

The Freethinker

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FOR THE PAST NINETEEN CENTURIES or so, the Christian Church has consistently and persistently taught that the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, on the Cross at Calvary, represented an atoning sacrifice which, in some mysterious manner known only to the divine parties to the celestial transaction themselves, somehow effected the forgiveness of sins and the consequent Reconciliation of God with man. Whether this dogma of the Divine, self-

imposed sacrifice on Calvary actually represented the primitive belief of the earliest Christians, is a moot point, the definitive answer to which must wait for a more exact knowledge of the still obscure origins of Christianity before becoming capable of a solution. But the belief is certainly very old; it repeatedly recurs in the New Testament, and it is taken for granted by the earliest non-canonical Christian authors, such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Rome (c. 150). Moreover, unlike a good many other Christian doctrines, the belief in the saving sacrifice of Calvary survived the Reformation, was in fact more emphasised by Luther and Calvin and their Protestant Churches than by the Catholic Church in pre-Reformation ages. Even today, the Doctrine of the Atonement of Christ on Calvary is still taught officially in the Formularies of both Rome and the Reformed Churches, not to mention the Eastern Churches of Greek Orthodoxy.

To Whom was the Sacrifice Offered?

However, whilst it has always been the belief of the Christian Churches that in some mysterious manner the blood shed on Calvary effected the remission of all human sins, the manner in which this Redemption was effected has always remained mysterious. Even the General Councils of the Catholic Church, who so often manifested a most remarkable capacity for comprehending the "incomprehensible" and for defining the indefinable, obviously balked at defining the Atonement. There is still no officially endorsed explanation of what is, from the point of view of the redeemed (*sic*) human race, perhaps the most important of all Christian doctrines. We—or some of us—are saved by the Divine Sacrifice effected on Calvary at an unknown date in the first century. But we do not know *how*, nor does even the Infallible Church—only God knows! Christ was, according to the Dogma of the Atonement, certainly offered, but to whom and why? "The Second Adam" died to atone for the sins of the "First Adam" in Eden, but why?

The Sacrifice to Satan

Whilst, however, these mysterious questions remain—mysterious, there has been no lack of theological speculation upon this enigmatic theme—the theologians have got busy on the abstruse problems involved in the manner of our—and their—salvation, and ingenious theories have been propounded which, whilst never canonised as definite dogmas of the Christian faith, have yet managed to win general acceptance and even to masquerade as orthodoxy

for periods of many centuries. Nowadays, as anyone knows who has even a rudimentary acquaintance with Christian orthodoxy, the official, though still not officially *defined* explanation of the Atonement is that Christ voluntarily offered himself to God the Father in order to give him satisfaction for the Fall in aboriginal Eden, and for the resulting sins perpetrated by Adam's sinful offspring. But though the fact is now probably unknown to most

modern Christians, and is actually very rarely mentioned even in the theological text-books, this was not the original Catholic explanation of the Atonement. It was only invented (and by an Archbishop of Canterbury) about 1110 A.D. prior to which a far more spec-

tacular view prevailed and passed for current orthodoxy for at least nine centuries, that is, for about half the total duration of Christianity. This then prevalent view maintained that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary was not to God the Father, but to the Devil, to the "Prince of this World," to Satan. From about 200 to 1100 the current belief of the Church taught by theologians of the greatest eminence and generally accepted as orthodoxy throughout the Christian Church was that on Calvary, God the Father offered his divine Son as a sacrifice to Satan. Why? To what end? These intricate posers also met with detailed and ingenious replies from leading Church Fathers.

The Divine Bait

The discoverer of this incredible mystery appears to have been the early (Greek-speaking) Father St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons. A later Father presents Satan on the theological field in these startling piscatory terms: "Like a skilful fisherman, God veiled the divine nature of His Son beneath human flesh in order to catch Satan by the hook of his Divinity. The latter, like a greedy fish, swallowed both bait and hook. Thus was fulfilled the word spoken of old by God to Job: 'Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook?' But his greediness proved fatal to himself. As Saturn of yore, he was obliged to give up those whom he had devoured." One ought, perhaps to add a word in explanation of the above subtle reasoning of this Holy Father; what he is really getting at is that God, so to speak, substituted (the Greek equivalent of the term "double-cross is actually used by another Church Father) an innocent victim, His own Son, for the guilty human race tainted with the stain of "Original Sin" contracted at the Fall in Eden. By accepting this innocent victim as a substitute for the guilty human race, Satan forfeited his empire over our guilty species, God had been too clever for him in this infernal business transaction! This fantastic belief persisted until about 1100 A.D. and many eminent Fathers and top theologians (including apparently the great St. Augustine of Hippo, who actually compared the cross to "the bait in a mousetrap," designed to trap Satan into accepting Christ's sacrifice) accepted the explanation that Satan, the Arch-Deceiver of mankind,

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Sacrifice to Satan

By F. A. RIDLEY

had himself been deceived by God the Father into accepting an innocent in lieu of a guilty victim and thereby effectively forfeiting the dominion over the human race which he himself (disguised as a serpent) had acquired by deceiving Adam. And even in Eden, as an ancient Greek hymn-writer, Venantius Fortunatus, phrases this fantastic explanation: "Christ spoiled the spoiler of his prey." Among the theologians who expanded and defended the sacrifice to Satan were two of the most famous (and "infallible") Popes, and St. Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa, now hailed by Catholic evolutionists as the man who discovered Evolution 1,500 years before Darwin (c.f. H. Dorlodot, *Darwinism and Catholic Thought*).

St. Anselm and the Theological Revolution

Nowadays Canterbury seems about the last place where a revolution would start—even a theological one. But one did start there, and a completely successful one. About 1100 A.D., when St. Anselm, the Italian Archbishop of Canterbury, published his epoch-making treatise *Cur Deus*

Homo? (Why did God become man?). For in this small, but immediately influential book—a theological classic—Anselm threw the Devil off the cross, so to speak, and effectively substituted the still orthodox belief that the Divine Sacrifice was offered to God the Father for his satisfaction of the manifold sins of the human race since Adam. Anselm "proved" this weighty contention to both his own satisfaction and to that of the Catholic Church by some very subtle dialectical reasoning based largely on the feudal social obligations of medieval society. His theological *coup d'état* against his Satanic Majesty was entirely successful, so much so that even the average Christian clergyman would now be both astonished and horrified to learn that it was once the almost universal belief of the Church, and one taught by the highest authorities, that Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, was sacrificed to Satan on a mountain near Jerusalem some nineteen centuries ago, and that he owes his salvation to this melancholy fact. Theologians, like politicians, have short and convenient memories.

Bible Bunkum

By P. G. ROY

IN a well-known epigram, G. E. Lessing, the finest German humanist, complained that nobody bothered to read the works of Germany's Milton, Klopstock; yet everybody praised him because this was considered good form. Similarly, the Bible is held in general esteem as the fountain-head of our Western civilisation, without any attempt at reading and forming an individual opinion. People accept their ready-made opinions through various channels and are quite content to echo their self-appointed cheer-masters. Thus few would dare question that the "Holy Scriptures" are indispensable for the maintenance of "Christian" morals and are wholesome for children and criminals alike. And yet, they do not know what spiritual food they offer their offspring; whoever starts reading the Bible feels disappointed at the contents, although it is not always openly admitted. How could it be otherwise? Culture is a process and must be free to progress; we cannot mould our modern life according to precepts laid down by semi-civilised Levantines of antiquity; nor have their traditions and folklore any value in character-formation. Only very few people draw the conclusion that modern mankind, rather than be cast into this alien Procrustean bedstead, ought to be freed from the shackles of ancient superstitions; the others just adopt the "I-couldn't-care-less" attitude and allow their children to be inoculated.

One is reminded of one of Hans Andersen's witty tales, "The Emperor's New Clothes." The two rogues who, under the pretence of weaving and tailoring mystic robes for the Emperor, extricated huge sums of money and material from him, could be the two denominations of our Bible. He who cannot see the exquisite pattern and shape of the work is, so they say, not worthy of his station in life, therefore everybody pretends to see quite clearly what in fact they do not see. Every minister sent by the Emperor to report, asks himself:

"Can it be that I am unfit for my office? . . . I will never confess that I could not see the stuff."

And when the impostors, busy with their ritualistic gimmicks of weaving without visible threads and looms, describe the pattern of the imagined fabric, everybody makes mental notes to be conversant; and at last the Emperor himself looks and he

"praised the stuff he could not see, and declared that he

was delighted with both colours and patterns . . . and he looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much . . . In short, no one would allow that he could not see these much admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a simpleton or unfit for his office."

Not until in the ensuing procession a little unspoiled child exclaimed, "But the Emperor has nothing on at all!" did it dawn upon the crowd that they had all allowed themselves to be deceived.

"The Emperor was vexed . . . but he thought the procession must go on now. And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever to appear holding up a train although, in reality, there was no train to hold."

How very life-like! When science threatens the survival of the Great Delusion, vested interests tell their dupes that their invisible stuff is superior and he who is unable to grasp the wonders of this "higher" truth is a basically bad character whom we had all better beware of. Fundamentally, they assert, there is no polarity between religion and science; the latter is of this world and appeals to reason; but faith is beyond human reason and cannot be grasped but with one's heart! And with all the modern means of influencing masses they set to conditioning humanity in the old mould.

On March 12th there was a programme on B.B.C. television—with all the apologies to the powers-that-be thought necessary in such a case—showing the psychological influencing machinery: first Hitler haranguing until his audience could do nothing more but bray "Heil"; then a tape-recorded sermon by a Negro priest in the deep south of the U.S.A. And when he and his audience had reached the state of paroxysm where they uttered beast-like cries and yelled in senseless uproar, it must have been brought home to every decent human being that religion, far from being a desirable ingredient of modern society, was something beastly and dangerous, something our children ought to be protected from.

So, after showing that religion has not existed ever since, but was the outcrop of certain conditions and bound to change together with them, we have the task of deflating the unfounded opinion fostered with regard to the "Holy Scriptures."

A Popular Pope

By COLIN McCALL

Although he has only been on the Papal throne since November, John XXIII is already, according to *Time* (March 23rd), "the best-loved Pope of modern times." What period is covered by that vague term "modern times," I don't profess to know; I suspect the writer chose it because of its vagueness. But there is no need to quibble over that or to ask what is the criterion of love. What has really been noticeable is the contrast between this Pope and the last. Pacelli was aristocratic, dictatorial, aloof; Roncalli is proletarian, democratic (insofar as a Pope can be) and friendly. I remember reading that Vatican gardeners had to adapt themselves to alarming new conditions with his election; for the first time in their lives they heard Papal laughter, and were actually spoken to by His Holiness. Pius had apparently never been heard to laugh, and the gardens had always to be cleared before he took his constitutional.

No wonder there were sighs of relief in some Catholic quarters when the Fascist "Pope of Peace" set out for his Summit Conference! One can have too much even of a good thing, and Pius wasn't as good as all that, the B.B.C. and British Press notwithstanding. Choosing a successor wasn't easy, either for the Conclave or the Holy Ghost, and they took their time. But we have to admit that they did the job well. No doubt it was perspiration rather than inspiration, but they couldn't have made a better choice than Cardinal Roncalli.

His first act was a surprise. He chose the title John XXIII, when there had been one already. True, the former John XXIII was deposed in 1415 at the Council of Constance (the same Council that ordered the burning of John Huss); true, too, that there were other contenders for the throne and he was not universally accepted; but the Church had seemed content to let the unsavoury matter remain ambiguous and undisturbed. Roncalli settled the matter with perfect discretion. His namesake became an anti-pope once and for all, without any proclamation. The only inconvenience? Perhaps a few reprintings of Papal lists on Catholic presses.

Since then he has broken quite a few conventions and probably caused a few cases of apoplexy among the staid section of Vatican society. Outstanding was his much-publicised visit to the Queen of Heaven Prison (delightful name!) when he told the convicts that one of his relatives "who was out hunting without a licence was caught by the carabinieri and sent to gaol for a month." Although that story might be all right for the inmates, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, must have thought it too strong for its outside readers. They were told that "His Holiness recalled the bad impression he received as a boy when someone close to him, though in no serious way, and though unintentionally, transgressed the law."

John XXIII is certainly very different from his predecessor. His position was not enviable. Outside the Vatican, Pius had been eulogised as a saint; inside he had become a hindrance, but he had wielded enormous personal power; delegated as little as possible. It was not easy to follow him, particularly for a 77-year-old man who was generally regarded as a mere stop-gap. John has succeeded remarkably well so far. He—or his advisers—saw the need for a personal touch after the coldness of Pius, and the jovial, rotund pontiff has filled that need splendidly. He knows he cannot count on a long reign, says *Time*.

"Well, here I am—at the end of the road and the top of the heap," he told the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Diefenbaker; on another occasion he said, "I who have come to the pontificate at such an advanced age do not despair of receiving from the Lord at least the time conceded to St. Agatho [three years]. There are many things to do."

He got to work quickly, and has already increased the size of the College of Cardinals, filled the administrative vacancies inherited from Pius, and announced an Ecumenical Council. And, though his coronation address contained the usual audacious claim that salvation is only attainable through unity with him, "since the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and represents His person on this earth," I have the feeling that he might have preferred not to be encumbered by the dogma of infallibility. That is speculation, of course, and rather idle speculation too, because that dogma, more than anything else, prevents the Christian unity which the Ecumenical Council is hoped to presage. Idle then, agreed, but possibly interesting, as are the gossipy little news items about him. As, for example, that he invites old friends to dinner and comments: "I tried to keep to the tradition, but it didn't last eight days. After all, nothing in Scripture says that I have to eat alone."

I find these items interesting for two reasons. First, I think John XXIII is genuinely friendly and concerned about people: more democratic and indeed far more human than the last Pope. For me he is, as a person, much more likeable than Pius. The second reason is related. Taking myself as a fairly average person, I assume that others are similarly affected, and this is confirmed by my conversations with quite varied people. So, I speculate once more. Can it be that the present propaganda line of the Church of Rome is to play up the "ordinariness" the *bonhomie*, even the unconventionality of the former Italian peasant? I suspect this to be so. Pius was treated with some awe; he was something of a recluse, an ascetic; he had that appearance and it was stressed. There is nothing ascetic about John. He likes life and people; he is a sympathetic character and the Church is making the most of him. "Here," it says, "is a man like you. Different, of course; specially selected by God, but essentially like you."

It is a good line, and it has gone down well. I don't know about "best-loved," but I would certainly say "most-liked" of recent Popes (to be as vague as *Time*). He walks in the streets of Rome and has been nicknamed "Johnny Walker"; he jokes with his gardeners, takes tea with his Swiss Guards. *The Church of England Newspaper* has been proved wrong in calling the Conclave's choice "feeble" because Roncalli was "on the verge of decrepitude" (it also thought it "thoroughly discreditable"). It has turned out to be a very shrewd choice—perhaps shrewder than the Conclave itself realised. "What harm can such a dear old man do?" may well be the reaction of many to warnings about the threat of Rome. The primary answer remains what it has always been: that this Church, more than any other, warps minds from earliest childhood so that grown-ups can believe there is value in the Papal blessing of a helicopter. Which, incidentally, took place recently.

This Believing World

The Rev. W. R. Shearer, the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, thinks very little of our "teenagers." Speaking the other day at the Council's annual congress, he called them "wild-eyed, materialist, and fatalist," who inhabited a world in "which the Christian faith does not penetrate." And worse than that—"they make no secret of their scepticism." All this is truly awful, but what are the Churches doing about it? Mr. Shearer complains "that we seem unable to make real contact with them." But why? Have not all the Churches got not only compulsory religious education in schools but the full weight of TV and the radio behind them?

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Easter Sunday was literally packed with religious programmes and services, beginning with the pious and dismal "Lift Up Your Hearts," and ending with "Epilogues" which were, if possible, even sillier. The Joyous Story of the Risen Christ has been hammered down the throats of the people year by year almost from birth to the grave. Moreover, it is endlessly repeated as far as possible in newspapers and journals all over the world.

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One example this year is the way the Archbishop of York, Dr. Ramsey, captured the *Sunday Dispatch* with an article on "the Christian Revolution," in which he gives the year 29 A.D. for "the biggest revolution in all history," though there is not a scrap of evidence of any kind that this really is the date of the death of Jesus—even if it could be proved (and it can't) that there ever was a Jesus. In addition, the Resurrection is "certain history," and therefore "we have sure ground for our faith that Christ is now alive and with us." Even the most rabid and ignorant Fundamentalist could never go further than that. Yet the only reason, the real reason, for this nonsense, is the Archbishop's "faith." And what is that worth?

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As for the Archbishop of Canterbury, he managed to capture recently *The Observer* with the "magic" of Christianity—though obviously he was using the word "magic" rather differently from the way Frazer used it in his *Golden Bough*. Magical or not, Dr. Fisher knows that there are people who "go a long way down the road" when it comes to the "teaching" of Christ, but they boggle at believing in God or the divinity of Christ. Well, if "truth will out," why have the Churches failed in providing the evidence for these two dogmas during nearly 2,000 years?

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In any case, what is his answer? Let them believe in the teaching and "Christ will be with them"—as if he knew. In making such a statement, Dr. Fisher must have known that there is not a scrap of evidence either that Christ is "alive," or that he would be or is with anybody—yet this kind of pious trash is uttered regularly as much by the rawest curate as by the most accomplished archbishop or cardinal.

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But the gem of the Archbishop's talk is when he says that in "the Kingdom of God" there is "a place for the agnostic" though an Atheist is "so difficult to understand." The Atheist relies on "reason" when he says that "there cannot be God or a Kingdom of God," yet reason "cannot prove there is not a God any more than it can prove finally that there is." The operative word here is "finally"—but what a confession to make! Literally thousands of books and articles have been published and millions of sermons delivered all over the world all proving

beyond a doubt that God exists; and now we are told that "finally" reason, that is, solid argument, cannot prove that there is a God. This should prove sad news for all readers of *The Observer*.

Thomas Paine Foundation

STATEMENT TO THE PRESS

The Thomas Paine Foundation takes pride in announcing that it has just purchased 20 acres of land located on Farm Life Road between Coconut Palm Drive and Bower Drive in the Redland section, in the town of Princeton, Dade County, Florida, upon which to build The Thomas Paine Children's Home and Educational Institute. Just as soon as the buildings are completed, orphaned and abandoned children will be housed, clothed and educated free of charge. Until the buildings are completed, the site will be used as the children's camp.

It is our purpose and intention to care for these children in the most modern and scientific manner. Their diet will be supervised by the eminent physician and dietician, Dr. John A. Myers, Baltimore, M.D., a graduate of John S. Hopkins University. The school's curriculum will be strictly secular and based upon a naturalistic philosophy in accordance with the latest scientific discoveries. To build strong minds in strong bodies will be our objective.

Our purpose in establishing this educational institution is to develop courageous men and women to be leaders in a society of intellectual freedom. It is our hope that eventually The Thomas Paine Children's Home will become an all-embracing institution of learning. The cornerstone of this school is based upon the philosophy of Thomas Paine as enunciated in this statement:

"Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good."

The school will be under the direction of a board of directors consisting of thirteen eminent men and women who are members of The Thomas Paine Foundation. The number thirteen (13) being symbolic of the original thirteen states of the United States of America. Thomas Paine was the first to give this country its name and did more than any other single individual to help establish it as a Republic. The buildings of The Thomas Paine Children's Home and Educational Institute will be of colonial design.

The Thomas Paine Foundation was responsible for the election of Thomas Paine to the Hall of Fame; the placing of a bronze plaque on the site where the author of COMMON SENSE was buried in New Rochelle, New York, the erection of the Thomas Paine statue in Paris, France, and the erection of the Thomas Paine statue in Morristown, New Jersey, commemorating the writing of CRISIS PAPERS during the trying times of the American Revolution.

The real estate agent who negotiated the sale is Mr. Frank Esterson, 1463 Drexel Avenue, Miami Beach, Fla., and Mr. Solomon Berg of New York, the owner of the property, made his contribution to this undertaking by selling the land to The Foundation below cost. Mr. Robert M. McCloskey, 420 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach, is the attorney handling our legal matters.

Joseph Lewis, Founder and Secretary.
The Thomas Paine Foundation.

—NEXT WEEK—

VASECTOMY AND BIRTH CONTROL

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Banch 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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, April 12th, 6.45 p.m.: T. REED, "Impressions of Germany in 1958."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, April 12th, 6.30 p.m.: E. W. SKINNER, "International Voluntary Service."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 12th, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "Happiness, Virtue and Duty Revalued."

Notes and News

"WHAT does Easter say to us?" asked the Archbishop of York in the *TV Times*. And he answered: "It says to us that if our world were to be blown to bits tomorrow, all that is good and righteous—all that is *Christ-worthy*—would live for ever." If you asked Dr. Ramsey where we're afraid you wouldn't get a very precise reply. The best he could do in his article was: "Another world, a spiritual world, beyonds the ups and down of life," which didn't convey very much to us. Nor did: "Eternal life is precious because it is *Christ's* life shared with us. Heaven is good because it is *Christ's* world shared with us." Following this, however, we did get a little enlightenment. Heaven, said the Archbishop, is "joyful, exciting *beyond all our guesses*." Previous italics were Dr. Ramsey's: these are ours. We wanted to emphasise his admission that Heaven is all guesswork, in case people wouldn't stop campaigning for peace.

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As we have often emphasised, church membership in the United States bears no relationship to religious belief. Many people go to church for purely social reasons, and in some Unitarian chapels God is never mentioned. Indeed, "Unitarian" might often be used as a synonym for "Humanist" or "Ethicist." This would seem to be the case with the First Unitarian Society, of Salt Lake City, Utah, judging by their bulletin, *Ram's Horn*. And in the

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £171; C. J. Cleary, 5s.; O.A.P., 1s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; R. Brownlee, 5s.; N.S.S. Dinner raffle (prize given by Mrs. F. Hayhow), £5.—Total to date, April 3rd, 1959, £176 13s. 6d.

latest to hand (Vol. X, 26), the pastor, Dr. Harold Scott reports having read the book of Revelation in the new translation by J. B. Phillips. In modern speech, he says, the book shows up as the "horrible nightmarish extravaganza" it is. He judges it to be "the work of a paranoic who is giving vent to insane ecstasy over the horrible fate he would like to have overtake those people who do not accept the improbable Christian religion of the first century." The god of the Christians is "pictured as the most cruel beast the diseased imagination of the author can conjure up" and "The contrivances of the Inquisitor or the torture chambers of Hitler were nothing compared with the malevolent sadism of the God of the Book of Revelation."

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THE *Daily Express* recently told a shaggy dog story about the village of Chedzoy in Somerset, the dog being the pet of the local rector. It seems he interferes with choir practices and services to such an extent that, in the words of the blacksmith, "the whole village is in a turmoil." "How can you join in a service with a dog sniffing around your heels?" asked a farmer; and we see his point. Other parishioners describe the dog wandering up and down the aisle, sniffing around the pews and "tickling the children's legs," but the parson thinks the "whole trouble has been stirred up by people inspired by venom, malice and uncharitableness." What, among Christians!

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SPEAKING at the blessing of the new £100,000 hall and extension to Mount St. Joseph Grammar School, Bolton, Lancashire, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford "praised the school's attitude to science" (*Bolton Evening News*, March 20th). He thought it a good thing that so many Catholic girls were training to be scientists. It meant, he said, "that they were able to establish a happy relationship between religious and scientific knowledge." It means rather, we should think, that some people can close the shutters of their minds as the occasion demands it. As for more Catholic scientists meaning that "control of science... was being undertaken by people with good personal standards and integrity," we must charitably assume that the Bishop, like most Papists, regularly practises self-delusion.

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THE Roman Catholic Bishop of Berlin, Cardinal Döpfner, incurred the wrath (on Easter Sunday) of the East German Premier, Herr Grotewohl, for his opposition to the civil ceremonies of baptism, marriage and burial and to the so-called "atheistical ceremonies of youth initiation organised by the State." From what we know of the East German situation, the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the State is a very uneasy one, with unbelieving government officials paying a clergy that is both hostile and despised. Now the State seems to have taken the offensive. The town of Stalinstadt has declared "that it will do away with all church ceremonies" (*Manchester Guardian*, 31/3/59) and the Socialist Unity Party has instructed its members: "The view still held by many parents that their children will not be more stupid when they receive religious instruction is not only wrong but is actually dangerous. It must, therefore, be combated in every possible way." Whatever our political views, we can certainly agree with that.

The 53rd Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society

IT SAYS MUCH for the vitality of our Society that the guests this year numbered about eighty members and friends, all happy to meet again fellow Secularists and, in many cases, to talk over memories of past Dinners and the many enthusiastic Freethinkers who attended them and who are now, alas, no longer with us. The new venue was the Pavours Arms in Westminster, and it must be recorded that an excellent dinner was provided and thoroughly enjoyed. Incidentally, the "apostle" spoons served with the coffee were particularly appropriate! As always a bright touch of colour and gaiety was provided by the ladies, and altogether the function proved as popular as ever.

The President (and Chairman), Mr. F. A. Ridley, who opened the speeches, was in his best and wittiest vein, cleverly working in references to Muhammad and Mecca (last year's Dinner was held in the Mecca Café) and George Jacob Holyoake and Parliament's Clock Tower as he dealt with the work of the N.S.S. during the past year. We were the only Society which called a Protest Meeting at the death of the late Pope—our own Protestants remaining silent before the tremendous boosting and publicity given to the Church of Rome in the press and on radio and TV. Mr. Ridley thought the prospects for Secularism in the future were particularly bright, and he reminded his audience that soon we would be celebrating our own centenary—as the National Secular Society was founded by Charles Bradlaugh in 1866. It was that great Freethinker's grandson, Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, who was the Guest of the evening and who was, after a suitable introduction by Mr. Ridley, the next speaker.

Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner expressed his thanks for the honour shown to him, but insisted that it was the Cause, the great Cause of Freethought, that he stood for to which all honour was due. He sketched the progress of International Freethought from the first meeting held in Brussels in 1880 to its ramifications now as the World Union of Freethinkers (with its preference for the word "Freethinker" rather than "Secularist") and the work put in by his grandfather to ensure its success. He also paid a great tribute to Francisco Ferrer, that great Spanish educationalist who introduced secular education into illiterate Spain, and was shot by its reactionary government, aided, of course, by the Church of Rome. The toast to the National Secular Society proposed by Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner was enthusiastically acclaimed.

Mr. Dave Shipper, who has made international Freethought his own speciality in the pages of THE FREETHINKER, followed with an excellent response. It was the first time he had spoken at a Dinner, and he made a special point of the *esprit de corps* he has always found among Freethinkers. The National Secular Society would always support the World Union of Freethinkers in every way.

The toast to our guests was proposed by Mr. W. Griffiths, self-effacing Chairman of G. W. Foote and Co. Ltd., whose energy and work for the Cause "behind the scenes" has done so much for the N.S.S.—more than most people imagine. In a typically modest speech, he welcomed such stalwarts as Mr. and Mrs. Fairhall, of South Place Ethical Society, Mr. Adrian Pigott, whose book against the Roman Church is so devastating, Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright, of the Leicester Secular Society—the oldest Secular Society in the world—Mr. Hockin, also of Leicester, a French

guest, Mlle. Steinmetz, Mr. and Mrs. Wray, our printers. He was glad to add that THE FREETHINKER has never been better produced. In addition, there were friends from the Merchant Navy present—and to all, we gave a hearty welcome.

In response, Mr. J. G. Cartwright gave us a characteristically unassuming little speech, with special reference to the work of the Leicester Secular Society, the platform of which had been graced by Bradlaugh, McCabe, Holyoake, and dozens of other well-known Freethinkers. He himself thought that the N.S.S. "shock tactics," disliked by some, were more effective than "gentler" methods.

After the speeches, came the ever-popular dancing to the music of Don Phipps and his band—which was suspended for a few moments for a raffle of a superb box of chocolates generously given by Mrs. Hayhow. The tickets sold rapidly and the proceeds, over £5, were handed to THE FREETHINKER SUSTENTATION FUND. The prize was most popularly won by Mr. Frank Murrill.

For the rest, one must pay a warm tribute for the excellent work put in for the success of the evening to Mr. McCall, our General Secretary, and to Mrs. Seibert, of the office staff, who both did so much "behind the scenes."

H.C.

Review

The Philosophy of Humanism by Corliss Lamont, Ph.D. Edition of January, 1959 by Elek Books Ltd., 14 Great James Street, London, W.C.1; 243 pp., 15/- net.

Dr. Lamont is one of the most eminent freethought (or, in their terminology, humanist) writers in America at the present time. I rate his *Illusion of Immortality* as one of the most valuable freethought propaganda books in the English language.

The evolution of the present work was as follows. In 1946 the author delivered a course of lectures at Columbia University entitled "The Philosophy of Naturalistic Humanism," which three years later he expanded into a volume published as *Humanism as a Philosophy*, which I have previously noted in these columns. This was subsequently revised and Elek Books have been handling editions in its present form since 1958. Dr. Lamont lucidly traces the history of Humanist (in our terminology Secularist) ideas throughout history, states them cogently and persuasively as they apply today, and looks towards their increasing practical application in the future.

On the philosophical plane Dr. Lamont is right in line with the important neo-materialistic developments which have taken place in his own country during the last half century, and he is right in giving credit in this direction: "Naturalist trends in Europe greatly increased as a result of Darwin's work. But the revival of Naturalism as an explicit philosophy in intellectual and academic circles took place chiefly in the United States" under the influence of its "elder statesmen": Professors Morris R. Cohen, F. J. E. Woodbridge and John Dewey. The latter, I believe, was the first to speak of "the new Materialism," though he preferred the less committal term Naturalism; as Lamont says, stemming from their work, "Naturalism has come increasingly to the fore in American philosophy and promises to continue its gains in the future."

Perhaps the major form of Naturalism is Materialism, but our author finds that "Materialism has stressed matter as such more than Nature, and tended until recently to over-simplify and over-mechanise . . ." I think our author would probably have to go back to the 18th century to unearth the type of mechanistic materialist he has in

mind, for it has long been an accepted materialistic principle that we must look for emergents rather than mere resultants. However, it is to the credit of the American schools that they have made the new materialism epistemologically, as well as scientifically, defensible. Philosophers like Sellars (who chiefly drew up the *Humanist Manifesto* of 1933) and Morris Cohen have made materialism into a well-rounded philosophy which would appear impervious to attack from any philosophical quarter.

The author, of course, rejects the supernatural lock, stock and barrel, and sees the story of God as a being once imagined as omnipresent and now apparently omnipresent. The bedrock of existence he calls "*Substance*" (matter-energy) and all the other ultimates are a description of the ways in which it behaves. "It is to substance that all the other metaphysical distinctions pertain." (Here he means such philosophical concepts as dimension, form, causation and quality.) As he remarks, "Metaphysics deals with the lowest common denominators of everything that exists"; they must be mutually consistent though not mutually deducible from one another.

He then proceeds to state a purely materialistic metaphysics well in harmony with contemporary development in the fields of philosophy.

Though I regard the term Humanism as, by itself, unsatisfactory on several counts, one cannot allow terminological differences to cloud the admiration due to such a brilliantly executed work.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Christianity in Gaol

Chapman Cohen once remarked that, although atheists have to pay towards the cost of prisons, they rarely get anything like a return for their money, because so few of them ever go inside. I was reminded of the truth of this while reading *Come to Prison* by Sewell Stokes (Longmans, Green & Co., 1957—price 21/-).

The writer has made an extensive tour of English prisons and his report throws light on quite a few interesting aspects of life there. It is faintly amusing—though not surprising—to note that on reception, prisoners are asked, "What is your religion?" The failure of Christianity to keep its adherents on the straight and narrow path is evidently taken for granted. Outside each cell a card is fixed giving the prisoner's name and other details. Each card is coloured according to the particular brand of religion he professes. Thus, white cards indicate Church of England, red cards Roman Catholic, blue cards for Jews and so on. This makes it easier for the ministers of the different denominations to find their clients. No colour seems to have been reserved for Atheists. Can it be that non-believers are able to live blameless lives without supernatural aid?

At the reception board, each prisoner is given a copy of the New Testament. At one time a whole Bible was provided but owing to shortage of paper (during the war) it was most regrettably used for cigarette and toilet paper. So the mutilated Bibles were withdrawn and now, if a prisoner wishes to have a Bible instead of merely a New Testament, he has to ask for one. I wonder how many do? If ever I find myself on the point of starting a prison sentence (which heaven forbid!), then I shall insist on a copy of the *Bible Handbook*. That will give the authorities food for thought.

E.C.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

IRENÆUS

I have been very interested in the articles and correspondence regarding the above, more especially as I am personally acquainted with Mr. R. Groves, who started the ball rolling.

Now that Mr. Howell-Smith has apparently come out on the side of Mr. Groves, there will be no holding the latter, as any frequenter of Tower Hill will tell you.

Before a recent issue of THE FREETHINKER, Mr. Groves was insisting that upon any point where Irenæus did not agree entirely with the "Holy Word" he was mistaken and the "inspired" book was correct!

Mr. Groves can (as most Roman Catholics), fit in anything to his own satisfaction.

For instance, he insists that, although Origin states that Josephus did not believe in Jesus as the Christ he could still have said "He was the Christ" without there being any contradiction!!

Being (compared with him) only a novice, I would not presume to cross swords with Mr. Howell-Smith, but would like to bring to his notice the following points:

(a) I have always understood that in eastern parts, more especially in the past ages, nearly 50 years of age *would* be considered old.

(b) Might not Gerald Massey be correct when he stated that Irenæus's Jesus was Jehoshua Ben-Pandiro who according to Jewish tradition was hanged in the reign of Alex. Jannæus (103-78 B.C.) and was presumably between 50-60 years of age at this time?

This would make Mr. Cutner's statement in "God—Man or Myth?" correct when he suggested that the Christian forger, to make Irenæus's statement agree with the Gospels, added "crucified by Pontius Pilate."

C. STANLEY.

OVER-POPULATION

I have recently read with interest articles by Messrs. Bennett, Grubiak and Bond on the subject of over-population. As a mathematician, if a child comes to me and tells me that I don't know how to do long division—or a first-year student tells me that my methods of integration are wrong—I smile (I hope) tolerantly. *Mutatis mutandis*, I accept the statements of world-wide biologists on their own subject unless they have a personal axe (usually religious or political) to grind. This last proviso precludes consideration of arguments by religionists, belittling the magnitude of the threat. It does *not* preclude the evidence of men of the category of Julian Huxley and Robert Cook. The latter has published a book on "Human Fertility." It has an introduction by Julian Huxley. Huxley says: "Human population is probably the gravest problem of our time . . . Meanwhile with all our much-vaunted modern improvements, more than *three-quarters* of the two billion (American) human beings in existence are under-nourished, while the *increase of agricultural production in the last decades has not even kept up with the increase in population.*" Robert Cook says: "Unbalanced and unchecked fertility is ravaging many lands like a hurricane or tidal wave. In Puerto Rico, Egypt, India, Italy and Japan, rampant fecundity has produced more hungry mouths than can be fed. The scramble for bare subsistence by hordes of hungry people is tearing the fertile earth from the hillsides, and plunging human beings into utter misery." I suggest that unless your readers have seen the conditions in some of these places—the poverty and the soil erosion—they keep silent until they have done so. It is true that in one or two of the countries mentioned, a belated attempt is being made to stem the tide, but in general the picture is as true today as it was when the book was written, eight years ago. On pages 18-19, Cook writes: "The failure to appraise the nature of the crisis is a failure of timing. We are still attempting to apply the non-scientific precepts of the Stone and Bronze Ages in this vital age of steel and power (previously Cook explains what he means by 'vital age'). Ancient, incongruous social morality is wholly incapable of dealing effectively and humanely with the problems of the fast-moving age in which our fate is cast."

It is heart-sickening to observe the utter indifference on the part of the Churches—but what can one say to the complacency of freethinkers like Grubiak and Bond? I can assure you that I give far more weight to the statements of men like Cook and Huxley on these subjects than to Grubiak and Bond. I know that the former can shelter behind the statement that he agrees that there is poverty amid plenty, but his implication is obvious, viz., better distribution would solve the problem. Cook and Huxley do not seem to think so.

I believe this to be one of the most serious aspects of the present counter-Reformation movement. If the Church of Rome gets the upper hand, humanity's fate is sealed; population will

increase without check, standards of living will fall; freedom will be non-existent and, finally, from sheer pressure of numbers, there must come a complete breakdown involving H-bombs and any other devil-spawned (or should I say "god-given") weapons of even greater horror.

I am, by nature, over-optimistic but, for the life of me, I can see nothing optimistic in this picture.

MALCOLM G. CLARKE.

At the present time world population is increasing at the rate of 46 million a year, about 126,000 per day. This increase will result in the world population, at present about 2,800 million, doubling in 44 years. On the other hand the sharpest rate of increase is in the under-developed countries and as these countries develop so their rate of population increase will fall. Thus while it has to be admitted that population will be more dense in future years it is nonsense to suggest that the world cannot feed a population many times over that of the present.

In *The Times* for July 22nd, 1949, Lord Boyd-Orr is reported as saying: "There was no difficulty about producing enough food for the present population of the world, or even twice that number, but the problem was, could politics and economics arrange that the food that was produced was dispersed and consumed in the countries that needed it?" That about puts the case in a nutshell. The land for agricultural development is there, but what is needed is a sane, rational system of society that will see that what is produced is sent where it is needed.

ROBERT MORRELL.

FUNERAL SERVICES

While understanding the wish of an atheist that his own funeral service should be a secular one, I find it strange that he believes a religious one shows disrespect for the dead.

A service mainly helps the emotions of those that mourn. If one's next of kin find relief in a religious service, why should an atheist be too disturbed?

No amount of prayers, candles or tears will bring him back or pass him on.

JEAN DUCKETT.

ROMAN EMPERORS

Surely Mr. F. A. Ridley made a slip in his article on Tiberius when he wrote that "alone among Roman rulers he (Tiberius) disliked the sanguinary gladiatorial games"? Others who similarly had no liking for them were Nerva, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Alexander Severus, and Julian the Apostate. And I dare say that if we were to go carefully through the whole list of Roman emperors we should find more.

I may pertinently add that I am at present reading a highly interesting book by Dr. Ivar Lissner on the lives of the Roman emperors, which has just been published in this country. Carrying in translation the somewhat unfortunate title, *Power and Folly* (for by no means all the men who ruled the Roman Empire were guilty of folly), it says of Marcus Aurelius that he "had no taste for blood. Even the gladiators at Rome were only allowed to fight in his presence if their lives were guaranteed, none of the combatants being permitted to carry sharp weapons." Marcus Aurelius was a saintly man whose principles would have forbidden him to be a spectator at cruel contests; but I think there is no doubt that the other excellent monarchs in my list were also free from the taint of blood-lust.

G. I. BENNETT.

[Mr. Ridley writes: The opinion that Tiberius was the only emperor to oppose the gladiatorial shows was not mine, but that of Dr. Maranon. But Marcus Aurelius on one occasion threw two lions alive into the Danube to assuage the flood and Julian the Apostate (contrary to the tenets of the neo-platonist school to which he belonged) made a regular habit of sacrificing animals on the altars of the gods.—Ed.]

WELSH SUNDAY

Sunday closing in Wales is likely to bring about an invasion of clerics on Sunday nights into the Working Men's Clubs. They are now recognising with the late General Booth that if you would have a good collection on the plate, catch them when they are half drunk. In my club, the committee has decided under protest from some of us to allow a local Sky Pilot to give a little sermon and a prayer with a collection afterwards for the Lord Jesus. Now had Jesus (by a catalyst) left the recipe to mankind of how to turn water into wine, I would give towards the collection, but as this selfish Christian scientist died with the secret of his catalytic knowledge, I refuse to subscribe.

PAUL VARNEY.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

Mr. McCall, rightly, points out the utterly ludicrous nature of the self-contradictory "explanations" of "transubstantiation."

But, while we are laughing heartily at the preposterous rubbish that Catholics are forced to believe on pain of "damnation," let us never forget that Rome once burned, racked, and slaughtered wholesale, people whose only crime was that they could not bring themselves to say that they accepted the self-same rubbish that we now laugh at.

It is still part of "Canon Law" that "heretics" may be put to death if other means of persuasion are of no avail. The Roman Church must never be allowed to regain its "temporal powers"; it would mean the return of the "Holy Office" and its attendant abominations.

Rome is the enemy of all shades of liberal thought and enlightened social practice.

S. W. BROOKS.

"ELUS"

In translating the Paris-Match article on Lourdes for the February 20th *Freethinker*, Dr. Duhig may have overlooked the felicitous pun on "elus," which signifies the "elect" of their god equally often with the elected of their people. I suggest that English needs such a genial Gallic term to embrace that familiar and potent pair, the pontifical bureaucrat and the political theologian. If these species are losing their feathers in your English climate, it is because their most hardy members flew long ago to the Southern United States.

ARKANSAS TRAVELLER.

ARE WE ROBOTS?

Mr. N. Toon's admirable article on "Freedom and the Will" in your March 13th issue apparently confirms my conclusion that we are *thinking robots*, inasmuch as our thoughts are *mechanically* produced, cause and effect operating throughout; thus determining our consciousness. Is my assumption correct, or is there a snag in it?

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

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