

The Freethinker

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SOMETHING LIKE 10 MILLION VIEWERS must have seen the two appearances on TV of Mr. Douglas Johnson in a carefully prepared and no doubt perfectly sincere manifestation of his powers as a medium in full contact with "spirits" of the dead. The Spiritualist journal "with the world's largest circulation," *Psychic News* declared itself quite satisfied that at last a "seance gets fair play on BBC TV"; and it chortled with joy at the wonderful proof that

Mr. Johnson gave of his "contacts" with the "spirit world," and the way in which he produced irresistible evidence that the dead were speaking through him. **Britain Staggered!**

Many readers sent us cuttings from various newspapers to prove how "staggered" they were — like *The People*, for example, which because one of its writers, a Mr. J. Justice (who apparently knows very little about Spiritualism and who gave one the impression that this "seance" was the first he ever saw) was himself "staggered," told his breathless readers that "this man has staggered all Britain." Of course Mr. J. Justice *knew* — though whether his information came from the spirits of the mighty dead, or from the same source as that of Mr. Johnson, was not easily deducible from his preposterous article. However, it would be too pessimistic not to perpetuate in these columns his final and most majestic pronouncement: "And I am convinced that there will not be a single scoffer among the viewers." So important did he consider this pontifical assertion that he actually put it into italics! It would be safe to say that in all probability there must have been millions "staggered" at the complete inadequacy of Mr. Johnson to assert *dogmatically* anything whatever of any note. I use the word "dogmatically" because, if information had really come from somebody now dead but once alive about his or her illness, it would have to be *literally* correct. And anybody who had been a few times to the kind of seance we were given will have noticed exactly the same technique, the utter impossibility of the "medium" to make any clear, definite, assertion of any kind.

Fishing!

In other words, Mr. Johnson was constantly "fishing," constantly putting in little bits of possible happenings, or names, and brilliantly getting out of any tight hole he had let himself in for when he was, as happened over and over again, wrong. As one example, he "sensed" the name "Frank," and as it conveyed nothing to his sitter, he told us that perhaps some other entity named Frank had "impinged" on his own special preserves from Spiritland. But surely the "guide" (or "helper" as Mr. Johnson chose to call it) could have easily shoved the unwelcome intruder out of the magic circle?

Speaking as one who has seen many of this kind of seance, it was I who was staggered that anybody could be taken in by its guesses, by its "fishing," by its gross mistakes. So little indeed did the BBC consultant psychiatrist, Dr. Stafford Clark, who compered the show, know of

Spiritualism that he actually declared that Mr. Johnson had been able to do something which no other medium could have done or offered to do for TV — a preposterous claim that even *Psychic News* had to disavow. Dozens of mediums could have duplicated anything shown on TV by Mr. Johnson, and many would have far better concealed his kind of mistakes.

In any case, a good part of the show was repeated for viewers to consider again, and it was then more easily seen how often Mr. Johnson "prompted" the sitter (Dr. Stafford Clark's wife) and how superbly Mrs. Clark fell for the bait. As far as I was able to judge, Mr. Johnson led her very cleverly to agree that her

mother had died of cancer — though in actual fact it was not cancer of the stomach as he suggested.

Sceptical Experts

But the really interesting part of the second showing was the appearance of the "experts" who were brought in to give their views after having studied afresh the whole seance, and not one of them agreed that Mr. Johnson had proved the spirit case. On the contrary indeed. Chan Canasta, perhaps the most brilliant living exponent of card divination and other mental "phenomena" of the "impossible," could hardly conceal his contempt for the "spirit" hypothesis. He made it quite clear that all *he* did was done without the "supernatural" — though no doubt he will be heartily disbelieved by most spiritualists. A member of the Society for Psychical Research who admitted that he was just a little impressed at first, found out on a second consideration that there was very little in Mr. Johnson's performance which could not have easily been done absolutely without the help of "spirits." And nearly similar views were expressed by a Research Psychologist. In fact, the second viewing neatly exploded all Mr. Johnson's pretensions of contact with the "spirit" world.

But surely there was another way in which Mr. Johnson or any other of the "well-known" mediums (the description "well-known" is almost always applied to mediums who are hardly known at all outside a very small circle of believers) which really would confound sceptical critics. The *Daily Mail* gave particulars with portraits of murders of about a dozen unlucky people. In spite of months of intense research, the murderers have so far not been found. Why does not Mr. Johnson get in touch with the poor victims who would certainly be only too pleased to see that justice was done even if they had been, against their wish, suddenly transported to a happier and sunnier clime. Not one of these murders has been solved, and not a single medium has volunteered to come on TV and prove how easy it is to find the murderers with the help of "guides" in the spirit world. Whether somebody is called Frank or Doris or Dorothy is a matter of small moment; but the administration of justice is a big cause. No doubt, however, that when the police do discover some clues which lead to the capture of a murderer or two, and the cases

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The T.V. Seance

By H. CUTNER

are completely forgotten, some medium in twenty years' time will claim that it was he or she who put the police on the track. Nobody will bother to expose the gross deception, and the people who swallow anything in a paper or a book will point out with pride that it was all done by a medium. Without one, our police would be helpless.

What about Freethought?

The BBC, all the same, must be congratulated on having staged this particular seance, and we can only hope that they will now give a representative Freethinker a chance to put up a reasoned case not only against religion and the supernatural in general, but against Christianity in particular. There are plenty of Freethinkers to choose from. But perhaps the great success of Mrs. Margaret Knight on TV has frightened the Corporation and the parsons on its staff — to say nothing of the shrieks of horror which always follow in abundance from Fundamentalists after a BBC speaker has hinted at some mild heretical views. To put it another way. We Freethinkers have now not only to fight organised Christianity, but also the immense publicity campaign it has bequeathed to itself on the radio and TV. The odds have always been against us but never so great as now.

Spiritualists have had their chance and miserably failed. Is there a chance for Freethought?

Is He coming soon?

By N. E. S. WEST

IN THE *Los Angeles Times* for January 27th, 1960, the White Memorial Church makes the startling statement that over one million Seventh Day Adventists devoutly believe that Jesus is coming soon. Are we supposed to be awed? There are perhaps a billion people in the world who not only do not expect Jesus to come soon, but billions who are convinced that Jesus was not the son of God; that he was not, and is not, any part of the Godhead; that he is not the Messiah. Against the number of Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Chinese and Japanese who care nothing about Jesus, the million Seventh Day Adventists appear very insignificant indeed.

The French firmly believed that the Maginot Line was a perfect defence against German aggression. They were wrong. In the days of Copernicus and Galileo, it was thought the earth was flat and that the earth was the centre of the Universe. These two men changed the concepts of millions. But now the question of the early return of Jesus has been raised by the Adventists, we might remember that it was Jesus himself who is alleged to have declared that within his generation, all things would pass away. People gave away their property and followed him. They prayed and starved. History is filled with prophets predicting the end of the world; all trying to deceive the simple-minded. It seems appropriate for us to think about the manner of his coming and the things that might be expected since man has created his God in his own image. This time, he will not have it so easy.

In certain non-English countries, there are, I believe, laws against anyone claiming to be Jesus. The first time he was supposed to have been on earth, Jesus was a God-Man. Many fail to find any evidence of the God part, and many say the man part was just a myth. But he was a man according to the Bible and he was followed by fishermen and the like. They went about the country and when they came to a city, they would ask for food and lodging. If this was denied them, they cursed the city and shook the dust of it from their feet. (Matthew 10.7-15.) Now if Jesus returns, he will want a place to stay. I suggest the best place would be with the Pope. The Pope claims to

be Christ's Vicar on earth, so Jesus should certainly stay with him.

Perhaps the Devil will take him up into a high mountain again and promise him the earth. But he won't need to turn water into wine. There are plenty of breweries and suchlike around, and some are operated by the representatives of the Vicar of Christ. Maybe one way to show the folly of this idea — that Jesus is coming soon — is to encourage people to read the Bible. Jesus is said to have told his followers: "And as ye go, preach saying the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (Matthew 10.7.)

Are people reasoning animals, when they are not convinced of these errors after 1900 years? We can ignore the expectation of a million Seventh Day Adventists, for the world has never been ruled by the simple, the poor and the ignorant — except when they have been directed by religious fanatics. There is an account in the *Los Angeles Times* (31/1/60) of a Billy Graham rally in Nigeria. Unbelievers distributed pamphlets stating: "Jesus not the Son of God. Not crucified. Did not rise from the dead. Did not ascend to heaven. Will not come again." At a race meeting you choose your horse and place a bet. Billy Graham is betting on Jesus while the Muslims are backing Muhammed — and Allah!

Long odds in each case.

Here and There

KWAME NKRUMAH, Prime Minister of Ghana, was educated by the Jesuits. Hence his meek and humble outlook and his exemplary tolerance against opposition! He not only offered to buy Lady Docker's yacht, he is probably the only Prime Minister in history who has his head depicted on his country's stamps. And he decorously declared: "My country must become a Christian land." So far, of its 4½ million inhabitants, only a bare 600,000 are Roman Catholics.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM is losing in the long run. Despite the fact that 7.5m. Catholics are born every year and 21,000 are baptized every day in the name of Rome, the daily increase in non-Christians amounts to 74,000. In other words, the Church comprises 480m. and faces another 2,190m. made up of: 914m. "heathen," 255m. Protestants, 405m. Muhammedans, 200m. Oriental Churches, 301m. Hindus, 103m. Buddhists, and 12m. Jews.

A HOLY TOOTH OF BUDDHA, 2 inches long, will be exposed for adoration in Mao's China. In 1071 when factions warred against each other for the possession of this relic, it disappeared; eight centuries later it was, thank heaven! found again (just like the Holy Coat of Trier) and to make sure that such mishap shall not occur again, Communist China is to build a beautiful "People's Pagoda" around it.

THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF GERMANY adopted a new Programme in 1959 after the leadership made their peace with the Church. The preamble to the new Constitution states that Socialism is based on the fundamentals of "Christian Ethics" (whatever this is to mean). Nevertheless, pious Dr. Adenauer complained that the Germans were irreligious: "I have always had the feeling that Berlin was a pagan city." When Bavaria's Catholic Action held a conference in February last to decide whether or not the Church permitted the use of the H-bomb, Prof. Gundlach, the Pope's Jesuit doctrinaire, declared its use was justified if our "highest ethical values" were in danger. Why not sacrifice mankind for the Glory of God?

P.G.R.

The Great Religious Orders—2

The Franciscans

By F. A. RIDLEY

UNDOUBTEDLY A DECISIVE TURNING-POINT in the evolution of European civilisation was represented by the Crusades — 1096-1300 — which established a connection between the semi-barbaric Europe of the Dark Ages and the more advanced culture of the Muslim East. The Crusades marked the dividing line between the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages, properly so-called; in which an ecclesiastical civilisation rather similar to the present theocracy in Tibet, was founded under the ægis of the Catholic Church. One of the results of this contact with a higher culture was the re-emergence of religious unbelief and scepticism, and the appearance of rival religions such as Manichean Dualism (the French Manicheans were known as Albigenses from their headquarters in the town of Albi) which threatened the current spiritual and temporal authority of the Catholic Church. So widely had unbelief spread, that a 13th century Pope actually wrote: "No one believes in Christianity nowadays." That great Protestant scholar, the late Professor Coulton, held the opinion that during the 13th century, Western Europe was on the verge of a Reformation.

The fact that this had to be postponed for another three centuries, was due to the counter-measures taken by the Church. Rome combined terrorism, in the shape of the Inquisition, and demagoguery, represented by the new Orders of preaching friars, or Franciscans and Dominicans, as they became known after the names of their Founders, Saints Francis and Dominic. These, otherwise so different Orders, both arose to combat the same danger that confronted the Church; and both differed considerably in their technique from the older stationary Orders like the Benedictines. From the 13th century down to the Protestant Reformation, they remained the leading Catholic Orders. Both were mobile Orders of walking and talking friars, who went out into the highways and byways to preach to the people, much as, presumably, the early Christian preachers did. But, in both their mental outlook and in their specialised tasks, there was a wide difference between Franciscans and Dominicans. Between them (and with the sinister co-operation of the "Black Terror," the Inquisition, which the Dominicans ran as a kind of clerical "Gestapo") they postponed the Reformation from the 13th to the 16th century, and were in fact, the effective saviours of the Catholic Church. (cf. G. C. Coulton, *Inquisition and Liberty*.)

St. Francis (1182-1226) was probably the most striking personality and — in some ways at least — the most attractive figure ever to be enrolled among the saints of the Catholic Church. His Christianity was of a most unusual kind and in many ways was of a markedly heretical nature which could easily have caused Francis to be burned at the stake as, indeed, many of his more literal-minded followers were burned soon after the Saint's own death. Francis had really very little in common with the ecclesiastical Christianity of the Middle Ages. As Reinach aptly observes: "Our age understands St. Francis better than did Voltaire. We see in him not so much the worker of miracles, as the friend of the lowly, the mystic spouse of poverty; the heart beating in sympathy with universal nature, even of animals, trees, and flowers. That sentimental Christianity is so different from the high and dry religion before his day, and recalls Buddhism by so many traits, that an Oriental influence is here very probable. Such an influence may have been transmitted to Italy by the Manicheans called Albigenses, among whom Francis

seems to have spent his early life. His respect for the hierarchy which the Albigenses repudiated, saved him from persecution. Thanks to him, the Church assimilated the better part of the heretic teaching of that period just as, ten centuries before, some of the Hellenic spirit of Gnosticism."

The extraordinary personality of St. Francis made a tremendous impression upon his contemporaries. He was freely compared with Christ, and a medieval proverb actually ran: "Francis listens to those to whom God will not listen." Even in recent years, Mr. Aldous Huxley has related how, upon the gate of a Franciscan monastery in the wilds of Central America, he himself saw the sign of the two crossed hands once common amongst Franciscan monasteries, that of Francis being distinguished from that of Christ by his own brown Franciscan habit. St. Francis, in fact, had he lived in the first, instead of the thirteenth century, could easily have become the "Christ" of a new religion; and the early Franciscan movement had all the makings of a formidable heresy, into which it would probably have developed had matters only taken a slightly different turn. As it was, the Inquisition actually burned quite a number of the Fraticelli, those Franciscan friars who pressed their founder's precepts about poverty to the point of holding a kind of Utopian Communism which denied the right of the Church and clergy to hold any property at all; not at all a popular doctrine with the wealthy hierarchy of the Age of Faith when the Church owned 40 to 50 per cent. of the land of Europe. The Saint himself however, was too useful to be burned. Instead he was canonised only two years after his death—1228—a record in hagiography? Rome largely overcame her contemporary crisis by cashing in on the tremendously popular reputation of the "Umbrian Christ," as the Saint of Assisi was described in his lifetime.

The Order founded by St. Francis and named after him, has survived to our own day, though it seems to have been purged pretty drastically after its founder's demise. According to that eminent ex-Franciscan, Joseph McCabe, the Saint himself did not have much to do with the actual organisation of the Order named after him, but his peculiar outlook seems to have left deep traces. In the main, however, the Franciscans seem to have remained much as he left them; as an Order that has concentrated primarily on preaching to the poor. But they have modified the original constitution drawn up by St. Francis, which forbade the acquisition of secular learning. The Franciscans have produced some notable theologians, particularly Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, perhaps the most acute thinker of the Middle Ages and the manufacturer of "Ockham's Razor" (*entia non multiplicanda sunt praeter necessitatem* — hypotheses must not be multiplied beyond necessity). In more recent times, the Franciscan Order produced another notable, if heretical theologian in the person of Fr. Anthony — Joseph McCabe! In technical questions relating to Christian theology, the Franciscans formed a distinctive school of theology, chiefly notable for having succeeded in imposing their pet dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary upon the Church; a most notable victory, since they had first to overcome the embittered opposition of the rival Dominican school, led by the redoubtable St. Thomas Aquinas himself. (As

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

In BBC's "Any Questions," one of the queries the other week, dealt with a Russian scientist's statement that Lot's wife (in the Bible) was turned into a pillar of salt because of some explosion by "space men" of nuclear weapons. What did Mrs. McLaughlin and Messrs. J. Thorpe and A. W. Benn — all three M.P.'s — and Mr. R. Wightman have to say about it? Most of what they did say caused roars of laughter, the speakers were so thoroughly *irreverent*; and the laughter (we hope) caused Mr. Justice Erskine, who gave Holyoake six months' hard, and Mr. Justice North, who gave G. W. Foote 12 months' hard for "blasphemy" to turn with agonising pain in their graves.

★
Still, it is good to put on record that not one of the panel *disbelieved* the story. There it was, in God's Precious Word, and Mr. Wightman very solemnly told us that the Old Testament was being more and more recognised as *true*. In fact, he instanced the first chapter of Genesis the order of Creation in which was exactly like that given us in the story of Evolution; and all four of the panel seemed heartily to agree. And this in 1960!

★
In "The Christian Religion and its Philosophy" broadcast for schools recently, Canon M. Stancliffe took "Revelation and Experience" for his subject, and he probably gave us more words about words in a given time than any speaker in the series. Words, words, words, poured from him, all to prove that Christ Jesus was the Word, the Divine Word, as given in John; and we hope, not only that the school-children who heard him understood him, but also that he understood himself. We doubt whether anybody else did — or, if understood, what earthly use it all was. We wish Canon Stancliffe would tell us.

★
That famous BBC comedian familiarly known as Jimmy Edwards came out very strongly against our primeval, archaic, and impudent "Sabbatarian" laws in an article in the *Daily Mail* recently — rather surprisingly, it must be admitted, for the *Daily Mail* has never concealed its firm determination to uphold Christianity to the utmost limit, and this must have included the Biblical injunction to keep the Sabbath Day holy on condition that the Sabbath Day was not the Biblical Saturday, but the Pagan Day of the Sun — Sunday.

★
Mr. Edwards has nothing but scorn and anger that such hopelessly out-of-date fanatics like the Lord's Day Observance Society could impose its primitive Fundamentalist will on the nation, and especially when "we stage folks" give so much to charity, even including giving time and money on a Sunday — the day when they could well be resting. This article was a model of real indignation—but will it have any effect? We doubt it. The great majority of MP's in Parliament — Tories and Labour — are almost certainly Christians, and that means it is "a sin to talk on Sundays" (the answer to Mr. Edwards's question). Any change in these outrageous Sunday laws is shunned by them as much as any change in the despicable "blasphemy" laws.

★
In this "Refugee" year it was only to be expected that someone would find out that the Jesus family on their way to Egypt to avoid the extermination of baby Jesus by Herod — a story quite as true as the story of Ali Baba — was, after all, a "refugee" family. Why the average parson missed this wonderful coincidence before this year must remain a mystery, but Mr. Hansford, who wrote about it

in *The Methodist Recorder* some weeks ago and gave us particulars of famous paintings which illustrate the Flight into Egypt, appears to have missed the obvious conclusion. It is that Jesus really was the greatest Refugee who ever lived.

★
It is all very well for our bishops — like the Bishop of Leicester — to be shocked at the current anti-Semitism. What else do he and his fellow priests and parsons teach at Easter? They can't open their mouths without calling — mostly angry — attention to the way the "Jews" crucified "our Lord and Saviour." The details of the Trial and Crucifixion are related in the most minute manner, and the part played by the Romans slowed down as much as possible. Even if the "Jews" were to blame nearly 2000 years ago — and there is real evidence that there was neither a trial nor a Crucifixion — what have people born in these days got to do with it? The Bishop of Leicester will not answer this challenge if he can avoid it.

★
Those lucky people who believe so strenuously in Astrology will cordially dislike Mr. Logan Courlay for debunking his "Lucky Week" as foretold by an astrologer. Writing in the *Daily Express* he tells us that on the Tuesday of his Lucky Week his valuable lighter was stolen, and on the Wednesday his wife lost an even more valuable bracelet in a restaurant — a bracelet which had "a double safety anti-theft catch." Still, the Stars go on for ever.

THE GREAT RELIGIOUS ORDERS (Concluded from page 75)

Joseph Turmel once noted: "The victory of the Immaculate Conception represented the victory of popular faith over the doctors," including Aquinas! The Franciscans owed their victory to their identification with the popular Mariology of the masses). A more honourable distinction still enjoyed by his disciples reveals that the spirit of the most loveable of Christian saints is still strong among them. The Franciscan theologians, alone in the Catholic Church, proclaim that animals have rights — and even perhaps, immortal souls — in opposition to the dominant Dominican teaching so alien to the practice and spirit of that great animal-lover, St. Francis, who seems to have been unique amongst saints in this respect. The Franciscans have been reformed several times and now have a branch for women also, as also a Third Order for laymen. Today, however, they are chiefly of interest as picturesque relics of a by-gone age, and of one of the most extraordinary personalities to await investigation and explanation at the hands of modern scientific psychology. Apparently the earthly remains of the Saint are still intact; at least what purported to be such, were solemnly carried in procession through the streets of Cologne at a Catholic Congress held there in 1956. A last flicker of the original Franciscan spirit may perhaps be discerned in a subsequent appeal by German Catholic pacifists against the earthly relics of this most pacific of saints being used as recruiting propaganda for the current revival of German militarism.

[Next Week: The Dominicans]

CRIMINAL STATISTICS

Ninety-nine of every 100 Canadian crooks are regular church-goers, according to the Government's Bureau of Statistics.—*Evening News* (12/2/60) Report from Ottawa.

—NEXT WEEK—

BIRTH CONTROL

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG

THE FREETHINKER

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

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Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. W. BARKER and L. FRURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, CORSAIR, SMITH, etc. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH, etc.

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

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.: Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute) Lecture every Sunday, 7 p.m.

Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, W.1.) Sunday, March 6th, 7.15 p.m.: A Lecture.

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, March 8th, 7.15 p.m.: Dr. J. KELNAR, "Mental Health—IV."

Leeds and District Humanist Group (Trades Hall, Fountain Street.) Sunday, March 6th, 7 p.m.: J. E. SEEL, "Marriage Guidance Problems."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, March 6th, 6.30 p.m.: 79th Anniversary, Guest Speaker, H. CUTNER, and Musical Items.

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (formerly West London Branch) (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, off Edgware Road, 3 mins. Marble Arch Station) Sunday, March 6th, 7.30 p.m.: A. E. ARTHUR, "The Anabaptists."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street.) Sunday, March 6th, 2.30 p.m.: Mrs. P. LILLEY, "Peaceful Co-Existence."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, March 6th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph. D. "March Hares: Reflections on the Population Problem."

Notes and News

How SERIOUS RUSSIAN physio-mathematician Agrest was when he suggested Lot's wife was killed by a nuclear explosion set off by men from outer space, we don't know. Leaving out the Bible fable, possibly such an explosion would explain curious geological features in the Lebanon, but it remains for us a far-fetched(!) theory, failing rather more concrete evidence. But then, we are incorrigibly sceptical.

★

A LETTER IN THE *Sunday Post* (14/2/60) from a Mr. D. M. Scott, of Hull, thanked correspondents for sending him examples of "their own faith in prayer." And Mr. Scott mentioned the pathetic case (though he didn't call it this) of "One dear lady in Carlisle [who] said she had prayed

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED, £62 5s. 5d.: H. Howard, 2s. 6d.; S. H. Hoddes, £1 1s.; J. D. Evans, 2s. 6d.; Anon, 3s. 4d.; Wm. S. McNeil, £1.; J. Humphrey, 10s.; Anon, 2s.; A. Fenton, 5s.; Total to date February 26th, 1960. £65 11s. 9d.

for her husband's safe return for 40 years." Mr. Scott doesn't say whether the prayer was answered.

★

IN THE SAME PAPER was a photo of "ten pretty little girls," daughters of Mrs. Mary Booth of Rutherglen. Their mother "had only managed to get one christened," being apparently otherwise engaged. However, everything was put right on February 13th, when the Rev. William Ralston christened the other nine.

★

The Irish News and Belfast Morning News (19/2/60) informs us — we are not philatelists these days — that since the death of Pius XII "a number of the world's nations have issued special stamps to mourn a beloved Pontiff's passing." Some issued them "as soon as production facilities would allow," others waited for "a fitting occasion." The Argentine chose the latter course and "On the first anniversary of the sad day, this nation's postal administration issued a striking one-peso stamp" portraying the Holy Father in black "as a symbol of mourning" on "the familiar yellow of the Vatican's flag." It was originally planned to issue a limited number of the stamps, but "demand became so great that an additional number had to be produced to satisfy them all." Which, if we can remember back to our stamp-collecting schooldays, will reduce their value.

★

WHILE ON THE SUBJECT OF STAMPS we musn't overlook the latest Maltese 3d. (purple, blue and gold) to commemorate the nineteenth centenary of St. Paul's shipwreck on the island. The celebrations have already started and will reach their climax in July. If the stamp is anything to go by, they will be characterised by the Roman Church's natural vulgarity.

★

A NEW "ROUND THE TOWN" COLUMN in the *Leicester Chronicle* was largely devoted to the Leicester Secular Society on February 19th. Noting that it was the oldest secular society in the world, founded by Josiah Gimson in 1851, and that the Secular Hall was opened in 1881, the *Chronicle* briefly stated the Secular view that "all human effort should be directed towards the improvement of this world" and "that it is no use depending upon supernatural beings or religious creeds." It then gave a profile, with picture, of Mr. C. H. Hammersley, the present live-wire Secretary of the Society. As a member of the Leicester Letter Writers' Club — it said — "he has helped to bombard the correspondence columns of the local Press and with the Club has appeared on the BBC's sound programmes 'Signpost' and 'Woman's Hour' and the television feature, 'Tonight'." The *Chronicle* also mentioned that Mr. Hammersley was an occasional contributor to THE FREETHINKER, an avid reader and "displays a liberal music appreciation."

★

AT THE KIND invitation of Lord Chorley and Lord Lucan the London Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers entertained the recently appointed Cultural Counsellor to the French Embassy to lunch at the House of Lords on Friday, February 26th. Professor C. Arnavon is a man of wide interests and his company was much appreciated by Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, Dr. Ronald Fletcher, Mr Colin McCall and Mr. Joseph Reeves, and by their Lordships.

Children and Animals

By EVA EBURY

MR. LEMASS, PREMIER OF EIRE, while agreeing to a convention to study the conditions of shipments of live horses to the Continent for meat, complains of the "cynicism" of the English, in that "drowned horses make news, drowned sailors do not." If this were true it would be cynicism. An English lifeboat capsized with the loss of its crew, the boat being overmanned immediately on an appeal for volunteer replacements; that is another story from that period of storms and shipwrecks.

We read complaints in letters to our newspapers that sentimentality is expended on animals while children are neglected, and yet, we hear from adoption societies, except the Roman Catholic, that would-be foster parents outnumber the babes by far.

Reflecting on the past, when workers' children, orphan children, unwanted children of the upper classes, were starved, neglected and overworked; sent to mines and factories in batches, simple or intelligent, fit or ill, all alike, just wee slaves, was this an age of compassion for animals? Were not bearbaiting and cock-fighting favourite sports? Had not Hogarth depicted the brutality of the masses of his day? Did not the canvasses decorating the halls of the rich, the lithographs of the middle class, coloured horrors of falling stags, foxes at bay, unspeakable stills of dead game, display the callousness of an age that accepted the verbal inspiration of the Bible? Was not the parson, most acceptable to Squire and worker alike, the one who took his pleasure in the chase?

"Asses have a little spread, and with fitting food are fed,
All things have a home but one, thou, O Englishman,
hath none."

Shelley was not presenting the argument that the carrots and straw of asses should be fed to the workers and the ass kicked out of his stable, but giving voice to inarticulate humanity, born to sorrow, pain, despair. He did not oppose, as Mr. Lemass does, the considerate treatment of Man against his animal helpmate.

Children slaved in mines and factories while churches were erected in every borough and near every mill. God shops to sell balms for conscience and to vend heavenly insurances. Conscience spoke thuswise to the canting hypocrites who owned the very lives of the worker children, "we must do something for our suffering brothers, we must save their souls, their little bodies will be well soon; Jesus will welcome them, and find them a home above the bright blue sky, with green pastures, what need have they to see the sky and pastures now?"

The Bench of Bishops which would not support the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill (1809), the Prevention of Cruelty to Cattle Bill (1824), the Cruelty to Animals Amendment Bill (1833), were the same men who in the House of Lords could not support the bills for limiting child labour, for better regulation of mad houses, and for the abolition of the corn laws.

Men and women of humanitarian sympathies and secular ethics, the Owens, Romillys and Holyoakes of the age, nauseated with the misery around, preached their crusade in the teeth of organised Christianity, and today we reap the harvest they sowed, in healthy, happy children, sunny classrooms, shorter hours of labour, and care for sickness and old age.

Today we have time to look further, and to see that other sentient inarticulate creatures are not left to drag out their poor little lives in misery and pain. Again it is men

and women of humanitarian sympathies, nauseated with the sight of unnecessary suffering, that lead the campaign to encourage a more civilised approach to treatment of animals. Again it is the Church, which, if it dare not actually oppose it, limps sadly and slowly behind. The theological reasoning now takes a *volte face*; beasts do not require consideration, for indeed they have no souls, they can never obtain a heavenly hereafter! The tortured body of the child was of no importance because its little soul was imperishable, the tortured body of the animal is of no importance because it has no imperishable soul! Joseph McCabe states: "The Pope refused to sanction the RSPCA, saying that it was based on the 'theoretical error' that man had duties to animals."

Mr. Lemass made an artful abridgment of a widely propagated abuse of England. The editorial of the *Donegal Democrat* (22.1.60) dealing with the matter of the drowned horses entitled it, "Much Ado about Little." It is worth quoting at length. It is introduced by a list of the saints for the week, as though to give a divine sanction to the outpouring of venom.

Britain's sensation-mongering Press represents the lowest form of mentality in mankind . . . Decent-minded Britishers are, we feel, as amused as we in this country are, at the crocodile tears at present being shed over the fate of a number of horses, which suffered death in a storm at sea . . . In a way, it is not surprising that we should hear lamentations over the fate of animals from people so many of whom have long since abandoned the ethical way of life, adopted instead the farmyard rule of morality and in cases where wedlock is given some measure of countenance have substituted the kennel for the cradle. But even at that their professed concern is anything but genuine . . . It is, perhaps, but another sign of the abject puerility of a section of the British people that at a time when the interests of their country are gravely threatened . . . they deem it expedient to play at flimsy sensationalism. Only a degenerate people could be guilty of such conduct. Unfortunately, notice at high level has been taken of their bleating. National dignity should stand high above the guttersnipe doings of a low-down institution like Britain's "Yellow Press."

National dignity!

Hear the *Irish Times* (18.1.60) from an article by Myles na Gopaleen: "In Dublin last week I saw animals being slaughtered almost in the gutter. In tumble-down sheds, down alleys . . . butchers carried on their grim work under the gaze of groups of young children . . . while nonchalant slaughtermen bend to their work in public view, in filthy surroundings, open handcarts are heaped with offals and carcasses, while jumble sales are conducted alongside."

He tells of girls in shops handling food with dirty hands and soiled gowns, of counters unscrubbed since 1925, and toilets so unspeakably filthy that one only approaches them at great personal risk.

The title of "National dignity" has to be earned. Britain was the first country to introduce legislation for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and the first to form a society for its prevention.

READER'S QUESTION

Who said that the myth of Jesus was providing a profitable business for the Church? asks W. Steinhardt.

The pleasure-loving Leo X is alleged to have said: "We owe all this to the fable of Jesus Christ," but Joseph McCabe (*A History of the Popes*) considers the Protestant source unreliable as well as late. On the other hand, the French historian, Fleury, in his *Histoire Ecclesiastique* (Tome XIX, pp. 186/7) records Boniface VIII, founder of the Holy Year in 1300, as saying: "All this comes to us from the fable of St. Joseph and his great booby of a son."

Music and Freethought

By ERIC COXON

IT IS FAR EASIER to show the relationships of literature and painting to Freethought than of music. Music is the conveying of appropriate sounds, generally set into a pattern, although not always; whereas literature consists of ideas in words, and painting may be described as the arrangement of ideas pictorially. Discovering intellectual ideas in music is difficult, owing to the very nature of music itself.

It is true, in music we get what is called "story" music. Puccini supplies us with many instances in his operas and another notable example is the introduction to the second act of Mozart's *Magic Flute*. There is "intellectual" music: a notable example here is Beethoven's 7th symphony. Again there is "descriptive" music; instance Beethoven's "Pastoral" or 6th Symphony. For heroic music we can go to Wagner, Verdi and others. If any music can justly be called "philosophical," there are Mahler's symphonies. Sentiment plus romance can be found in the operatic works of Bellini, Donizetti, Balfe and Glinka. There exists the huge field of sonata music and set pieces, songs and ballads, etc., etc. But all do not agree on what constitutes "intellectual" or "philosophical" music. It seems therefore, virtually impossible to show a *direct* connection between the art and freethinking influences. What does seem possible, however, as I shall try to show, is some connection between music and Freethought, and historical periods. And here we consider notably the beginnings of the Romantic Era in music.

Ludwig von Beethoven, composing at the turn of the 18th century, is rightly called "the first of the Romantics." Emphasis without the desertion of formal values, was laid by Beethoven, on Romanticism which had long found expression in musical works, without emerging as the dominant factor, in Mozart's symphony No. 40, in G Minor, and in much operatic music, for instance. The closing stages of classicism marked Beethoven's emergence, first as a classical composer, devoted to existing canons, then to introducing his own ideas. These strongly favoured romantic and intellectual expression. Following closely after Beethoven, came Schubert and Weber. Schumann, with others, generally widening and adding to the output of composition featuring romanticism as its central note. Opera saw the vivid romantic works of Auber in France.

When Beethoven set the romantic period on its way to revival, and for a time to outmode, classicism, the French Revolution was just past and the Napoleonic era was commencing. Here we see — and there is no doubt about it, for Beethoven was inspired to write at least two of his works by the legendary feats of Bonaparte — how a great composer was elevated by his own historical times to portray through his art how these aspects of experience impressed him.

The changing, stirring, tumultuous, strange and — as must have seemed to many — optimistic days of the Revolution in France and the conquests of the young "second Alexander," Bonaparte, helped bring forth romanticism in music. Romanticism, in short, mirrored the times. It gave dignity, seriousness, yet optimism; it was noble and poetic, as the historical changes taking place in Europe, were expected to usher in correspondingly high human values in social life. Such, of course, scarcely materialised. But it is instructive to note how the closing stages of the classical era in music were often marked by a satirical and mocking attitude towards the existing social order, as we find in the opera bouffe of Mozart and Rossini. The note of the following romantic period of music was very different: life

and values were taken very seriously.

We can, of course, illustrate how the changes in history culminating in the French Revolution and followed by Napoleonic times, were greatly brought about by direct influences of Freethought. Here we find, therefore, that historical social changes and the beginnings of musical romanticism stand in relationship. The closing stages of classicism in music mirrored in part the world of the aristocrat, the Court, and the Church — the admixture was formal, blasé, beautiful, not without graces, and not without considerable sophistication, either. The romantic period ushered in a world of values very dissimilar; very serious of purpose. Reflecting how such ideas of a secular character helped bring in social change at the turn of the 18th century, we see that the bridge between the two worlds of musical classicism and romanticism rests upon ideas destructive of the existing social order.

This historical change seems a clear-cut instance of what we are considering. But it is the only one we can find. This is not to say that later on in musical composition, Freethought influences did not exert themselves. They did. But we are unable to find that they were, by being linked to sweeping historical and social change, decisive on any larger scale. However, as the 19th century draws out, we find that romantic and sentimental opera, as an instance, is succeeded first by operas having a strong nationalistic flavour, and then by realism in opera, the Verisme school.

By this time, of course, the ideas of Darwin, Wallace and others, were gaining support. Impetus to Freethought was given, whilst the Church faced another damaging assault.

Summing up, therefore, romanticism in music could scarcely have commenced unless Freethought and social change in part due to the latter, had taken place. Events of later years show an influence, but less clearly perceptible.

Some would raise the point that composers of music have assisted in a frankly Freethought work of music. Mozart's *Magic Flute* opera is often cited as being a work of this kind. Then certain composers are described as having been Freethinkers in life and purpose — Beethoven himself and Verdi, for instance. And Wagner is often called a Freethinker, although I should hesitate to regard him as such in a secular sense.

It would seem, then, that the true influence of Freethought on music, considered on any large scale, is an historical and social one.

CORRESPONDENCE

MR. MEULEN REPLIES

In reply to Mr. Binns, I fear I can add little to my statement that science confines itself to tracing regular sequences of events. In no single case does science attempt to say *why* A follows B. But Determinism asserts that A is compelled to follow B.

Regarded as an assertion, this statement is metaphysical — it makes an unverifiable assertion. Why unverifiable? Because it admits of no comparison. We could assert the existence of compulsion between A and B only if we could compare that sequence with an uncompelled sequence. And to the making of unverifiable assertions there is no end. I could say that A follows B because A is pushed, or because B is pulled, or both are sliding downhill, or mounting to a centre of the universe, or that there is sexual attraction between them and A follows B because of her pretty face!

Let us then agree that the question of Free Will v. Determinism is speculative — it cannot be proved (and the same is true of "Universal causation" — Mr. Binns really should be careful about assertions regarding the totality of things). My speculation is that A wills to follow B. The theory does not apply only to the human

mind: since the time of De Vries it has been shown that all living organisms periodically throw off "sports" that resemble nothing in the recorded history of that species. Add to this the millions of minute variations in every specimen, and the case for spontaneity becomes stronger. As fast as science discovers fresh sequences it also discovers fresh variations in other realms. I repeat that in many cases these variations are so small that they do not invalidate the erection of a scientific "law." Human beings, although we may not like the thought, are overwhelmingly more alike than unlike; we are simply more interested in the differences than in the similarities. But the differences are there. They may be spontaneous. I feel that I *can* choose, and that by my choice I *can* alter future events. Mr. Binns thinks that he cannot alter future events. I bring him tidings of great joy.

HENRY MEULEN.

THE 39 ARTICLES

Mr. Ridley tells us that Cardinal Manning described the 39 Articles as a middle way between the Church of Rome and the Protestant Churches. That is the spurious position of Anglo-Catholicism. The 39 Articles were formulated to give a broad scriptural outlook to a people who were taught by a system of catechism, and many of whom were illiterate and ignorant of scriptural truths. The Articles opened the eyes of their understanding and set them free from a man-made religion outside God's revealed truth; enabling them to repudiate, not only their past spurious teachers, but also the priestly system which had shackled them.

What is Modernism? Dr. Soper is surely an outstanding Modernist, and he repudiates the Virgin Birth and Resurrection. To classify Dr. Matthews as a Modernist of this type is using words that could be defamatory to a reverend servant of the Church of England, by law established.

But most of Mr. Ridley's article is a sound and learned exposition.

J. H. KELLY.

ROYAL CHILD

The "Royal" child Jesus, was lucky in having a guiding star, three wise men and a choir of angels, but why, or why, didn't an all-wise Papa think of a Richard Dimbleby and the invention of gunpowder for a salute of 21 guns? Oh! and I nearly forgot, a *Bethlehem Daily Express*?

W.D.K.

AN OXFORD CRITIC

Although I belong to that dangerous, juvenile and fear-mongering body who call themselves "Christians," I do from time to time read your paper, THE FREETHINKER; and much of what I read, including front-page articles, seems to me an insult to the intelligence of your readers, whether Christian or freethinking.

From the general tone of many of your articles it is clear that you are concerned to relieve us Christians of our absurd superstitions: has not experience taught you that jibes about the espionage network of the Vatican, or the injustice of the cursing of the fig tree, disturb the faith of no-one? As to the former, whatever its truth (which I doubt) not even Roman Catholics are convinced that "the Vatican" is infallible, whatever under certain conditions may be true of the Pope. And as to the latter, the Christian may be prompted to ponder the story afresh, and so realise as a result that perhaps the Omnipotent God is not bound to act in strict accordance with the democratic codes which man has evolved, in fact it would be highly suspicious if He did.

For whose benefit then are these cutting asides inserted? Your freethinking readers must be sufficiently convinced already of the absurdity of Christianity and Christians — if they are not then I think they will seek something to reassure them on a deeper level: they will hardly find more than momentary reassurance in such childish spite. Christians, too, might be ready to throw off the shackles of their faith and embrace the "freedom" you offer

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if you showed in your paper that this led you to a fuller, maturer and more joyful life, such as they now find in the Church. But evidence for this is sadly lacking, even between the lines.

P. D. KING (Balliol College, Oxford).

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24th. Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair) Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Hornbrook, Johnson, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Mr. and Mrs. Ebury, Mr. Gordon, Mr. Manhattan and Mrs. Trask. New members were admitted to Bradford, Glasgow, Kingston, Marble Arch and North London Branches which, with individual members, made 11 in all. Good wishes were sent to Mr. P. F. Moore, who was in hospital. Humanist Council and World Union of Freethinkers reports were given, and a challenge to Mr. Douglas Johnson, the medium, in THE FREETHINKER (26/2/60) was approved. Letter to Loughborough Magistrates was endorsed. Statements of Accounts of Kingston and North London Branches were before the meeting and were approved with congratulations to each Branch. Reports from these Branches and from Blackpool and West Ham and District were noted with satisfaction. Mr. Hector Hawton, Editor of *The Humanist* had accepted an invitation to be the Guest of Honour at the Annual Dinner. Mr. Barker was nominated to fill vacancy on the Conference and Standing Orders Sub-committee. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, March 16th, 1960.

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