probabilities, indeed, nightmarish actualities. Needless to say, Malthus was bitterly denounced by Karl Marx and others for his stupidity and pessimism and, especially, on the grounds that his theory seemed to underline the Christian dictum, "The poor you have always with you", and, consequently, encouraged and countenanced the continued misery of the considerable pauper section of Britain's XIXth Century population: the "Lazarus layers" as Marx described them. It need scarcely be mentioned that the facts of history have, so far as European civilisation is concerned, completely invalidated Malthus. Indeed, the only proviso to that statement needs to be made to a relative extent with regard to the Roman Catholic countries such as Ireland and Spain: in both of which the well-known proscription against birth control of the "Holy Mother" Church, has the effect of increasing their populations whilst, at the same time, the same baleful influence is largely instrumental in retarding political and scientific, and hence, economic, advancement.

Had the human race been found by Malthus in a con-

dition approximating to that of rabbits (rock rabbits?), which are notoriously prolific breeders and voracious eaters living, perhaps on some fanciful island, or continent such as Australia—but *without* the presence of human beings who would, on the one hand, have continually increased the growth of grass, wheat and other vegetables, and who would, on the other hand, have made continual efforts to exterminate their unwanted guests—then, and only in such circumstances, could the Malthusian theory have had any serious validity. But human beings are by no means as brainless as rabbits, and they have many other advantages. In particular, each one of us has the use of a *pair of hands* that can be adapted to many skilful purposes. So that, given a reasonable awareness of the dangers that might accrue from an *unreasonable* increase of population, combined with an *unreasonable* failure to maintain the scientific advancement of agricultural and industrial production, the Malthusian prophecy is virtually impossible of fulfilment.

Nor, in modern times, has there ever been any serious apprehension that the world's scientists would be likely to fail in maintaining the necessary rate of advance, unless some, actually *worse*, catastrophe, such as an all-out Rocket-and-H Bomb War were to produce intolerable conditions. But, in such a case, Man's miseries could scarcely be attributed to problems of *over-population*? Furthermore, it is scientifically well established that, given proper husbandry, there are ample raw material resources for our requirements for as far forward as it is reasonable to make predictions of the relative trends: i.e., of the growth of population vis-a-vis the necessary scientific advancement to avoid the threat of famine, or, indeed any other sort of material insufficiency.

A leading world authority on such topics is, of course, Josué de Castro, whose book was reviewed and discussed in the columns of THE FREETHINKER several years ago (1952/53). More recently, Professor J. D. Bernal's *World Without War* (Routledge & Kegan Paul) is the latest work dealing with every aspect of the subject having, however, its main emphasis on the need to avert *war*, and, concomitantly, on the increasing need for *world co-operation* in economic matters—which latter condition implies a greater need for the individual nations to control their internal economies on a national basis.

In conclusion, to argue that over-population is an inexorable threat to the future happiness of mankind would be tantamount to insisting that diseases such as smallpox or malaria would always have been a source of serious affliction—when, in point of fact, we know that these and many other diseases can be prevented, controlled or cured. But two prescriptions are essential prerequisites for human comfort and happiness: firstly, Mankind has to be aware of its danger, from whatever source it may come, secondly, it is bound to exert every ounce of its collective will-power, skill and courage to avoid it. Thus doth Man become the Master of his fate. So and not otherwise.

—NEXT WEEK—

PEOPLE OF NO CONVICTION

By G. I. BENNETT



# Faith and Fraud

By ARTHUR G. CROMWELL  
(The American Freethought author)

I HAVE BEFORE ME *The Works of Flavius Josephus, Containing The Antiquities of The Jews*. In Book XVII, Chapter III, this Jewish historian is telling about the various public improvements that Pilate was about to undertake to improve the water supply for Judea. The Jews opposed this proposed project on the grounds that they would be taxed beyond their ability to pay. In the very middle of this story was interpolated, about 500 years after Josephus was dead and gone, a paragraph, which, by the way, is the main so-called "historical" reference to Jesus in a secular history, and this by a forged interpolation by someone of the early Catholic (or Christian) Church.

Let me present this paragraph and then see if even this faked interpolation gives the Christian Church of today, or any accredited historian, much comfort in developing the historicity of this fabled character. I quote: "Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal amongst us, had condemned him to the cross\*, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day†—as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct to this day."

Please note that the asterisk and the cross indicate in the footnotes \*A.D. 33, April 3rd, and †April 5th.

Note that this is the most the Christian Church can claim as "contemporary" evidence or reference to Jesus.

Note also that nowhere in the N.T. does it tell anything about the water works Pilate wanted to install in Judea, and by the same token, nowhere else in all the mighty opus of Josephus's historical works is any other mention made of any of the characters or incidents told of in the N.T. Not one word about any immaculate birth, not one word about what his wonderful works actually were, not one word about his disciples, his death by crucifixion, or his resurrection, or his bodily ascension into the stratosphere. Do you think for a moment that any responsible historian ever has, or ever will accept such trash as "Historical Evidence"?

Jesus' alleged birthplace is likewise unknown. Luke says—or implies—that he was born in Nazareth in a cow stable. Matthew says he was born in Bethlehem in a house. Matthew says that it was the "Holy Ghost" that sired Jesus. Luke says it was the angel Gabriel, and both give genealogies to prove that Joseph, the lawful husband of Mary, was the father of Jesus because both Joseph and Jesus came direct from the House of David. So, even N.T. history is most unreliable, for what is said in one book by one unknown writer is contradicted in another book by some other unknown writer. And it is no use for the believer to tell us that Jesus was born 1,959 years ago. We know the calendar is not founded upon the birth of Jesus, or is it dated from his supposed birthday. Our calendar was founded by Julius Caesar, and B.C. was intended to mean Before Caesar, and A.D., After the Ruler. This was corrupted by Pope Gregory XIII, in 1582, and changed from a Caesarian calendar into what we now know as the "Gregorian" Calendar. From this you will see that as far

as the actual birthday of Jesus was concerned in the establishing of our present calendar, no relationship whatsoever is in the evidence, except that Gregory changed the B.C. to read "Before Christ," and the A.D. to mean "Anno Domini"—after our Lord. Not a single day of the week, or even one of the months, is named from Christian origin, but rather, all are Pagan names, many of them in honour of the Roman Gods of Caesar's day. And, if you should argue that "Domini" means "Lord," I would advise you to look up the origin and meaning of "Lord" and you will find that it was, and yet is, a political title, and thieved by the unknown writers of both the Old and New Testaments to imply a religious or some ethereal being. The name Christian did not come into being till long after Josephus was dead and gone.

Now the interpolater does not say that Jesus was actually crucified, or that he actually died; it only says that he was "condemned to the cross" and that "he appeared to them alive again."

Josephus is supposed to have said: "Those that loved him first did not forsake him." Well, if you argue that this unknown interpolater was only intending to refer to his mother Mary and the harlot Mary, then perhaps this much could be taken literally. But we do know, from the story as told in the four Gospels, that one of his disciples denied him, another betrayed him, and all of them deserted him. The record of his life and ministry after his supposed resurrection is most incomplete, one place indicating that he only remained on earth three days and another forty days. Take your pick and pay the cashier—or the ever-present collection plate.

To refer to the stories in the N.T. as being "historical" is about as logical and accurate as claiming the tales of Shakespeare as being historical.

The Christian religion, like most of the other religions preceding it, is but a conglomeration of some of the older religions and rebuilt on a foundation of lies, forgeries, fraud and deceit.

## Secularism in Trinidad

THE GENERAL SECRETARY of the National Secular Society has received the following report from the San Juan (Trinidad) Branch of the Society.

Dear Mr. McCall,—

Again it is my pleasant duty to send you the report of the Trinidad No. 2 Branch of the National Secular Society.

This year has been a very progressive one for us, and we had some very interesting talks from members who some months ago found themselves unable to express their views in readily understood language. We are, of course, encouraged by the unshakable conviction of Mr. S. Gustavus Stephen, our President, that Secularism must replace Jesus as the sole saviour of humanity and release us from the shackles of the supernatural. It was gratifying to hear members speak on such subjects as psychology, geology, anthropology, astronomy, determinism, etc.; hearing, for example, Mr. F. Corbie speaking on the origin of the earth. And I surprised myself explaining to members the soundness of astronomy as compared to the biblical drama of creation in six acts. Mr. S. Naidoo was instructive on sane sex instruction, as compared to the obscene sex stories



in the old Testament. Mr. I. Williams was splendid on the child mind of the bible God. And I can go like that for most of our members who just a couple of years ago were Godists.

Mr. Stephen goes every month-end to give talks at Fyzabad to members there. Members of our Branch and the Fyzabad members had a nice time in a get-together at one of our beautiful beaches (Saliabay) three months ago. And we read all the articles in THE FREETHINKER and benefit much from them.

The only sad note was the death of one of our members, Rambally Dass. We were preparing for a secular funeral but his relatives thought otherwise, and the secular funeral was abandoned.

Attached is a financial report, and we agreed to send you 21s. to help defray in some small way the Society's postal expenses.

Again thanking you, sir, for the great benefit we have received as members of the National Secular Society with its high motives and intellectual approach to dismantle the bulwark of superstition, and the determination of our members to be with you always in the great struggle against the ambassadors of the great supernatural majesty.

Yours for the onward march of Secularism, sweeping away the clouds of obscurantism throughout 1959.

JAMES BIRBAL, Secretary.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### R. G. INGERSOLL

Dr. Vitali Negri's reference to the late R. G. Ingersoll calls for a brief comment. As a matter of fact, eight days before his death, Ingersoll wrote to C. J. Robins, of Dayton, Ohio, affirming his atheism in the following terms: "I still believe all religions are based on falsehoods and mistakes. I still deny the existence of the supernatural." In his last poem, written on February 2nd, 1899, he wrote:

"We have no God to serve or fear,  
No Hell to shun,  
No Devil with malicious leer,  
When life is done."

R. G. FORSTER.

### PAPAL INFALLIBILITY

It is claimed that the Roman Catholic Church was built on "the Rock" of Peter, but the real fact is that the Church was built on the Rock of Peter's Confession. 1st Corinthians 10:4 double checks the fact that Christ is the Rock. The Eastern Churches agree on this point as recorded in their Letter rejecting the Infallible claim. Moreover, what Roman Catholics overlook is that what was said to Peter in Matthew 10-19 was similarly said to all the Apostles in Matthew 28:18 and John 20:23. This was pointed out by the Early Fathers. Cyprian speaks for them all (Cypr. de Unit Eccl.). Cardinal Cusanus agreed with the Early Fathers in this view (Card. Cus. de Conc. Cath. 11-13). Acts, Chapter 8, shows Peter being sent to preach by the other Apostles, and Galatians shows Paul rebuking Peter. So much for Rome's claim to Peter being supreme and the first Infallible Pope.

Now let us look at events in Papal history.

(a) We find in the early years that two Popes were described by "Rome" as heretics, namely, Liberius-Arian and Honorius-Monotholite. These views raised controversies and the Popes were cursed by their successors.

(b) Pius IX declared the Immaculate Conception as an Article of Faith. Innocent III disagreed, however: "Eve was produced without sin. Mary was produced *in* sin, but she brought forth without sin. (Sermo II, De Festo Assum Marice Colon 1552.) One infallible Pope is wrong.

(c) The case of Galileo is, of course, a challenge to Papal Infallibility.

(d) It is of interest to note that this dogma was never declared an Article of Faith at the Council of Trent or in the Creed of Pius IV (1564).

(e) The Assumption: In the fifth century there was an Apocryphal book on the subject called *The passing, that is to say, the Assumption of Mary*. This book was condemned in the decretals attributed to Pope Gelatius, 494 A.D. Another so-called Infallible Pope testified against the Assumption—Benedict XIV (De Fest. Assump. apud. Migne. Theol. Curs. Compl. tom. XXVI, page 144). Pius XII finally declared this Dogma, which is contrary to the Scriptures, John 3:13.

E. BROOKES.

### CANON SCRUTTON

In "This Believing World" (23/1/59) the writer asks whether the "soap-box orator," Canon Tom Scrutton, has ever met a Freethinker in debate. Indeed he has—three times. The first was the late R. H. Rosetti, and the second was Mr. Len Ebury, both at Kingston-upon-Thames Market Place, before large audiences; the third was Mr. J. W. Barker, indoors.

After the debate with Mr. Ebury, posters appeared announcing that Canon Scrutton would reply to the Atheists—in his church the following Sunday! In the debate with Mr. Barker, the latter quoted a passage from the Gospels and the Canon denied that it was there. Being offered Mr. Barker's Bible to prove the passage's existence, the Canon refused to take it and asked for adjournment of the meeting to go home and get his own Bible (he must have thought that Mr. Barker's was home-produced!). And, of course, the passage turned out to be a "faulty translation," even in his own book.

Canon Scrutton has always appeared on the platform with a crucifix in his hand, although the cross has often been an instrument of torture. But Canon Scrutton's cross has a special claim to fame. Had it not been for that cross, it is doubtful if the Kingston Branch of the National Secular Society would have come into existence or Mr. Barker become a regular N.S.S. speaker. So the cross can be useful sometimes.

Incidentally, Canon Scrutton now speaks opposite Messrs. Ebury and Barker at Tower Hill each Thursday.

E. MILLS, Hon. Secretary, Kingston Branch, N.S.S.

### A REPLY?

The Latin translation of "Against Heresies" was quoted by Tertullian, which means that it was composed during the lifetime of Irenaeus' contemporaries. Mr. Cutner's observation (THE FREETHINKER, January 30th) that its date is "quite unknown" is therefore wide of the mark.

The numerous and frequent allusions to the Crucifixion which occur throughout the work are perfectly integrated with the text, and there is no reason to believe that they are not genuine.

Finally, Mr. Cutner would have us believe that the translator (who, he says, was horrified by the passage describing Jesus dying "as an old man") preferred the labour of making numerous additions and alterations to the simple expedient of omitting the passage from his translation!

May I assure Mr. Cutner that I am still finding it frightfully difficult to swallow that.

ROGER GROVES.

[Mr. Cutner writes: Mr. Groves has *not* replied to my article. I did not expect him to.—ED]

## N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 1959.—Present: Messrs. Ebury (Chair), Alexander, Barker, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Moore, Taylor, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Ridley, Arthur and Corstorphine. Mr. A. Samms was made a Life-Member of the Society in recognition of services. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow, North London, and Wales and Western Branches, which, with individual members, made seven in all.

Reports from San Juan and Kingston Branches were before the meeting. News was received from Portsmouth Branch of the death of the Society's oldest member, Mrs. Perrett. It was agreed to give full support to the Secular Education League, which was being re-formed; and three delegates (President, Treasurer and Secretary) were nominated for the new Humanist Council. Reports were given of Mr. Ridley's visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Mr. Alexander's visit to Cardiff and the Secretary's debate at Manchester University. N.C.C.L. Emergency Conference on Mental Health was reported by Messrs. Alexander and Gordon. Annual Conference details were given and nominations were made. It was agreed to approach the Humanist Council with a view to commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of Thomas Paine on June 8th. A visit to Thetford and a meeting were suggested. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, March 11th, 1959.

## THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT

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