

The Freethinker

Volume LXXIX—No. 22

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

THE PRESENT YEAR, so rich in scientific anniversaries, can also boast of two great theologians, John Calvin, 1509-64, and Joseph Turmel, 1859-1943, both eminent professors of "Divine Science." The centenary of Joseph Turmel, "priest and historian of Dogmas," as he invariably signed his publications, is not likely to be commemorated by any Christian Church in the coming months. For this encyclopaedic scholar who probably knew more about Catholic theology than any man who has ever lived, eventually lapsed into heresy and ended up a convinced unbeliever, who turned his heavy critical artillery against the Church. But while the Roman Catholic Church in which both Calvin and Turmel began their

theological careers is unlikely to commemorate either of these notorious heretics, yet we imagine that in some Protestant circles at least, the name and fame of John Calvin, perhaps the most learned, and certainly the most logical theologian of whom the Reformed Churches can boast, will probably attract its quota of attention in this 450th year after the Reformer's birth. Such praise as may be forthcoming, will probably be of a strictly qualified nature, since apart from a few isolated Calvinistic Conventions in remote areas, even the Protestant Churches have retreated quite a distance both from the puritanical rigours of the original Calvinist Church discipline and from his iron inescapable theological logic which doomed the vast bulk of mankind to everlasting perdition. What Calvin described as "The horrible decree" of Divine Predestination to everlasting torment, has few adherents today; and the Calvinistic—or more accurately—Augustinian theological system developed by Calvin and his school is today almost extinct even in the Protestant Churches which still officially acknowledge the French Reformer as their Founder. Neither Roman Catholicism nor Protestant Modernism, the two main surviving theological schools of today, have got much use for the grim logic of Calvin's *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as interpreted at Geneva in the 16th century.

Calvin at Geneva

Calvin was born in France in 1509 and died (like Luther, in his bed, a rare end for arch-heretics in that persecution-ridden age) at Geneva in 1564. A lawyer by profession, Calvin early embraced the Reformed doctrines while a student at the Paris Sorbonne, where he was a contemporary of his future antagonist, Ignatius of Loyola, the future leader of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Like so many Protestants who did not wish to end their days at the stake, Calvin fled, first to the more tolerant atmosphere of Basle, where he wrote at the age of 26 the first draft of his subsequently much expanded masterpiece, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which may be regarded as the definitive starting-point of the theological system later to become world-famous as Calvinism. Later, the exiled Reformer went to Geneva, where his followers soon acquired control not only of the local Church, but even-

tually of the Civil Government, where Calvin ended as a kind of dictator in morals and politics equally with ecclesiastical matters. Here Calvin both rounded off his theological system and here, too, he introduced into the civic policy of Geneva that Draconian system of puritanical legislation which was later to be imitated in England and North America by Calvin's posthumous disciples, the Pilgrim Fathers and the English Puritans, that harsh morality so trenchantly caricatured by Lord Macaulay's famous description of the English Calvinists who "objected to bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators." In Calvin's Geneva adultery became a capital crime, and children

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

John Calvin

By F. A. RIDLEY

were punished—sometimes by death—for breaking the Biblical commandment, "Honour thy father and mother." As regards religious persecution, Calvin started, like Luther, by opposing it, but he eventually denounced the Spanish Unitarian Servetus to the Catholic (Toulouse) French inquisitors; and when Servetus rashly came to Geneva, Calvin consented to his execution, though it ought to be added in fairness that the actual trial was not conducted by Calvin, and that he himself wished to commute the horrible sentence of burning alive to the more humane sentence of execution by beheading. (The actual roasting alive of Servetus was one of the most horrible on record and lasted nearly an hour.) Calvin died in Geneva in 1564; in his later years he became a kind of Protestant "pope" and exiled Protestants flocked to Geneva from all parts of Europe. Amongst Calvin's correspondents were John Knox, Edward VI of England and his Lord Protectors, the Dukes of Somerset and Northumberland. In his lifetime Calvin became the acknowledged international leader and adviser of the more radical Protestants in both the religious and the political fields.

Augustine and Calvin

Since the publication of Calvin's *Institutes*, it has been customary to refer to the Geneva Reformer's system of Predestination, or rather, fatalistic theology, as Calvinism. But actually such a term is not altogether accurate; a strong strain of Predestinarian-theological fatalism, as it may be perhaps more accurately termed, is implicit and evident in the New Testament, in the Pauline Epistles, in particular in that most influential of all Christian treatises on theology in the annals of Christianity, St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*. Later, but also long before Calvin, the famous African doctor, St. Augustine of Hippo, evolved a complete system of Predestinarian theology in which all the main ideas of Calvin are to be found. Indeed, it might be more accurate to describe Calvinism as "Augustinianism." (Luther, too, was an Augustinian and rejected the doctrine that salvation can be earned by men as a reward for their good works. Luther even described the Biblical *Epistle of James*, which teaches this doctrine, as "an Epistle of straw.") The real difference between Augustine and Calvin lay in the context of their theology

rather than in the actual content of their practically identical theological systems. As a Catholic Bishop, Augustine could not openly defy his Church, which both teaches the efficacy of "good works" as a means of salvation and also that the prayers of the faithful can effect the posthumous lot of souls in purgatory, both of which beliefs presuppose some measure of the possession of Free Will. But Calvin threw all these limitations overboard along with the Catholic Church, consequently he could come out with a naked assertion of the "horrible decree," "Some He hath predestined from eternity to eternal life; others to eternal death." What any man does, good or bad, is entirely irrelevant to his celestial, or infernal destiny. Salvation is never deserved, it is solely due to God's inscrutable Will in the perspectives of eternity. While Rome recognises St. Augustine as a great theologian, she has never entirely accepted his "Calvinistic" views on Predestination and the complete futility of all and any good works as an aid to the salvation of the individual.

The Democratic Theocracy

Calvin's system was what is now called a totalitarian one; he was virtually the civil, as well as religious ruler, of Geneva and his indirect influence on current politics, eco-

nomics and ethics, was almost equal to his direct influence on theology. The Presbyterian system of government which he introduced into the Church, has been aptly termed (by a modern Scottish historian) as "The Democratic Theocracy." In contradistinction from Lutheranism, which has always favoured monarchical absolutism in Germany and Scandinavia, Calvinism was usually to be found in association with radical and republican movements, as King James I testified, "No bishop, no king." Calvinists played a leading role in the Dutch, Scottish and English revolutions in the century after Calvin's death—and Calvinists were prominent among the Pilgrim Fathers who founded the U.S.A. One might almost describe John Calvin as the "Karl Marx" of the Protestant Reformation, with Oliver Cromwell (or John Knox) as its "Lenin." Actually, the indirect but effective influence of Calvinism on the rise of capitalism has been traced by several reputable historians, but it was, of course, *indirect*, since Calvin always wrote primarily as a religious reformer—a fact which some Socialists, e.g., Engels, did not always, apparently, appreciate. But the influence of Calvinism was varied and manifold; if the French Reformer was the "godfather" of Predestination, he was also the stepfather of modern Democracy.

Points from New Novels

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

THERE IS A HORRIFYINGLY EFFECTIVE PICTURE of the haunted childhood of a rabbi's son in *Whither?*, a short novel by Mordecai Zeev Feilerberg (Abelard-Schuman, 12s. 6d.). One gathers that this book has been a great success in the original Hebrew because of the authentic detail and atmosphere. Well, the boy is brought up by a mother who tells him such dreadful stories about a wrathful God that each one blanches a strand of the child's hair. All happiness and joy is Satan's work, the father tells his son; and in the *Reshis Hohmah* the boy reads that to neglect just once to pronounce the benediction when washing one's hands is to be transformed into a frog for seven years. The miserable youth dreams of angels covered with eyes, cruel and terrible, who carry on their shoulders a multitude of children who have sinned to cast them into the great fire in the depths of Hell. No wonder that one night when the boy is sitting alone in Bet Mamidrash ("The house of study"), he suddenly thinks he hears an awful voice saying to him, "Nachman, let me have a pinch of snuff." He looks up and sees "a long tongue stuck out at him from the women's pews in the synagogue" and goes mad!

Another aspect of religious education is commented on by Isabel Stratchey in her new romance, *For Change of Scene* (Blond, 15s.). Here is a relevant quotation: "Harold understood that she had trained herself through years of patient endeavour to appear coolly efficient, but this was like a cloak hiding deep, childish terrors. The Roman Church, an old nanny for lost children, had taken her to its bosom, and clinging to this authoritative bosom she dared look more calmly out at the world. Somehow they stumbled on to the subject of religion and she resisted discussion, thrusting aside his questions with hurried, non-committal evasions, and then when he insisted, giving cold statements of conviction. He also had his nanny at home (his old housekeeper) and could sympathise and condone. Also he was fascinated by any sort of addiction, as though there were an affinity between alcohol, drugs and religion

and they were all in one or other of them up to the neck. So her religion seemed to him not only a support but a fatally interesting weakness, almost a vice. He imagined chemical processes at work in her, changing her composition like mites in cheese, immunising her against him. She was all the more attractive now that she seemed likely to turn out in the end to be unobtainable." Poor girl—poor Harold!

Guy Endore's *Detour Through Devon* (Gollancz, 12s. 6d.) is a really gripping "suspense story" about a professor of philology who is accused of murdering one of his pupils. It is full of interesting asides about semantics—how, for instance, "by the faith of God (*je de dio*)" has turned into the derisive "fiddle-de-dec." I particularly like this little reverie of the professor's: "My mind was occupied with nothing more criminal than the question of how the English word 'nice' can come from a French word meaning 'stupid.' And how 'silly' can come from a German word meaning 'blessed.' How 'cretin,' which is the lowest kind of an imbecile, can come from the word 'Christian.'"

Quiz

1. What do the letters of ZETA stand for?
2. What religious significance has the word Zeta?
3. Who were the last three British Nobel Prize Winners in Literature?
4. What is the Mazarin Bible?
5. Who created Esperanto?
6. Who were the Illuminati?
7. What is the explanation of "Flying Saucers"?

(Answers on page 176)

—NEXT WEEK—

SABBATARIANS' DAY

By C. H. HAMMERSLEY

Mr. Adrian Pigott's "Report on Malta" will be concluded next week

W. H. Hudson's Vision of Earth

By G. I. BENNETT

LITTLE BIOGRAPHICALLY has been written about W. H. Hudson. A writer of distinction on nature, and on man in nature, whose place in English literature is assured, he has a following but has never been popular. No doubt this is one reason why he has not attracted the attention of biographers. But there is another. Hudson was a man of "almost maidenish reserve" (the description is Mr. Samuel J. Looker's) who hated any kind of personal publicity; and before his death he systematically destroyed as much as he could of the correspondence he had had with others in the course of his long life. So one very important source of a biographer's material—personal letters—is missing.

As to his earliest years, Hudson himself provides us with a sketch of a singularly happy boyhood lived in South America recorded unforgettably in the pages of his *Far Away and Long Ago*. But this does not take us beyond adolescence. We do not know what Hudson did for a living in the ensuing thirteen years or so between the ages of fifteen and twenty-eight. He probably drifted from one odd job to the next before finally taking the boat to England where he lived out the remainder of his days, only once departing therefrom (as far as I can ascertain) for a short stay in Ireland. To the Continent he never went—it might not have existed as far as he was concerned. So his life passed uneventfully enough, much of it being lived—paradoxically for a man of his open-air temperament—in the heart of London in a house in St. Luke's Road, Bayswater, inherited by him from his wife upon her death.

And if we know nothing about Hudson's early years of manhood spent in South America, we do not really know more about his first ten years in England. It was a period of almost complete obscurity of which Hudson hardly ever spoke—a period of eking out a living in casual, uncongenial employments. He was 39 when Morley Roberts first met him. This marked the beginning of a long friendship of forty-two years, ending only with Hudson's death—a friendship that provided first-hand material for Roberts when he wrote his revealing *Portrait of Hudson*. But apart from this book, which I read some years ago, the only other biography that has come my way has been Mr. Robert Hamilton's *W. H. Hudson: The Vision of Earth*, published in 1946. Of compact size, some 140 pages in length, it is a delightfully readable account in good literary English of Hudson's life (as far as it is known) and his work.

Amplify, I think, does Mr. Hamilton justify the sub-title of his book by showing that Hudson was pre-eminently a man with a vision centred in and arising out of his intense love of Mother Nature in all her manifold seasons and moods. No man more delighted in the open air than Hudson. No man more hated the artificialities of life as it is lived in the cities. And for industrialism, and its narrowing, cramping environment, he had a peculiar, unabating abhorrence. He was a wholehearted believer in small community life where, he felt, worthwhile traditions are safeguarded and the liberties essential to the whole man preserved. An individualist and a conservative in outlook he certainly was—although not in the ordinary political sense. "I don't understand politics," he once told Roberts; but what he really meant was that politics didn't interest him.

As a Hudsonian, Mr. Hamilton obviously sympathises with Hudson's dislike of modern industrial life, which he thinks (as I do) is prejudicial to a child's growth of character, producing a feeling of rootlessness, and impoverishing the life of the mind. He also has the idea (which seems to me to be not without some validity) that the modern uncreative, frustrating life engendered by industrial civilisation has tended to enhance sexuality, concerning which he quotes Hudson as saying exaggeratedly, "There is no millennium, no rest, no perpetual peace, till that fury has burnt itself out." Hudson apparently believed that life lived on a higher aesthetic level, and in closer proximity to hill, meadow, and woodland, would go some way to reducing modern man's preoccupation with sex. Whether by living near to nature we can transcend art, as Hudson argued, because our instinct for beauty is thereby satisfied and we do not feel the need for re-creating it or finding a substitute for it—this, I think, is a point of some obscurity. In regard to art as in regard to sex, Hudson was simply voicing his own personal reactions. He certainly did not himself feel much need of art.

Mr. Hamilton queries, although he does not dwell upon, whether the South American nature-lover had any strong sexual feeling, interestingly noting Roberts's view that "it is a question whether it was in him to love any one woman with great passion and put himself in chains." Hudson, who married a former opera singer years older than himself, made the surprising statement in a letter that has survived his wholesale destruction of correspondence that he "was never in love with (his) wife" but only with her voice, which moved him "as no singing voice had ever done before." I think I have read that it reminded him of the melody of the birds which, as is well known, delighted Hudson above all else, even in the freest sanctuaries of wild life. For him they seemed to enjoy a freedom and symbolise an ethereality beyond the attainment of man.

Some years ago, basing my argument largely upon the evidence provided by his *Far Away and Long Ago*, I deduced that he did not believe in God.* The reading of other of his writings has since abundantly convinced me that he, like Richard Jefferies, was totally without any supernatural faith—although he was less vociferous than Jefferies in avowing the fact. He accepted the idea of a universe in which God is not, but—one feels—somewhat reluctantly and sadly.

He did not believe in immortality. He was sure that the soul did not survive the dissolution of death, and some of his most lovely and poignant passages are written in the shadow of this thought. And when a lady, visiting him in his gloomy rooms in Bayswater in the last months of his life, tried to reconcile him to the passing of earthly light and life "with a comfort of which I could not avail myself," he brushed it aside with, "Don't talk to me of that. I know, I know. You are young . . ." And he suggested she should read the thoughts on death that he had put into an essay called "The Return of the Chiff-chaff," published in his book, *A Traveller in Little Things*, the last but one to come from his pen.

* In my article, "Did W. H. Hudson Disbelieve in God?", *Literary Guide*, April, 1952.

(To be concluded)

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.

TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

Hon. Editorial Committee:

F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s.; half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d. (In U.S.A.: 13 weeks, \$1.15; 26 weeks, \$2.25; 52 weeks, \$4.50.)

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

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

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.

INDOOR

Orpington Humanist Group.—Meet Shoreham Station, Sunday, May 31st, 11 a.m. Train leaves Victoria 10.15 a.m. (fast); change at Swanley.

Oxford University Humanist Group (Worcester Memorial Room). Monday, June 1st, 8.15 p.m.: P. J. CORBETT, M.A., "God—Myth or Fact?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, May 31st, 7 p.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, "Is Berlin Worth War?"

Notes and News

THE *Leicester Mercury* has been running a series of articles on the pros and cons of euthanasia, with contributions by the Bishop of Leicester, a Roman Catholic Canon, a Doctor and a member of the Euthanasia Society. Then, on May 18th, Mr. C. H. Hammersley's letter giving a Secularist's view, was published. "I have examined the various reasons [against euthanasia] put forward by the Churches," wrote Mr. Hammersley, "and in my opinion none of them can be called anything other than opinions, which may be accepted or rejected at will." He did not believe that life had anything to do with God, but "was given to us by our parents and passed on by us to our children." It therefore belonged to the individual alone, "who must decide in certain circumstances whether to terminate it or not." And, as the member of the Euthanasia Society asked (May 15th): "Is it right or fair that doctors should have to carry alone the heavy burden of responsibility...?"

★

It is impossible to exclude emotion from discussions on euthanasia, and Sir Ronald Fisher's suggestion (in *Adelaide*) that parents "should be able to approach a magistrate, with medical backing, and terminate a useless life," brought the expected outcry, with religion, needless to say, in the van. The technique adopted by the *London Evening Standard* (where we first read the report, 9/4/59) is worthy of note. Sir Ronald is genial and kindly looking, but he was photographed at a calculating machine; and

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £201 17s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; "Jef" (Buenos Aires), £1; N. Cluett, 2s. 6d.; P. Stoddard, 5s.—Total to date, May 22nd, 1959, £203 7s.

the reply to him by a parent was entitled "Could you ever say 'Kill my child?'" It ended with the suggestion that idiot children "bring with them a brighter, clearer love... compassion and humility" and that to "destroy these children at birth would be to kill not only the tiny body, but to murder the mercy and tenderness which lightens life... if Sir Ronald had his way." We have italicised murder to emphasise the emotional charging that enters these last few lines. Notice, too, the suggestion of selfishness in the last half-dozen words, "if Sir Ronald had his way." This is a common, and possibly unconscious habit of opponents of euthanasia: to suggest that its supporters are only concerned about the burden that imbeciles are to others. In fact, euthanasia is compassionate: imbeciles and incurable invalids are often a burden to themselves as well.

★

MATERIALISM is not only to be found in Russia and China, said Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in an address to the World Conference of Religion and Freedom, at Dallas, Texas, on April 18th. There it has been brought in through the front door, but "we have allowed it to slip in through the back door." We have never been to Dallas—though we believe it is quite a place—and if Prince Bernhard went there to say this, we wonder if his journey was really necessary. But then, of course, we are "back door" boys.

New Zealand Hospitality

SAILORS ARE OFTEN AT A LOSS for something to do in foreign ports—even those of the Commonwealth—but I shall never feel so in Auckland. My travels as a steward on a passenger ship recently took me to that city, where I was delighted to meet members of the New Zealand Rationalist Association. Their warm welcome exceeded my wildest expectations.

While at the office I was introduced to Mr. Harry Nash, a well-known organiser and contributor to the Association's paper, *The New Zealand Rationalist*. He invited me to his house to discuss subjects of mutual interest, and I met Mrs. Nash, who proved as keen and kindly as her husband. I was able to take a fellow steward with me on subsequent visits to Mr. and Mrs. Nash. They seemed to know the most interesting people in town, and we spent many happy hours in their company and that of their friends.

We met Odo Strewé, another regular writer for the *N.Z. Rationalist*, a most remarkable man: a rather unorthodox landscape artist who does wonders with rare trees and rocks. Mr. Strewé holds advanced ideas on education and with a co-worker he is engaged on producing a science text book for schools. His own children provide splendid advertisements for his ideas on unconventional unbringing.

Not surprisingly all the Rationalists I met were well read. Astronomy, which happens to be my own hobby, was perhaps the most popular interest among them, and a number of them were grinding their own mirrors for reflector telescopes. But it mustn't be thought that our time was spent solely in intellectual pursuits. We travelled to a surf beach, 40 miles away, by car; had a delightful picnic, and tried our hands (or feet!) on the surf boards. It was great fun.

RONALD J. MOORE.

This Believing World

The American writer, Howard Fast, who once wrote a book about Thomas Paine (with very little understanding of that great man) has now written one on Moses. For him, Moses really lived, but, as one reviewer sadly remarks, "he hasn't stuck strictly to the Biblical story." Moses was not sent down the Nile to save him from Pharaoh, but from being a sacrifice to "a snake god"; and he originated Judaism, not as a revelation from God, but took it from the highly civilised Egyptians. Once one begins to speculate on these lines, any theory will do—but the fact remains that secular history has not discovered a trace anywhere of Moses or Joshua or of the Israelites in Egypt as depicted in Genesis. This book is as much of a fiction as Fast's.

★

The London "Evening News" publishes every week a "Saturday Reflection" which is as Fundamentalist as the most pious Salvation Army lassie could wish. In one of its latest pronouncements, we are told that the Gospel of Mark was published "about 35 years after Our Lord's Ascension," a statement which well signifies the extent of the writer's erudition. The late Dean Inge had nothing but contempt for believers in the "bodily" ascension of "our Lord," which he once said "must either be revolving round the sun, or located in some other star or planet, or poised in inter-stellar space in a temperature of minus 275 degrees Centigrade."

★

As for Mark, no evidence has ever been produced that, in its present form, it was known before the year 180 A.D. The dates for the Gospels given even by the Protestant Churches, are all based on those given by the Church of Rome, and are quite worthless. All the stories of John Mark, and Peter, and Barnabas, and John, are "apocryphal," that is, they are "made up." We know practically nothing, not only of the origins of the Christian Church, but of the origins of the Gospels. Fortunately for Christianity, the vast majority of believers never investigate anything for themselves. That is why they believe.

★

As everyone knows who has met them, the only true Christians in the world are Jehovah's Witnesses, and rival Churches are, of course, up in arms against them. The Bishop of Leicester, for example, is so very angry that he accuses the Witnesses of believing "in a hotch potch of opinions largely made up of heresies rejected at one time or another by the historic Church." We cannot help wondering which is this "historic Church." Is it by any chance the Church of Rome? The truth is surely that *all* the Churches, historic or not, are packed with heresies, according to their rivals. Is not the Church of England completely heretical according to the Church of Rome?

★

In these days of flying saucers, visitors from Venus or other planets, reincarnation—under hypnosis people are telling us of the wonderful time they had as Hindu princes, prime ministers, Casanovas, but never, of course, as scullery maids or slaves—it need cause no surprise to find *The People* publishing an article in which a Mrs. Appleton vouches for the fact that she is "going to have a baby from Venus." After all, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke—helped, of course, by Isaiah—tell us that their hero Jesus was born of a Virgin, and millions and millions of people believe them. Swallowing such a story as Gospel truth makes a fine prelude to others just as true.

Mrs. Appleton was caught washing clothes by "a man from Venus," who told her that her next child would be a boy weighing 7lb. 3oz., who would also be "a leader of men at 14." He would be called Matthew—an honest-to-goodness Christian name. The gentleman from Venus at least knew his Bible. And so all we now have to do is to wait for the happy event. *The People* hopes, however, that the "new baby won't grow up with his (or her) head in the clouds, too!" So do we.

Black Christs and White Lies

By D. SHIPPER

AN INTERESTING ARTICLE in the Ghanaian edition of *Drum* tells of two leading "Black Christs" of Nigeria. Ebute Metta (Lagos) is distinguished by being the home of Emmanuel Odumosu, a 43-year-old, who declares he is actually Jesus Christ. Among his 700 followers can be numbered his seven wives, and he has declared his intention of marrying more—one way of increasing his following—though it seems that the views of Christ on the desirability of marriage seem to have changed slightly!

Odumosu owns a contracting business which brings him in £2,000 per year and announces himself financially independent of his disciples. He is credited with the following statement: "Africans are the Jews of the Dispersion. You are a Jew and I'm a Jew. We are no less Jews because we were not born in Judea. A man is not a fish because he was born on a boat."

We leave this remarkable piece of logic with the encouraging observation that the foregoing news is bound to send the price of pork down. Incidentally, he requires his followers to be flogged nine times before they can join him. Emmanuel or Jesus (we don't know which he prefers to be called) has also clearly defined his attitude to the other religions of the world: "The person speaking to you is the Saviour of the Whole World. In the unsearchable mysteries of God I come as the Bride of the Lamb [we can take it for granted the lamb was Kosher] to collect the elect and to establish His Kingdom on Earth. The world Churches must now give up."

It grieves us to report that in spite of these specific instructions (which are, after all, straight from the horse's mouth) such unworthy characters as Pope John XXIII, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Billy Graham have made no move as yet to wind up their estates.

The second Nigerian Jesus is 40-year-old Ededem Basse, of Ikot Ekpene. Disdaining the customary but more plebeian twelve disciples, he has forty reputedly beautiful girls who cater, we suppose, to his every whim. Having accumulated a fortune, he lives in a palace with his forty maidens, but once a year leaves his palatial apartments to be pulled through the streets of his village in an ancient chariot. Many of his followers believe he is able to perform miracles. If he is able to keep forty beautiful girls happy we are inclined to agree.

You may think it peculiar that we write about two Christs in the one article. Denying this, we point out that we have always asserted Jesus was a split personality anyway!

Catholic Education ?

WITH the device—known as the "Numeraid"—normally staggering problems don't even faze first-graders. For instance, a nun at St. Sebastian's School in Ross Township, Pa., tells her first-grade wards: "Children, multiply 1,547 by 2." In a matter of seconds, the answer choruses back from all corners of the classroom—"3,084." "Just a routine problem," said Sister Judith.

—Los Angeles Examiner.
Not quite so routine, perhaps. Take another look, Sister.

The N.S.S Annual Conference

BRISTOL — 1959

THE WARM and sunshiny weather which greeted delegates, members, and friends of the National Secular Society at Bristol this Whitsun helped to make the Social and Reception held in the Co-operative Hall on Saturday evening a most enjoyable one. After a short speech from Mr. Dave Shipper welcoming the visitors, we sat down not only to enjoy meeting new and old friends, but also to substantial refreshments as guests of the Executive Committee, with Mrs. E. Warner providing entertainment on the piano.

Promptly at 10 a.m. on Sunday, May 17th, the President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, took the chair, and after the Minutes of the last Conference were passed, the General Secretary, Mr. Colin McCall, read out the Executive's Annual Report, which was warmly received. Copies, when printed, will be sent out to all Branches and members. The Financial Report was then presented by the Treasurer, Mr. W. Griffiths, and after its adoption was proposed by Mr. G. Plume and seconded by Mr. J. Gordon, a number of points, mostly relating to the possible purchase of new premises in Goswell Road, which necessitated the selling of certain investments, were carefully explained.

The election of the new President for the year was then proceeded with, Mr. L. Ebury temporarily taking the chair. There were two candidates—Mr. Ridley, who was proposed by Mr. J. W. Barker and seconded by Mrs. Ebury; both warmly recommended his re-election; and Mr. F. J. Corina, proposed by Mr. Smith (Manchester) and seconded by Mr. G. H. Taylor, who both felt that a change might benefit the Society.

A letter explaining the case brought against Mr. Corina by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, who were, on appeal, proved to be completely wrong, and had to pay costs, was then read out by Mr. Ebury.

In the discussion which followed many speakers took part—Mr. McCall pointing out how the immediate presence of Mr. Ridley was so often necessary in carrying out the work of the Society. Mr. Percy Turner once again recorded his determined opposition to the Society having any officials, while Mrs. Tacchi-Morris thought a change in leadership would do good. Mr. Kirk pointed out that both Mr. Ridley and Mr. Corina were Honorary Members of the Leicester Secular Society.

After a number of other speeches, the vote was taken—for Mr. Ridley, the number was 34, for Mr. Corina, 5, abstentions 4.

Mr. Ridley then took the chair as the President for the ensuing year and in a brief speech he hoped that he would fulfil all the duties expected of him.

The election of the two Vice-Presidents then took place. On a straight vote by ballot Mr. Ebury received 33 votes, Mr. Mosley 29, Mr. Taylor 20 and Mr. Corina 16, but a card vote was called for by Bradford, Central London, Manchester, Wales and Western and West London Branches, with the result that Mr. Ebury received 308, Mr. Taylor 261, Mr. Mosley 168, and Mr. Corina 133. Messrs. Ebury and Taylor being duly elected.

As Treasurer again, after a warm appreciation of his—honorary—services to the Society, by Mr. McCall, Mr. Griffiths was unanimously elected. Only those who have worked with him, like our General Secretary and the members of the Executive, know how much we owe Mr. Griffiths for his firm and efficient handling of the many daily problems the N.S.S. has to face, as well as those of the Secular Society Ltd., and the G. W. Foote Company.

The Auditors, Messrs. Wright, Fairbrother and Steel, were also unanimously reappointed. After which the election of the Executive Committee (excluding the London area) was taken *en bloc* and carried. There being a contest for the two London area representatives, the election was by ballot, Mrs. E. Venton and Mr. C. H. Cleaver being finally elected after North London had withdrawn Mr. P. F. Moore's name, pending an interview with Mr. Moore.

Before the next Motion on the "Agenda was discussed, Mr. Turner wanted to know why his own Resolution submitted to the Agenda Committee had not appeared. Mr. Johnson (on behalf of the Executive) pointed out that some of those sent in were perhaps ambiguous or contrary to rule, etc. There were always good reasons.

The Motion by Wales and Western Branch:

That this Society form a Press Propaganda Group to exploit the possibilities of unified action in the correspondence columns of local and national newspapers, was argued at length by Mr. Shipper, who proposed it, and by Mr. Taylor, who seconded it and who pointed out that he had suggested similar action in 1956. Editors as a rule took little notice of one or two individual letters, but would soon sit up when faced with strong concerted action. Mr. Smith fully agreed, but thought the Branches could deal with Press propaganda in their own areas. Mr. Ebury, Mrs. Venton, Mrs. Tacchi-Morris, and Messrs. Caines, Smith, Turner, Kirk, Miller, and McCall, all took part in a valuable discussion. The Motion was agreed to.

The comprehensive Motion by Bradford and Manchester Branches:

That this Society support all opposition from other sources to the attempts of Roman Catholics to secure larger public grants for their schools, while urging the secular solution (*i.e.* the total abolition of religious teaching in schools) as the right and proper one, was also the subject of much discussion by Messrs. Smith, Corina, Kirk, Miller, and others. The true and only fair solution of the religious squabbles in schools was the secular one, and Mr. McCall gave details of the re-formed Secular Education League with active members like Messrs. Coates, Hankinson, Burnet, Blackham, Micklewright and others working for secular education. The great difficulty was to get the teachers themselves interested. Only a dozen replies had been received after advertisements in teachers' journals, but 1,000 letters were to be sent to staff rooms up and down the country. The Motion was agreed to.

The wording of the Motion by North London Branch:

Seeing that criminal statistics show that the profession of religious belief is no guarantee of good social behaviour, this Conference protests against the excessive time given to religious broadcasts on the BBC, and suggests that talks on scientific humanism, civics and social ethics would be a valuable educational substitute, at first caused some discussion; and amendments were proposed and seconded, but Mr. McCall, supporting the Agenda wording, pointed out how very difficult it was to get actual or authentic statistics of the religion of criminals. Mr. Martin, on the authority of Mrs. Margaret Knight, thought statistics of religious delinquents were available. Mr. Corina agreed, but it was generally thought that they were selective. Other points of view were put forward and the Motion was finally passed with the words after "would be" changed to "of more positive social value."

The Motion by Wales and Western Branch:

That this Society undertake an advertising campaign in an effort to boost the sales of THE FREETHINKER and thus bring

the movement to the notice of unattached secularists among the general public, though fully agreed upon, raised the point that advertising was very expensive, and results of spending a great deal of money were by no means certain. A well-planned advertising campaign for THE FREETHINKER was far beyond our resources at present, but it was agreed to leave the matter to the Executive's discretion.

The comprehensive Motion by Central London and Manchester Branches:

That this Conference regrets that no report on Catholic Action has as yet been formulated by the Society and recommends that material for such a report be gathered forthwith from Branches and all other sources, provided material for a hot discussion. Mr. Alexander did not think the Society had done as much as it ought to have done against the menace of Catholic Action, while Mr. Smith pointed out that we in the South had little idea of what was going on in the North, particularly in the Manchester area, where Roman Catholics were particularly strong. He was supported by Mr. Turner, but Mr. McCall urged the Conference to reject the Motion. It was not true that the N.S.S. had done nothing about the menace and he gave particulars of a letter sent out to all Branches and all members asking for definite information on the matter. Not a *single* Branch replied. One individual member had done so. This could not be called neglect by the Executive. The truth was that, as Mr. Ridley pointed out, it was most difficult to get real evidence of what was being done by Catholic Action. Its members were masters of the art of "burrowing," or working underground. The Motion was lost.

The Motion by the Bradford Branch that "the Executive Committee be urged to introduce more militancy" was withdrawn by Mr. Corina. It was only intended to be an observation in a letter.

The Motion by Wales and Western Branch:

That this Society appoint a sub-committee to examine the approach to youth made by foreign freethought and humanist organisations, was agreed upon, and Mr. Shipper, who could so ably deal with it, was asked to supply data.

The Motion by West London Branch:

That, in view of the impending financial difficulties of our movement, the Secular Society Ltd. be approached to consider the setting up of a joint Ways and Means Committee, moved by Mr. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Williams, was more or less countered by the financial difficulties, as was ably explained by Mr. Griffiths. It was withdrawn.

The Motion by Wales and Western Branch:

That this Society organise an annual weekend school for members and sympathisers, was also vigorously discussed. An amendment was proposed and seconded that the word "consider" should be substituted for the word "organise," though Mr. Shipper asked whether we could organise one if necessary? Mrs. Tacchi-Morris offered a school in Somerset as a beginning, but Mr. McCall thought it would be difficult to get eminent professors or other famous people to address such a school. Mr. Caines felt that something should be done about it; Mr. Kirk thought the various areas could better organise their own weekend schools. Such ventures on a national scale were notoriously difficult. Mr. Johnson gave details of the weekend schools organised by his own trade union, and after Mr. Shipper had expressed his support for the Motion, it was carried with "attempt to" inserted before "organise."

The Motion by the Executive Committee:

That a questionnaire to candidates at the next general election be devised by a sub-committee based on suggestions at this Conference, was amended to end "based on the policy of this society"

and passed, members being asked to submit suggestions.

The next two Motions, Motion by North London Branch:

That, in view of statements in THE FREETHINKER re the burial of freethinkers with religious rites contrary to their expressed wishes, this Conference urges the Executive Committee to consider ways and means of trying to rectify the position through approaches to Cremation Societies and other bodies, and the comprehensive Motion by Central London and North London Branches:

This Conference declares that the only considerations in judging applications for adoption should be the suitability and good moral character of the would-be guardians. It supports the Government policy of encouraging adoption rather than the placing of children in institutions, but protests at the discrimination by Adoption Societies against non-religious applicants and calls upon the Government to remedy this evil, were, apart from some questions, unanimously agreed upon.

Finally, the venue for the next Conference was fixed for Birmingham, after some little discussion. It was many years since Birmingham had been asked to act as hosts for a Conference and the Branch's invitation was welcomed.

An excellent luncheon was provided by the George and Dragon Hotel, and thoroughly enjoyed by all present. Later, the members went, after tea, to the Downs for their outdoor Demonstration, and various speakers attracted big audiences—and many hecklers! Messrs. Barker, Caines, Ebury, McCall, Shipper and Smith were all in good form, and it was a tired but happy company of Secularists from many parts of the country who discoursed in their hotel lounge until the early hours of the morning.

On Whit Monday, though many members had to return to their respective homes, Mr. Dave Shipper organised a sightseeing tour of Bristol and its environs, which provided a happy ending to a most successful Conference.

A word of thanks is due to Mr. and Mrs. Caines, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan, Mrs. Seibert, and to all who helped in making this Conference such a success. H.C.

CORRESPONDENCE

SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

Referring to Mr. G. H. Taylor's explanatory comments on Humanism, with which I agree, it seems regrettable, but necessary to use the term "Scientific Humanism," to prevent misunderstanding, the adjective "Scientific" implying "Atheistic." As "Freethinker" implies, *Atheist*, generally speaking, so "Humanist" will more and more connote *Atheist*. I hope so. C. E. RATCLIFFE.

In the absence of a clear-cut definition, the term "Scientific Humanism" (preferred by Mr. G. H. Taylor in THE FREETHINKER, May 1st, 1959) by itself means nothing, for, just as "Humanism" has its varieties, so also have the terms "science" and its adjective "scientific," e.g., "Christian Science" and the many "scientific" (though in reality pseudo) systems of psychology. Perhaps Mr. Taylor would kindly give us his own definition of "Scientific Humanism," which, logically, should exclude all other meanings of "science" and "humanism." J. C. HORUS.

[Friend Horus is mistaken in supposing the "absence of a clear-cut definition." It is given on pages 19-20 of Margaret Knight's *Morals Without Religion*.—G.H.T.]

SPINOZA

May I thank you and the author for the excellent article, "Freedom and the Will (in THE FREETHINKER, 13/3/59) by Nicholas Toon? The name of Spinoza is nowhere mentioned by the author, but his spirit is present in every word. It is the most lucid statement I have read of this great thinker's doctrine (central to his philosophy) that all things are necessarily determined in Nature—which is only another way of saying that "every event is necessarily determined by its antecedents—the basic law of science, as the author says.

One should recall the fact that Spinoza completely rejected the theological determinism (the "doctrine of ends") of theology, in favour of a scientific determinism which leaves man "free" to develop control over his way of life in proportion to his ever

increasing knowledge of Nature. In *this* way man is "free"—nothing (and no one) can escape this scientific determinism.

THOS. F. ADAMS.

P.S.: Perhaps one of your correspondents can give us an article on Spinoza? I am a recent reader of your journal.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

I sympathise deeply with Mr. J. B. Potheary's problem (*THE FREETHINKER*, 3/4/59) as to the withdrawal of children from Religious Instruction.

It is all too easy for the solitary withdrawn child to become an object of curiosity or even of ridicule to other children, added to which forbidden fruit (even of the religious kind) can seem very attractive to the immature mind.

Personally I do not withdraw my child, but discuss religious issues with her, pointing out the faults and failings of the stories, etc., which she is learning during R.I., always stressing that one does not have to believe *anything* which is not reasonable, or which is open to doubt.

I do not think it is possible to withdraw any child from religious influences in a society such as ours. History lessons, for instance, teem with religion. Neither is it desirable to ask our children to bury their heads like so many ostriches. They want to know what it's all about.

Let them find out. Answer their questions, and so long as religion is not confirmed in the home, there can be no indoctrination; and finally, when the child is absolutely sick of the rubbish and tells you so, then is the time for withdrawal.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

It is one thing to "allow" our children to partake of religious instruction; it is quite another thing to "allow" them to participate in religious worship. It is the latter indulgence that can have the most serious effects—and it seems that not a few Freethinkers avoid this problem. Why did Walter Steinhardt fail to consider religious worship? To my mind, the danger in this practice is that, if the authorities can get children to do such fantastically stupid things (praying to nothing for something they are never going to get) every day, *en masse*, there is every chance that they will follow the herd in everything for the rest of their days.

If both parents are atheists I would recommend withdrawal from worship; never mind R.I., it isn't half so serious.

ERNIE CROSSWELL.

THE FREETHINKER FOR 1958
BOUND VOLUME 27/6. Postage 2/-. *Limited number only*
PIONEER PRESS, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1

"LOUD MUSIC FAR OFF" Essays by JOHN O'HARE
Brilliant and Stimulating 2/9 post free
I.L.P. BOOKSHOP . 6 ENDSLEIGH STREET . W.C.1

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW
By ROBERT S. W. POLLARD. Price 2/6, post 6d.
PIONEER PRESS . 41 GRAY'S INN ROAD . LONDON . W.C.1

THOMAS PAINE MEMORIAL MEETING

Organised by
The Humanist Council and the World Union of Freethinkers
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1

SUNDAY, JUNE 7th, 7 p.m.
(Paine died June 8th, 1809)

DR. CARL BODE
(Cultural Attaché, U.S. Embassy)

MICHAEL FOOT
(Editor, "Tribune")

DR. RONALD FLETCHER
(Bedford College, University of London)

DENNIS PHOMBEAH
(Secretary, Committee of African Organisations)

F. A. RIDLEY (President N.S.S.) and CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

Chairman: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER (President, World Union of Freethinkers)

All welcome

All welcome

All welcome

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Zero Energy Thermonuclear Assembly. 2. The little room over the church porch where in former times the sexton lived and guarded the documents. 3. Sir Winston Churchill (1953), Bertrand Russell (1950), T. S. Eliot (1948). 4. An edition of the Latin Vulgate, taking its name from the owner; it was used by Gutenberg for printing the first book for which metal types were used. 5. Zamenhoff. 6. The "Enlightened Ones" of religion, who, in the 16th century onwards, sought to purify religion of its superstition; they became a secret society. 7. Like rainbows, they are shapes, not objects. It is now accepted that they are atmospheric mirages or mock suns caused by abnormal atmospheric conditions. This, of course, is not taking into account those occasions when they are straightforward external objects such as meteorological or cosmic-ray balloons, or when they are simply hallucinations.

G.H.T.

CATHOLIC IMPERIALISM & WORLD FREEDOM

By AVRO MANHATTAN

Second Edition

AN IMPORTANT COMPREHENSIVE BOOK ON CATHOLICISM IRREFUTABLE FACTUAL EVIDENCE about Vatican political directives to Catholics; about the Catholic denial that the people have any rights; about political Catholicism in England and the U.S.A.; about Vatican diplomacy and international espionage; and hundreds of other vital items.

INVALUABLE for private and public discussions, writings to newspapers, etc. Fully documented and indexed.

528 printed pages, paper cover.

PRICE: 20/- (postage 1/3). \$3.75 (postage 15c.)

PIONEER PRESS . 41 GRAY'S INN ROAD . LONDON . W.C.1

IS SPIRITUALISM TRUE? By C. E. Ratcliffe.

Price 1/-; postage 2d.

(Proceeds to THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund)

THE WORLD MENACE OF CATHOLIC ACTION.

By A. Stewart.

Price 1/-; postage 2d.

THE POPES AND THEIR CHURCH.

By Joseph McCabe.

Price 2/-; postage 4d.

CAN MATERIALISM EXPLAIN MIND? By G. H.

Taylor.

Price 3/6; postage 6d.

THE PAPACY IN POLITICS TODAY.

By Joseph McCabe.

Price 2/6; postage 5d.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP.

By H. Cutner.

Price 2/6; postage 6d.

FREEDOM'S FOE—THE VATICAN.

By Adrian Pigott.

A collection of Danger Signals for those who value liberty. 128 pages. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN: Its Character, Methods and Aims.

By Avro Manhattan.

3rd Edition—Revised and Enlarged.

Price 21/-; postage 1/3

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING.

By Chapman Cohen.

Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound.

Price 7/6 each series; postage 7d. each.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT.

By Chapman Cohen.

Price 3/- (specially reduced price); postage 5d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition).

By Chapman Cohen.

Price 5/6; postage 7d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.

18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker.

Price 5/6; postage 8d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner.

Price 1/3; postage 4d.

AGE OF REASON.

Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen.

Cloth 4/-; postage 7d.

HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.

British Christianity critically examined. By C. G. L. Du Cann.

Price 1/-; postage 3d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (10th Edition).

By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball.

Price 4/6; postage 6d.

A CHRONOLOGY OF BRITISH SECULARISM.

By G. H. Taylor.

Price 1/-; post 2d.