

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IN THE YEAR OF GRACE 1878, William Booth, former Methodist minister and hot-gospeller, founded an ostensibly evangelical organisation of a type not hitherto known, and which adopted a title also so far unknown in the annals of Christianity—the Salvation Army. In religion, as in more mundane matters, the famous law of the survival of the fittest holds good, and despite the transcendental explanations which all religions offer in order to explain their own origins and continued existence, always has existed throughout recorded history. It represents, in fact, one of the most important functions of the currently evolving science of comparative religion to explain precisely why some religions achieve instantaneous or lasting success, whereas others, sometimes it would appear more deserving of such success, perish prematurely. In the case of the creation of the Reverend William Booth's own cult eighty-one years ago, in the slums and back alleys of Victorian England, the Salvation Army represented one of modern religion's outstanding successes and it offers, moreover, a case study of unusual interest to the percipient student of the often allied sciences of sociology and comparative religion. Like its even more famous predecessor and Catholic prototype, the Jesuit Order, the similarly militant and military—organisation of "General" Booth, the Salvation Army, quickly became an international force, almost, indeed, a world-wide power. Yet whilst this fact is indisputable, it may appear, at first sight at least, very surprising. For the Salvation Army consists mostly of very primitive human types. Apart from the first two "Generals," the Founder, William Booth, the "Army's" great demagogue, and his son and successor, the second "General," Bramwell Booth, the great organiser of the Army of Salvation, the mental calibre of the "Army's" leaders has not been—to put it mildly—conspicuously high, while about the mental level of its rank and file the less said the better. One would have to plumb the lowest level of the Bible-banging sects of the American Middle-West to find any adequate parallel. Yet, whilst the above facts are almost self-evident, no one can deny that the meteoric rise of the "Army" and its subsequent world-wide expansion, have constituted one of the most outstanding success stories of modern times. The "Army" can indeed claim the distinction of being perhaps the only form of insular English religion to have become a successful "export" to the continent of Europe. Salvation Army collectors can be seen at work every Sunday evening in German beer halls (despite the Army's repeated prohibition of alcohol) collecting, apparently very successfully, their hard-earned marks and pfennigs from the German workers, as no doubt of many other lands as well.

General Loyola and Booth
Students of the older Catholic "Salvation Army," the Company of Jesus, will be quick to note the many points of similarity between the creations of "General" William Booth and "General" Ignatius of Loyola in the remark-

able historical parallel between the two great organisers of, respectively, the Protestant "Army" and the Catholic Company, who were, in both cases, the second Generals, Bramwell Booth and Diego Lainez. In both cases the newly founded organisation achieved rapid and world-wide success by a judicious combination of military efficiency and a brazen demagoguery. One can, in fact, describe the Salvation Army with substantial accuracy, as the Protestant counterpart of the Company of Jesus. Incidentally, whilst this precise comparison has been made often enough by critical writers, it actually appears that the strong resemblance between the "Company" and the "Army" was not entirely fortuitous. I was once in-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Protestant "Company of Jesus"

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

formed by a student of the Salvation Army's evolution that "General" Bramwell Booth, the organising genius of the Booth dynasty, was a great admirer—in the organisational, if not the doctrinal sense—of Loyola's foundation and deliberately organised many details of the Protestant "Army" on the Jesuit model. Loyola himself had borrowed wholesale from the rival creed of Islam, as students of the Jesuits are well aware. Perhaps the virtually autocratic power of the Salvationist General is ultimately thus modelled on that of the Jesuit General? I learned recently from a Catholic periodical that Cardinal Manning, the great organiser of English Catholicism, admired the Salvation Army very much and actually went to visit its heretical headquarters.

Proletarian Christianity

As historical students know, the success of the Jesuits was due to causes to be found in the era and world of the Reformation. The causes for the rapid rise and expansion of the Army lay in an entirely different age and sphere; the Christianity of the Salvation Army is that of proletarian Christianity, or perhaps more accurately, since the term "proletariat" has now largely lost its pauper stigma, Christianity for down and outs, for what Karl Marx (as Mr. G. F. Bond has recently reminded us) described as the "Lazarus" or more generally as the "disinherited" layers of Victorian industrial society, its submerged tenth. The horrors of early industrialism are now common knowledge. Amongst its most prominent expressions was that of "darkest England," of pauperdom which embraced that then numerous section of absolute or virtual paupers, who frequented the grim workhouses and slums of that anti-social era of ruthless competitive economic struggle; the class described (at the turn of the century) by the American author, Jack London, as "the People of the Abyss." It was amongst this class of not at all genteel paupers that Booth and his early assistants worked. It was in and around the slums that the "Army" was born, and it was there that it made its recruits from the Victorian underworld. It is, perhaps, somewhat ironical to recall, particularly in view of its later startling commercial success, that the early Salvationists were often regarded as subversive socialist—then a name of dread—agitators, in which con-

nection even Engels once referred to the alleged fact that the Salvation Army "fought Capitalism in a religious way." However, if it did actually do so, it quickly learned to serve God *and* Mammon with equal zeal and success. Except perhaps for its younger contemporary, the equally crude American sect of Jehovah's Witnesses, no modern religious sect has been so successful in selling religion (including conspicuously that highly saleable, as well as inflammable substance, hell-fire) as have the soldiers of J. Christ and W. Booth.

The Survival of the Fittest

Why did this illiterate horde of ex-drunkards and gaol-birds acquire such speedy and world-wide publicity? The answer to this extremely interesting question can, or so I suggest, be easily found along sociological lines. The Protestant, like the early Catholic "Army," actually succeeded in meeting the immediate needs of its times; it gave its contemporaries what they—or, at least, a good many of them—wanted, in a word, the creation of William and Bramwell Booth was more fit (in the Darwinian sense) to survive than were its then numerous Protestant contemporaries and competitors. It found a new social class in "Darkest England," the numerous slum-dwellers and pub-crawlers of the era, to whom Christianity meant exactly

nothing, and it proceeded to convert—and to exploit them—to the greater glory of God and to the immense renown and profit of the Salvation Army Naturally, to achieve this remarkable feat, the Army had to get down to the primitive emotional and mental level of its illiterate clientèle, which it did very successfully on an international scale, since industrialisation produces similar features everywhere. In this last respect there is no comparison with the Jesuits, whose own clientèle has always been amongst the educated classes. In Victorian England Christianity was essentially a class religion. Anglicanism catered for the spiritual welfare of the gentry—God bless the squire, etc.—whilst the Nonconformist Churches looked after the middle class. The Founders of the Salvation Army found a class in Victorian society which had hitherto been beneath the notice of all the Christian Churches—that of the down and outs; they catered for it—and for themselves—by converting it. By peddling this brand of salvation in the next world to a class which had little hope for it in *this* one, General Booth eventually cornered what proved to be a highly profitable market. The Salvation Army had effectively achieved its own salvation—in this world, if not in the next.

News from Abroad

By DAVE SHIPPER

TURKEY

IT GRIEVES US TO REPORT that Turkey today is torn by grave internal dissent. For some months a heated discussion has raged over the question whether or not it is permissible for the Koran to be translated into Turkish and for Latin characters instead of the normal Arabic to be used.

In a recent press conference the Director of the Religious Department of the Prime Minister's office asserted that an adequate translation of the Koran could not be effected in any other language, the Arabic language possessing unique properties. Furthermore, its translation into Turkish would be likely to break the bonds of brotherhood that unite the Moslem world, as all Moslems should be able to read the Koran in Arabic—the language of Mohammed. Many religious personalities have given their opinion that a literary translation is unnecessary. What is needed is a literal translation for the unfortunates ignorant of Arabic.

Some of the student organisations have protested vigorously at the statement of the Director of the Religious Department, considering this in opposition to the progressive attitude of Kemal Ataturk.

Meanwhile, the Turkish Government has not yet given a definite opinion. It seems that the authorities in Ankara prefer to leave the dispute to be settled by philologists and theologians. As we can claim true impartiality in this matter, perhaps we could offer a word of advice to both sides? Whether the Koran is written in Arabic or Turkish, Swahili, Finnish or Esperanto, it will still be deadly dull reading.

BRAZIL

BRAZIL must be one of the few countries where organised Positivism still exists, and it was interesting to receive a report from the veteran Positivist leader, Venâncio de Figueiredo Neiva, of Rio de Janeiro. Writing in French, Señor Neiva expressed his interest at seeing a copy of THE FREETHINKER and the N.S.S. aims and objects, and thought members of the "Religion of Humanity" held similar views. It was obvious, he said, that the British freethought

movement was carrying out practical propaganda, not only against outdated superstition, but against the horrible menace of nuclear world war. He hoped we would continue to strive our utmost for international peace and universal brotherhood. The Brazilian Positivists feel that the most urgent reform necessary is the re-education of world opinion by basing education on "positive morals." If our political executives were not "moralised" diplomatic treaties would continue to be made only to be broken. Politics must be subordinated to morals and "obey the scientific laws of positive sociology, disdaining party and personal interests."

The Religion of Humanity, he says is grateful to preceding religions for "the social services rendered and for those they render in the common work of maintaining moral culture." Some may feel the Positivists are too kind! In Rio de Janeiro the Positivist Church was founded in 1881 and since then has opened each Sunday. Membership is comparatively small, but Señor Neiva believes a great number of Brazilians subscribe to Positivist principles. There is also a Positivist Club, which performed the function of the British-type "Open Forum" and may be regarded as a centre for all intellectuals and progressives. This has 110 members and owns a building, including two halls. There are also Temples of Humanity in Porto Alegre, Sao Paulo and other towns, and these hold a welcome for all religious nonconformists.

My correspondent knows of no freethought organisations in Brazil, but thinks the climate quite favourable for future organisation. In the meantime, it seems, individual freethinkers could well meet under the auspices of the Positivist movement.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE BEST ATTESTED EVENT IN HISTORY

By H. CUTNER

God's Chosen People

By DR. VITALI NEGRI

Both Christianity and Mohammedanism recognise the claim of the Jews as being God's "chosen people": the Christians because of their acceptance of the Old Testament and the fact that the "Son of God" was born a Jew; the Mohammedans primarily because they consider themselves descendants of Abraham through his son Ishmael, and regard Mohammed as the prophet sent by God to reinstate the true religion of Abraham through the writings of the Koran.

Both of these religions also curse the Jews: Christianity because the Jews denied and continue to deny the messiahship and divinity of Jesus of Nazareth whom they caused to be crucified, and Mohammedanism because the Jews refused to accept Mohammed as the Prophet, or the Koran as the Book of God.

The Jews likewise curse both the Christians and the Mohammedans whom they look upon as renegades, adulterers, pretenders, and impostors.

All of which brings us to the startling fact that although Christianity and Mohammedanism are rooted in Judaism and continue to revere the Old Testament which is the Bible of the Jews, the only other common denominator that each of the three religions fundamentally shares with the others is hate represented by mutual suspicion, distrust, animosity, and arrogance. Hatred, not love, is the policy of each toward the other, once the pretensions and outward courtesies are removed.

Christianity proclaims itself to be built upon love, yet its vicious intolerance of the Jews and of the rebelling factions within its own framework has been even more rabid than the driving fury of the Moslems against the Infidel, a category including both Jews and Christians.

Nor have the Christians and Mohammedans been the only enemies of God's "chosen people." The history of the Jews as recorded in their Bible, devotes more space to the sufferings and calamities which befall them in the centuries before the Christian era than it does to their glories and prosperity. Yet, despite their long-suffering, these are the people who have designated themselves, not as the defeated ones, but as the glorified ones, and whose sacred scriptures clearly define the conditions by which this favoured "high" estate may be maintained.

In Deuteronomy 7, beginning with verse 2, it is written: "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them [many nations] before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; neither shall thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son . . ."

"For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

Such is the promise and its conditions. A promise which, pleasant sounding as it may be to the ears of the Chosen Ones, is hardly inducive to building up enthusiasm, magnanimity, or affection in the hearts of non-Jews. Add to this the dietary rules which make it impossible for the orthodox Jew to eat of the same food, off the same dishes, or with the same utensils as does the non-Jew, and one begins to comprehend the deep cleavage by which Jews, through their religious doctrines, manage to separate themselves, socially and culturally, from the rest of humanity.

In the light of reason, any assertion which bases its claims upon supernaturalism, is, of course, delusional. The idea of a supernatural force or form called God originating the Bible, the Koran, or any other written work is

fallacious, irrational, and nonsensical. Men created The Word; men wrote the Bible. In fact, Jews wrote the Bible—for themselves. It was not intended to embrace humanity or save humanity. It was intended to solidify the Jewish tribes, preserve their histories, folklore and legends, inspire nationalism, and protect their heritage, as given to them by Moses and the Law, from any outside (non-Jewish) infiltration, be it biological, cultural, or religious.

When viewed by non-Jews, such highly discriminatory claims, practices, and attitudes were bound to arouse antagonism, jealousy, and hatred. From the destruction of their national home in Jerusalem by the armies of Titus, up to the present Arab antagonism, the Jews have been constantly maligned, stamped upon, and slaughtered. And of those who managed to escape death, whether in the pogroms of Russia, the inquisitions of Spain, or the concentration camps of Hitler's Europe, few have managed to escape the smaller persecutions which, lumped together, equal social and political ostracism in practically every nation into which they have set foot.

Such is the penalty which the world has exacted and forced upon them for setting themselves apart as a "chosen people," for practising Jewish isolationism in the midst of other cultures, and for clinging stubbornly to Jewish nationalism while living, rearing families, and being born in other countries under other flags.

All of Judaism's religious leaders, from Abraham to Moses and on through the various great Rabbis and teachers who have given the Jews their sacred writings and religious laws, have emphatically stressed this idea of being "special," apart from other people, of being a separate ethnological group, and of hating and destroying those who do not share their "specialness." Each of these leaders, in turn, has added his own share to the ever-increasing burden of malice and oppression which the Jewish people have borne.

One such leader arose in the twelfth century, simultaneously with the expulsion of the Jews from France and just before the historic persecutions in Spain. His name, too, was Moses—Moses Maimonides, known also as the Great Rambam.

Born at Cordova, a city taken by the Mohammedans when Maimonides was about 13 years old, this second famous Moses later became court physician at Cairo to Saladin, King of Egypt. At the age of 23 he began the compilation of a gigantic work which was to present a solution of every question touching the religious, moral or social duties of the Jews. He completed this work at the age of 33, in Egypt.

(To be continued)

TOO COCKSURE

No Christian speaker is more forcible, fluent and cocksure than that gallant Fundamentalist, Prof. John Foster; and on TV's "Meeting Point" on the Christian view of life recently, he could hardly restrain his enthusiasm as to the way Christianity changed lives and, particularly, abolished slavery. For once, his audience vigorously challenged almost everything he said, and Prof. Foster appeared to collapse like a pricked toy balloon. It was quite amusing to find how his cocksureness deserted him just at the end of this futile religious show.

This Believing World

TV gave us an excellent film dealing with the Dead Sea Scrolls the other day, featuring Mr. John Allegro, who claimed that the Scrolls had thrown a "bombshell" in the Christian camp. In the studio discussion which followed, Kenneth Harris, of *The Observer*, asked the Rev. M. Black, Dr. Hugh Schonfield, and F. F. Bruce whether they agreed with Mr. Allegro, and it was quite amusing to see how they hedged or denied the "bombshell" altogether. If the Dead Sea Scrolls are rightly dated, then they prove that the famous "uniqueness" of the teachings of Jesus and early Christianity never existed. Nearly all these teachings, if not all of them, can be found in the Scrolls, and all that the Gospel writers did was to "lift" them bodily and put them into the mouth of Jesus.

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Although the "Radio Times" gave Mr. Allegro's name as among those who would take part in the discussion, he was not present. It was like playing in *Hamlet* without Hamlet. The truth is that the Scrolls are certainly a bombshell to Christianity. Even the picture of a Teacher of Righteousness portrayed by the writers of the Scrolls was taken over by the Gospel writers when they invented their own picture of Christ Jesus. Or to put it another way—the "uniqueness" of Jesus has now been exploded for ever.

★

According to an "adaptation" of a book by Dr. E. Chesser in *News Chronicle*, we are told that "the aim of religion is not to formulate the idea of God in intellectual terms, but to enter into a personal relationship with the Divine." It would be difficult to get more drivel into as many words no matter who wrote it, and if Dr. Chesser is responsible, then he ought to be ashamed of himself. What is meant by "formulating the idea of God in intellectual terms"? Does anybody know? Either there is a "God" or there is not. What have "intellectual" terms got to do with it?

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And what is meant by "a personal relationship with the Divine"? What is the "Divine"? If it, or he, is "God," how does one get into a "personal" relationship with the old gent? Can he be touched? Of course, Einstein is dragged in to show that what is really meant is "cosmic religious feeling"; but even the mighty brain of Einstein—if he ever said it—could never have explained in intelligible terms what he meant. However, religion must be saved at all costs, which is the why and the wherefore of so many books. And most of them are packed with similar jargon.

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A nightmare descended on 100,000 children from all over the British Isles who were tested recently on their knowledge of the Bible. They entered for the 89th Annual Scripture Examination of the National Sunday School Union, and no doubt most of them were able to say who were Jesus and Moses—but what else? A lady who entered the "Double Your Money" Quiz the other week was most anxious to win on questions from the Bible to help her church, which was in need of the money. She actually said in answer to one question that there were ten tribes of Israel! This very religious lady should have been asked what was the Precious Message of Haggai, Nahum, and Philemon? As it was, she failed lamentably on far simpler questions. We wonder how the 100,000 children got on?

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The Benedictines have an "Anglican" Order and one of them, Dom A. Morris, in the *Sunday Times* recently, dealt with "The Problem of Suffering." This must be the 979,436th article dealing with the famous Problem so far

published, and how far did we get? Dom Morris admits that many features in Christianity can be paralleled in other religions, but he triumphantly points out that they deal with myths, while "Jesus was an historical person." But coming to "suffering," he asks, "Where would be courage, or the nobility of self-sacrificing love" without suffering? In other words, he just asks another question, and supposes he has answered the "problem." He has done nothing of the kind. He has run away from dealing with it.

Review

Health Culture for Women—The Sane Way to Slim.
by F. A. Hornibrook and Ettie Rout.
Penguin, 2/6.

Few women are not "figure-conscious" at some time or other and few are those who have not compared the various methods, exercise, diet, etc., of "specialists" both medical and quack.

Here at last is a book free from the often obscure terminology of the physician or obstetrician and the impracticable dietetic advice of the food-faddist. No phase of a woman's life is ignored and the exercises given can be used by the busy housewife or "career-woman" without undue disruption of the normal working-day.

The authors make sensible recommendations about women's clothing and past experience has convinced this reviewer that their remarks on modern footwear fashions are only too true.

The young married woman will find the chapter dealing with the restoration of the figure following pregnancy particularly valuable, but it is difficult to find highlights in a book packed so full of expert advice on every page.

Mr. Hornibrook hardly needs introduction to FREE-THINKER readers, but it should be known that his fame is hardly confined to the freethought field. A well-known physiotherapist, he is the author of many books and articles on physical education and has lectured and demonstrated his methods to hundreds of doctors.

His late wife, Miss Ettie Rout, was a New Zealander who made a deep study of health matters and was well-known as a writer and journalist.

Mr. Hornibrook's fantastically successful *Culture of the Abdomen* brought enlightenment to many thousands of men; we forecast this book will do the same for an even greater number of women.

ANNE-ADELE SHIPPER.

Please reserve your Ticket

NOW

FOR THE

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY
53RD ANNUAL DINNER

followed by DANCING

SATURDAY, 28th MARCH, 1959

(Day after Good Friday)

ALL

at the PAVIOURS ARMS

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DINNER 6.30 P.M.

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Evening Dress Optional

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(President, World Union of Freethinkers)

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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.

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, March 22nd, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
 Central London Branch N.S.S. (The Lauric Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 22nd, 7.15 p.m.: W. A. GAPE, "The Cult of Personality."
 Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 24th, 7.15 p.m.: DR. W. E. SWINTON, "Moral Ideas in Darwin's *Origin of Species*."
 Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, March 22nd, 3 p.m.: J. GORDON, "Science and Freethought, Today and Tomorrow."
 Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 22nd, 6.30 p.m.: DR. D. STARK MURRAY, "Man Made Diseases."
 Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-op Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 22nd, 2.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY (N.S.S.), "Christian Ethics and Modern Problems."
 South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 22nd, 11 a.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Moral Practice and the Easter Legend."
 Study Circle.—Friday, March 20th, at 7.30 p.m., N.S.S. Offices, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1: P. F. MOORE, "The Peasant Religion of the Middle Ages."

Notes and News

THE National Secular Society's Annual Dinner, as will be seen from the notice opposite, will be held on March 28th, the Saturday after Good Friday, at the Pavilions Arms, Westminster. It is always a happy occasion, and it is most fitting that, in this year of notable Freethought anniversaries (centenary year of *The Origin of Species* and of Francisco Ferrer's birth, 150th anniversary of Thomas Paine's death, etc.) Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner should be our Guest of Honour. Mr. Bonner is the President of the World Union of Freethinkers, and grandson of Charles Bradlaugh, founder of the National Secular Society. We

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £148 17s. 10d.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; 'Beckenham', 5s.; C. J. Cleary, 5s.; G. Swan, 5s.; C. Cullen, 5s.; Burnley Members, £3.; S.Clowes, 10s.; Total to date, March 13th, 1959, £153 10s. 0d.

ask those readers who want to attend the Dinner to inform the N.S.S. Secretary now. The Easter holiday makes it necessary for details to be settled a little while before.

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JUNE 8TH, 1959, will be the 150th anniversary of Thomas Paine's death, and on the day previous, Sunday, June 7th, a commemorative meeting will be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. It has been arranged jointly by the Humanist Council and the World Union of Freethinkers, English Section, and the venue, of course, is most appropriate, since Moncure Conway was the biographer of Paine. Among the speakers will be Mr. Michael Foot and Mr. Christopher Brunel. Further details will be given later.

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"THE armed forces of the Crown used in defence of our own freedom, or to the defence of others to whom we have a duty, not as an instrument of tyranny, are being used as the force of God in the same enterprise," said the Archbishop of Wales at a colour ceremony in Pontypool on Sunday, March 1st. Another minister, writing to *The Times*, had alarmingly suggested that the hymn lines, "Sufficient is thine arm alone and our defence is sure," should be taken at their face value and the armed forces disbanded. This was too much for the Archbishop. We pray "Give us this day our daily bread," he said, but it doesn't absolve us from all effort to earn our daily bread for ourselves." Again, "Should we close our hospitals, shut down our National Health Service and trust in the providence of God to save us from the ravages of disease?" he asked. "No; we can be perfectly certain of God's will for us but... in order to make His will effective action is required from us." That's the trouble: we have to do all the work but He gets the credit.

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IN a letter to the *Sunday Express* (1/3/59), Mr. P. Lysaght, of Sussex, told how his four-year-old daughter suffered from nightmares after hearing, in kindergarten, of the slaughter of the innocents. Mr. Lysaght went to see the clergyman who was responsible for the religious instruction and asked him not to teach "any more bloodthirsty stories." For some weeks things seemed to be all right, but the child had nightmares again the week before the letter was written. She had now been told that horrifying tale of how "Herod gave the head of John the Baptist as a reward to Salome, who had pleased him with her risqué dance," says Mr. Lysaght. "Surely this cannot be the best way to teach practical Christianity to small children," he exclaimed angrily. The best way, we think, is not to teach any Christianity to small children. After all, the crucifixion is a pretty horrible business, too, and that is usually proclaimed the central feature of Christianity.

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MR. PETER MOORE'S two lectures to the Study Circle (on Friday, March 13th and 20th) were much appreciated, and he is to give a third one this Friday on "The Peasant Religion of the Middle Ages." And, talking of lectures, the open-air meetings in the London area have taken full advantage of the recent good weather. Attendances have been particularly high at Tower Hill on Thursday lunchtimes and Hyde Park on Sundays. Mr. Len Ebury and Mr. J. W. Barker are the main speakers at these places, but young Australian Mr. David Tribe has made a successful debut at Speaker's Corner.

Birth Control and the Population Problem

By H. CUTNER

SOME OF THE EARLIEST ARTICLES I wrote for this journal—nearly forty years ago—were on Neo-Malthusianism, a word which has almost disappeared. It has—quite wrongly—been displaced by “Family Planning” or Birth Control. It should be made clear that the Neo-Malthusians were in full agreement with Malthus, that is, that there really was a Population Problem, but disagreed with his “remedy.” This was late marriage, perhaps the only form of birth control which a parson could dare then to propose. Nowadays, “Family Planning” can be practised by anyone if they want to—and here it may as well be pointed out that the planners in general know nothing, or very little, of the Problem posed by Malthus. The late Dr. Marie Stopes had no use whatever for him; she was only concerned in giving birth control information to all people who wanted it—and in this she deserves all our praise.

As a member of the Council in the old Malthusian League, I was, so to speak, in the thick of the fight and soon recognised that our opponents were the whole of the Roman Catholic Church—it opposed both Birth Control and the Population Problem—but also Socialism and Communism. This meant that my articles were bitterly attacked by numbers of our readers who belonged to left wing organisations. Some of the letters sent to Chapman Cohen were literally vituperative—although Freethinkers of the eminence of Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, Robert Ingersoll, and John M. Robertson, were all convinced Malthusians. In the end, Chapman Cohen begged me to deal as little as possible with Malthusianism, and never to mention if I could avoid it, any Socialist opposition to Malthus.

In passing, it is interesting to note how concerned with the question was Mrs. Besant. With Bradlaugh, she put up a marvellous fight for the right of everybody to birth control information on the basis of Malthusianism; but she found it extremely difficult to persuade her Socialist comrades to accept her views. In the famous debate she held with Foote in 1886, “Is Socialism Sound?” he twitted her on the almost solid opposition she was receiving from her new-found friends on the problem. Here is her reply:

I do not move from the position I took up in 1877. I would stand as readily on my trial now, as then, for the right to teach people how to limit their families within their means. I know I am in a minority on this question in the Socialist Party. I know that the majority of my Socialist friends, realising rightly, as they do, that the population question alone cannot solve this problem of poverty, at present shut their eyes too much on this matter, and turn their backs too angrily on a truth which they ought to realise.

However, imbibing the much more important teachings of Theosophy under the tutelage of Madame Blavatsky, Mrs. Besant threw overboard both Socialism and Malthusianism—though the prophecy about her often then made that one day she would join the Catholic Church was, I am happy to say, never realised.

No one need be surprised that Mr. Bond, in his recent article on “The Increasing World Population” (THE FREETHINKER, page 62) referred to the way “Malthus was bitterly denounced by Karl Marx and others for his stupidity and pessimism”; though there is not a sociologist or economist of any note these days who has not had to take Malthus into account if he wanted to write a work worth reading and studying. The truth is, of course, that all over the world Malthusianism has had to be reckoned with, and never more so than now. Most of the metaphysical examinations of value and surplus value enunciated by Marx are

as dead as the dodo. While Marx is mostly out-of-date, Malthus is being championed more than ever.

In the days before the war, when I used to lecture against Socialism and Communism in favour of Malthus, I was at first told how the “capitalist” exploiters in Brazil deliberately destroyed *thousands* of tons of coffee in Brazil so as “to keep the prices up.” Later, the thousands of tons became millions of tons, and, later still, billions of tons. I never managed, however, to get either details or authorities or, indeed, any evidence whatever of the terrific destruction of coffee which always took place in Brazil and which was supposed to prove that there was ample food for all the world’s population. Even if the coffee had not been destroyed, I was never convincingly shown how an extra cup of coffee for each living person in the world every week solved the Population Problem.

I mention this Brazilian coffee joke because it is no longer used as a crushing argument against the deluded Malthusians. Instead, we get from Mr. J. Grubiak (THE FREETHINKER, page 50) the following illuminating evidence against the followers of Malthus:

All over the world, and most particularly in the U.S.A. (where farmers are paid *not* to breed pigs and *not* to grow grain) production is being sternly limited. Even at that, it often turns out that “surplus” foodstuffs have to be destroyed in order to prevent giving them away to people who need them. This is the kind of argument which enraptures me! I would dearly love Mr. Grubiak to give just a little more information about these destroyed “foodstuffs.” Could we have a few or many of the names of the farmers who are paid *not* to breed pigs—who pays them, and who it is that “sternly” orders that production must be “limited.” I ask for full reports which I can study for myself, with names and all particulars. I cannot, of course, yet argue with Mr. Grubiak, but his full evidence and authorities will help to clear the air, so to speak. At present, I feel that without knowing all the facts, especially those from “all over the world,” I am very much handicapped. But unhappily I note that Mr. Grubiak does very sadly admit that in “the East” we do find “real famine”; so I suspect that the “all over the world” does not include “the East.” It is such a pity—for think how very welcome the trillions of tons of coffee destroyed in Brazil would be there.

Mr. Grubiak believes in “Social Credit,” and with the facility of a Fundamentalist Christian, he dismisses “poverty” as “easily” abolished. If we all followed Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, and, in particular, “sold all we had,” the word poverty would become archaic. We should all have far more than we could eat. That is, everybody living would be amply fed. The same applies to Social Credit—food would be grown to such excess under the famous ideas of Major Douglas and his Social Credit, that poverty (as Mr. Grubiak insists) “could be easily abolished.” Not to be outdone, Mr. Bond quotes Prof. J. D. Bernal, who spoke on TV the other week, and pompously told us there was enough food for everybody in the world. There was no necessity to *prove* this, for Prof. Bernal is a convinced Communist, and has no need to. His *ipse dixit* suffices.

Mr. Bond also mentions the book written by de Castro which some years ago I reviewed in these columns. I charged de Castro with not having read Malthus and, as he must have read my review and did not answer me, I know now I was right. His book is as dead as the Marxian metaphysical philosophy of surplus value.

Mr. Bond, however, happily tells us that "nor in modern times has there ever been any serious apprehensions that the world's scientists would be likely to fail in maintaining the necessary rate of advance" in agriculture and industrial production. This touching belief in science—always completely unsupported by names or any authority—is trotted out almost as often as Brazilian coffee used to be. So per-

haps Mr. Bond will name the scientists who are going to show how terrifically *easy*, especially with "a pair of hands"—Mr. Bond's own words—the world will manage to get all the food it needs.

In the next article I will quote what some of "the world's scientists" really do say.

(To be concluded)

The First Historic Briton

By LESLIE HANGER

In the Roman era Britain was a dim, distant, sunset land on the edge of beyond and when, in the fourth century, the imperial power began to crumble, it was a land of insecurity and unrest. It was against such a background as the dark ages began to close in that Pelagius, the first Briton to make his mark on history, emerges.

Pelagius found the land of his birth riven by strife. The new religion of Christianity was divided into acrimonious sects, there was a revival of native paganism in the countryside inspired by opposition to Rome; Tax-burdened peasants were driven to brigandage while the country's wealth was drained to finance civil wars against Rome.

Pelagius travelled to Rome, presumably to study law, for he there acquired a strict and exact method of interpretation of any subject to which he applied his thought and he conceived justice as a pervading spirit, rigidly binding on responsible persons through contracts freely entered into. Undoubtedly he was profoundly influenced by reading Lucretius whose sense of progressive evolution was based on an atomic materialism, and who passionately assaulted the fears perpetuated by religion to obstruct human happiness. Nothing suggests that he conceived any alternative to Christianity; the old philosophies were dead and only a conservative remnant clung to Paganism. Even the barbarians were Christians, of the Arian heresy it is true, but Christians nevertheless, so they threatened the State, but not the Church.

Universal justice and the brotherhood of man was the concept Pelagius held of his religion, and he was revolted by the reality around him. The procedures of the State were to sustain the rich, who used the legal apparatus to inflict arbitrary imprisonments, confiscations and executions, merely from motives of greed. Utter repulsion gripped him when he wrote: "How is it, I ask, that there is so great a discrepancy among those who share the name of Christian and are bound by the same religious obligations, that some are steeped in merciless brutality and do not fear to oppress, rob, torture and kill, while others are so dominated by pity that even the wretches whom the others do not shrink from slaughtering appear pitiless in comparison with themselves?"

Setting out to combat such abominations, Pelagius took the only course open to him in such an age; he accepted chastity and poverty and led the life of a monk, though he never became a priest, for the priesthood was repugnant to him. No popular preacher, he did not broadcast his views, but propagated them by personal contact with selected individuals. Thus he gathered a considerable following and found lieutenants who were more militant than himself.

The Catholic Church was then as now, coming in on the tide, and corruption was as rife in the Church as in secular life. High office carried rich rewards, and every method was employed to obtain them. One candidate

for the Papal throne carried the day because he had the forethought to employ gladiators to support his claims, a manoeuvre that resulted in 137 deaths. One of the last of the pagan leaders remarked "Make me bishop of Rome and I will turn Christian"—and no wonder!

It was against such things that Pelagius set his face, and the first clash was with those Church leaders who were explaining away the texts against riches and smoothing the path of the bankers and big landowners by substituting a doctrine of stewardship for that of restitution. Condemning this policy, Pelagius refused to believe that the command to sell all and give to the poor meant anything but what it plainly stated, while the references to rich men, camels and needles' eyes were to be taken literally. Such an exhibition of plain commonsense brought an accusation of heresy. Pelagius wished to preserve the "Primitive Community" of the original Christian community, the equality that he preached was not doctrinal and exacting; what he abominated was greed, and he condemned the wealthy in scathing terms.

The great struggle of Pelagius and his followers however was against the pernicious doctrines of predestination, grace and original sin, then fast becoming the accepted dogmas of the Church. Augustine, by these doctrines, was forging the shackles that were to imprison the mind for centuries "Give what you command and command what you will" said Augustine in his *Confessions*, and Pelagius, horrified, replied with "If I ought, I can," a courageous motto that he often repeated. Man's freedom was the dominant principle of his ideas; he denied that the human race was divided into good and bad, that virtue was the monopoly of a few and there was an elect placed over and above the sinful masses. He held that everyone was under an obligation to strive for perfection, grace being open to all. He pointed out that under paganism there were thoroughly good men and women guided by the light of their own conscience. "How many has one seen of philosophers chaste, patient, modest, generous, disinterested, charitable, scorning the honours and pleasures of the world and loving justice and truth?" he asked. Pelagius proclaimed the natural holiness of man, taunting Augustine with stressing to Christians the difficulty of avoiding sin when Pelagius had achieved a steadfast virtue; and he accused his opponent of providing an excuse for men to remain sinful and imperfect. If holiness was brought from without, virtue became severed from us, and evil, which came from willing bad things, grew habitual. No wonder Pelagius was accused of trying to revive Stoicism!

The very intelligence and honesty of the Pelagians told against them in the struggle, for the ignorant Christian mob were infuriated at being informed that death was a natural fact and not a punishment that could be mitigated by the magic of baptism. Bribes, force of arms, and the howls of the mob thwarted the Pelagians in their bid for

power. The pessimistic inhuman doctrines of Augustine were better suited to a society sinking in ruins, and the Church accepted them, justifying the sneers of the pagans who contrasted the great days gone by with the degeneracy under Christian leadership. The Pelagians, however, persevered, and passed on much of their master's teaching, and for centuries his ideas, modified or disguised, persisted until they helped to found the Protestantism and Humanism of the Renaissance.

Pelagius struck a blow for Humanism and a rational hope in conflict with the Dark Ages, and there are many figures in British history who are less worthy of remembrance. His statement that virtue existed before Christianity would be news to many people even today!

CORRESPONDENCE

THE POPULATION PROBLEM

I read Mr. J. Grubiak's comments on "The Neglected Question," by Mr. G. I. Bennett (THE FREETHINKER, 13/2/59) with amazement. The fantastic world he depicts is bursting with good things. Emaciated corpses are picked up in Canton and elsewhere most mornings, it is true—but that is because politicians and financiers make sinister marks on paper, playing the dirty game of preventing U.S.A. farmers from producing pigs or grain. Millions live in poverty despite the abundance—but that is because someone has made the wrong marks. Mr. Grubiak proposes to make the right marks, viz., Social Credit and a National Dividend, and thus "remove economic pressure."

May I point out that when desirable goods fall in price there is an immediate rush to acquire them? Mr. Grubiak's policy would result in the taking of the shops by storm, a few purchasers going in mortal fear of whole regiments of would-be purchasers who had arrived too late at the kill. Purchasing power, in fact, cannot be created out of paper, either by politicians, financiers, Mr. Grubiak, or anyone else. I refer Mr. Grubiak to my letter to THE FREETHINKER of 23.3.56.

Finally, England has two enemies: Russian dictatorship and the Roman Church. The Russians are playing a subtle game (see my letter to THE FREETHINKER of 9.3.56) and Mr. Grubiak would seem to be unwittingly assisting them. Furthermore, he sees a "very poor case for birth control from an economic point of view." This opinion will certainly please the R.C. Church, also, because it has, for the last 500 years at least, seen not only a poor case, but a very real menace to its foundations, which are human discord, degeneracy, corruption, and those dirty games which Mr. Grubiak, with extraordinary inconsistency, will abolish with a stroke of his pen. REGINALD READER.

THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE

According to the *Sunday Mail*, a Glasgow artist (said to be an agnostic), who is engaged in decorating the interior of a local church, believes that he can paint a realistic impression of the face of God. "The face I envisage," he told a reporter, "will incorporate a number of features from people who have impressed me in the past. It would not be out of place as a symbol." He is reported to be so engrossed in the work that he intends to give up his job as an art teacher, on two days a week. The minister of the church is, of course, delighted with the wonderful piece of work. "And he is doing it for the love of it. We would never have afforded to pay an artist," said the minister.

In the meantime the "agnostic" artist wants to paint the face of God on a mural he is doing, but he is not sure if the congregation will permit it. "When I started work in the church over two months ago I wanted to portray God in one of the first scenes. They refused them. They insisted that I symbolise Him with a single triangle."

Insistence such as this would tend to show that some congregations know more about the origin of religion than some agnostics,

and so, if our artist friend intends to continue in this religious labour of love, he would be well advised to take up the study of phallic worship, and, in doing so, he will then discover that the triangle is the only recognised symbol of God, or, as Wall would say, "a favourite method of figuring God."

The Christians got their union of three persons (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) in one Godhead, from the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Hindus, who used the triangle with its tip pointing upwards (the male principle) as representing the Trinity—"three persons, co-eternal, together, and co-equal," says Inman.

"With its base upward it represents the *mons veneris* in woman, the delta, or the door through which everything enters the world; and the phallus of man."—Wall. The union of two triangles (as in the flag of David) indicates the male and female principles uniting with each other in the act of creation, and again, according to Wall, "this male triangle represents the male God Jehovah."

Anyone interested in the study of phallicism should get a copy of that splendid volume on the subject, *Phallic Worship*, by George Ryley Scott. It contains a history of sex and sex rites in relation to the religions of all races from antiquity to the present day. It is illustrated, has 300 pages and sells at about 35s., being a bargain at the price. SCOTIA.

LOVE OF GOD

"Suffer little children to come unto Me." This alleged saying of Jesus is quoted by the Christians as illustrative of His love of children, almost, indeed, as if only He could feel such love. This "love" did not subject him to pain, trouble or sorrow or hard work such as has been felt by parents, doctors, nurses, teachers and the many others who have spent their lives in the service of children. If He desired children to "come unto Him," surely, in the name of all that is sane and compassionate, there is no need to take them in the agonising way that so many of them have gone to Him. An omnipotent God who uses fire, famine, pestilence and all the other horrifying ways of suffering little children to come unto Him is surely one who cannot in any way be identified with the supreme qualities of love. J. PRESTAGE.

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