

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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THE PRIME MINISTERS of the different parts of that incongruously-named political entity, "The British Empire and Commonwealth" are at present meeting in London. Around the Conference table attended exclusively by Prime Ministers, or their deputies, major matters of moment will be discussed, including, we hope, the most urgent of all, the present appalling phase of racial segregation and oppression in South Africa. But there is one question of definite, if not of immediate importance, that unfortunately is not at all likely to figure on the Agenda.

That is the present absurd ecclesiastical situation where, in the metropolis of a cosmopolitan Commonwealth tenanted by many races and by many religions,

two Established Churches, those of England and Scotland (which today only represent minorities among one particular religion, itself in a minority in the Commonwealth) enjoy a privileged position in their relation to the Monarchy. It is, we suggest, high time that this medieval relationship of Church and State was finally abolished, and the principle of the Secular State was accepted in its integrity. The Prime Minister's Conference, representing as it does, every important religion and race within the Commonwealth, appears to be the obvious body to tackle this long overdue reform.

## The Commonwealth and Religion!

For the Prime Ministers who are meeting in London are of many races and religions. They represent Hindu India, Muslim Pakistan and Malaya, Buddhist Ceylon and Pagan Ghana, besides those professedly Christian states which themselves mostly accept the secularist definition of the state as a body non-competent in matters of religion, or itself not officially committed to any particular religion, or society of religions. Thus, for example, while say, Canada and Australia have predominantly Christian populations, yet neither is an officially Christian country. Even Calvinist South Africa does not base its apartheid policies officially on its Calvinistic dogma of predestination, though no doubt the ideas of the Geneva Reformer, applied to the racial question, played a leading, perhaps predominant part in achieving the formation of those policies. To the above however, there remains one notable exception; in the metropolis of the Commonwealth itself, the elsewhere prevalent secular principle of the mutual separation of Church and State is openly flouted. For in England, as separately in Scotland (under the provisions of the Act of Union in 1707) State-Churches exist with special privileges; Churches to which the Monarch and family must by law belong, as also must certain other major officers of state, viz. the Lord Chancellor. It is this state of things that itself dates from an older pre-Commonwealth phase of English and Scottish society, that still prevails most incongruously in the centre of the Commonwealth, amid which it constitutes a glaring exception and anomaly.

## Christianity and the Commonwealth

We propose to view this important question statistically

rather than theologically. It appears at present, to be difficult, perhaps even impossible to obtain exact statistics of the various non-Christian religions, as also of the various Christian sects to be found in the Commonwealth. Round figures such as 200 millions of Hindus, 100 millions of Muslims, etc. are not really very convincing. Such computations usually appear to be vitiated by their habit of lumping all nominal believers within a common fold (for example, as a formerly baptised Christian—I had not begun to read THE FREETHINKER in those days—I would presumably be included in such lists as a member of the Anglican Church of Wales into which I was originally admitted.) However that may be, it can

hardly be doubted that the number of non-Christian believers of various religions to be ranked as citizens of our Commonwealth, markedly exceeds the number of Christians of all denominations! The populations of India and Pakistan alone would surely guarantee this computation. And to make the absurdity of the Established Churches in England and Scotland doubly absurd, it also can hardly be called in question that, excluding all the non-Christian creeds in the Commonwealth who do not belong to the State Churches of England and Scotland, the devotees of other Christian sects also greatly exceed the number of the actual adherents of these two Churches. Present day statistics are apt to be misleading, but certainly only a minority of the populations of England and Scotland themselves—and probably an infinitesimal minority of the total inhabitants of the Commonwealth outside Great Britain—would ascribe themselves as members of the flocks of either the Archbishop of Canterbury or the more democratically-elected, General Moderator of the Church of Scotland. We arrive accordingly, at an outright absurdity: our State Churches, "by law Established," correspond actually to no known democratic procedure within our (self-styled) politically democratic Commonwealth. They represent in fact, this grotesque anomaly: the official recognition and establishment; not only of a minority, but of a minority of a minority! Anglicans and Presbyterians—Scottish ones only—represent a minority amongst the professors of the Christian faith in the Commonwealth, while Christianity itself represents only a minority faith among the total inhabitants of the Commonwealth. The Head of the Commonwealth herself is compelled by law to be simultaneously a kind of spiritual Siamese twin: an Anglican, south of the Tweed, and a Presbyterian north of it. Thus, the river which forms the boundary between her two Kingdoms likewise separates her two creeds. Here, we repeat, is a matter that urgently calls for inclusion on the Agenda of the Prime Minister's Conference.

## A Medieval Anachronism

The fact becomes obvious that the whole present ecclesiastical set-up in England and Scotland represents a medieval anachronism. It is long outmoded, and entirely

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

# The Commonwealth Conference

By F. A. RIDLEY

and increasingly out of touch with the present day social and religious conditions. During the stormy era of the Reformation whence the present established Churches of England and Scotland originated, these bodies represented a compromise in the theological sense (particularly in England) between the warring Catholic and Protestant camps. It is quite possible that at that time, they represented an actual majority of the inhabitants of the populations of two European states whose combined population hardly equalled that of the Greater London of today. In the present-day colossal British Commonwealth, with its hundreds of millions of inhabitants and many religions, the English and Scottish Established Churches represent merely a legalised absurdity. In any social set-up that desires to

conform to the democratic pattern, the secular principle of the abolition of ecclesiastical privilege and of the concurrent equality of all religions before the law, remains the only possible solution. The time is surely overdue for the Prime Ministers to take the above facts into consideration and then to bring the public policy of the British Commonwealth into line with that of those other giant political amalgams of many races and religions, the U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and China, which despite conflicting ideologies and social systems, all agree and practise in their public policy, the pre-eminent principle of Secularism; the permanent and complete separation of Church and State. It is high time that the British Commonwealth, too, came into line with this fundamental principle of modern society.

## Senator McCarthy

FEW PEOPLE CAN BE UNAWARE that *The New Yorker's* Washington Correspondent, Richard Rovere, has recently published a book entitled *Senator Joe McCarthy* (Methuen). Many will have read the long extracts from it that appeared in *The Observer* a few months ago; others will have read reviews. They will know that Mr. Rovere exposes McCarthy as a man completely lacking in any sense of honesty or decency.

That the book received favourable reviews in England came as a shock to Patrick F. Scanlan, K.S.G., Managing Editor of *The Tablet*, U.S.A., and he expressed his disapproval through the correspondence columns of Britain's own *Catholic Herald* (11/3/60), singling out another Roman Catholic, Christopher Hollis, for special mention. Mr. Hollis had declared that "Joe McCarthy was a foul-mouthed, bragging brute, who with his reckless accusations threw the nation's life into confusion from a mere love of confusion, who lied without pretence of believing his own lies and in indifference even to their plausibility."

Mr. Scanlan, "as a close friend of the late Senator for almost ten years," asked permission to make a few statements, and we print now the remainder of his *Catholic Herald* letter in full:—

"Senator McCarthy was a practical Catholic; he never missed Sunday Mass; he made a visit to the Blessed Sacrament nearly every afternoon; he was married to a charming girl whom he converted before he married her; he was wedded in the cathedral at a Mass; he died fortified by the Sacraments, was buried from St. Matthew's Cathedral, Washington, with the final blessing being given by Archbishop O'Boyle and with a superb eulogy delivered by Mgr. Cartwright, P.A., rector of the cathedral. Both his character and his patriotic efforts were approved by Cardinal Spellman, among others.

"Among hundreds of letters of tribute in our files, we will quote from only one, from Rev. L. Bignamini, rector of St. Theresa's Seminary in Burma:

"The Honourable Senator Joe McCarthy is a most dear benefactor of this St. Theresa's Seminary, Burma, since 1938, when he was a simple lawyer. Since then he has always sent regular donations every year for the support of some of our students, three of whom are now priests working with success in our mission. One of them, Rev. Vincent Thasan, after his ordination on Easter Sunday, 1948, was sent for further studies in Canon Law at the Propaganda College, Rome. He came back in July, 1951, and is now teaching in this seminary. Of course, I could give many more details about our dear and honourable benefactor's generous kindness towards this poor seminary of ours."

"Much more might be said of this man who is so cruelly

castigated, and all seemingly on the words in a book by the former editor of a Communist publication. Believe me, a gross misrepresentation has been made by Richard Rovere, and now British reviewers have been instrumental in spreading it. May Senator McCarthy rest in peace.

PATRICK F. SCANLAN, K.S.G.,

Managing Editor, *The Tablet*, U.S.A."

"We are a little surprised at the simplistic attitude of our distinguished correspondent," commented *The Catholic Herald*. "There are only too many instances of Christians being devout in private life and disastrous in public — compare the classic case of the mystical Capuchin, Père Joseph, who, as foreign minister to Cardinal Richelieu, knowingly helped to plunge Europe into the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. The truth is that, if the private piety of Catholics were always reflected in their public and professional lives, the conquest of the world for Christ would be far nearer its achievement."

This just won't do. Not only did Senator McCarthy live and die a fervent Catholic, he was privately advised and publicly supported by prominent clergymen. As Mr. Scanlan's letter reminds us, Monsignor Cartwright delivered "a superb eulogy" in St. Martin's Cathedral, Washington and — please note — "Both his (McCarthy's) character and his patriotic efforts were approved by Cardinal Spellman, among others." Would *The Catholic Herald* describe the attitude of the Archbishop of New York as "simplistic"?

### LETTER FROM A SPANISH READER

We print the following letter because we believe it to be both interesting and encouraging, and we wish our Spanish friend who wrote it every success in the future. His name and address have been withheld for obvious reasons.

Will you please notice that since I am going home to Spain soon, and I very much doubt whether I should get THE FREETHINKER safely while staying there, I am unable to have my subscription renewed.

I became aware, some time ago, that the rate of THE FREETHINKER had had to be increased, and, although I have been trying to call on you and pay for my small debt, I have, as yet, not succeeded in doing either. As I am not certain now if I shall be able to visit you before I go, I am sending you 10/- to that effect. If there is any balance please give it to THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund.

I should add that I have enjoyed reading THE FREETHINKER immensely and, what is more, it has cast a lot of light on my — having been educated in Spain — ignorance of several things concerning religions and freethought. It has helped me to build a bulwark within me about matters which before I doubted but on which I could not make a firm-enough decision, and I can only thank all those concerned in its publication and distribution. I hope to be able to subscribe again to it, either by my going abroad once more or by more possibilities arising in Spain.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE KENNEDY CANDIDACY

By WALTER L. ARSTEIN

# James Leasor and Pontius Pilate

By C. STANLEY

ALTHOUGH HISTORY DISCLOSES practically nothing of the life and death of the Roman Governor of Judea at the time of the alleged existence of Jesus, *Today* (formerly *John Bull*) recently published three articles entitled "The Man who Killed Christ," and described them as a "detailed and authentic reconstruction of the life of Pontius Pilate," written "after an exhaustive search of every known historical source" by the "distinguished author" James Leasor.

I have never previously read anything by Mr. Leasor, but I have read rather exhaustively all that known historians and theologians have written upon this subject, and I looked forward to the articles. They proved to be simply a re-hash of the Gospels and Josephus (further revised) flavoured by the author's own vivid imagination. Beginning with the appointment of Pilate as Governor of Judea and describing his arrival at Caesarea, the author states that Pilate was quite willing to be friendly with the Jews if only they would be reasonable. Philo and Josephus describe Pilate as "inflexible, merciless and obstinate" and as riding roughshod over the Jews from start to finish, but Mr. Leasor, thanks to his "exhaustive search," knows better. His "historical source" discloses that when members of the Sanhedrin visited Pilate, they were addressed by him in Greek, but they, deliberately to rile him, replied in Aramaic of which Pilate was unable to understand a word! It is not disclosed where the author obtained this information, nor even that the Jews could speak any other language than Aramaic. But Pilate, because of this and "similar pinpricks," determined to show the Jews quickly who was master.

John the Baptist is now introduced and is then conveniently transferred from Pilate's territory into that of Herod; whereupon, following the Gospel stories, he rebukes Herod for his evil life and especially for his marriage to his brother's wife Herodias, "mother of lovely Salome." Herod then has John arrested and — in an endeavour to reconcile the story with Josephus — "removed to his mountain castle at Machaerus."

Mr. Leasor then relates that Herod offered to pass John over to Pilate who, however, "not to be trapped so easily," refused the offer. The story is then continued more or less upon the lines of the Gospels — with slight additions supplied by the author's search — or imagination. To readers who have studied Josephus, it will be evident that the introduction of John the Baptist in this historian's *Antiquities* is as unblushing an interpolation as those relating to Jesus and James. Whether such a person as John did in fact make his appearance on the banks of the Jordan about the commencement of the Christian era is an open question. The exploits of this character are not mentioned by any profane writer in the next 200 years. Nor is the slightest reference made to this glorious forerunner of the Messiah in any of the Epistles, although frequent mention is made in them to baptism, of the appearance of Jesus and the circumstances preceding that appearance.

Josephus is at variance with the Gospels with regard to the Baptist. He states that Herod sent John to Machaerus as a prisoner because he feared that his great influence over the people might excite them to rebellion. But the passage is a glaring forgery. The previous section ends with the statement that Tiberius wrote to Vilellus to make war on Aretas; and the section immediately succeeding continues with the words "So Vilellus prepared to make

war with Aretas." Without the passage regarding John, the tale is natural and connected. The clearest proof of forgery, however, is that it makes Herod send John to the citadel of Machaerus which was not only not within his own territory (or even within the Roman domain) but which belonged to Aretas the king of Arabia *with whom Herod was then at war*. So that, had Herod sent John to this castle he would have no power over him either to kill or save. Josephus would never be so contradictory as to state that Herod imprisoned the Baptist in the castle of another king — and him a foe! There are other absurdities, and it is clear that the whole passage was inserted in the text in order to make Josephus bear witness that John existed at the time of Herod. But it is done so clumsily, that it completely falsifies the Gospels.

After continuing with the Gospel story of Judas Iscariot's promise to identify and betray Jesus (the best-known man in Jerusalem!) the author then follows Mr. Frank Morison in his fantastic story "Who moved the Stone?" The scene now moves to Pilate's private apartments, where the Governor sits with his wife "before a huge fire burning in a metal brazier." The time is 11 o'clock, when Caiaphas arrives with his request for the execution of Jesus. This, according to Mr. Leasor, is the chance to show that friendship for the Jews for which Pilate has been waiting, and he willingly gives Caiaphas an escort of Roman soldiers to effect the arrest. Mr. Leasor, in order to make the Gospel stories more convincing, tries to blend the four tales (and Acts) and he relates how Judas, after throwing back the "blood money," tried to hang himself "but in so doing fell and ruptured himself so severely that he died." But there is no mention of how Judas (vide Acts) purchased a field with this same money! Pilate also sends Jesus to Herod for trial, which is about as reasonable as to suggest the sending of a Frenchman who has committed a crime in England back to France for trial! The old story of Pilate's offer to release Jesus or Barabbas is then retold "for at the Passover there was a custom of releasing one convicted prisoner," when even Christian writers agree that there never was such a custom during the entire existence of the Roman Empire. However, Pilate, with a fine contempt for Roman law and his own life, proceeds to wash his hands of the matter, and gives the Jews "permission to get on with their crucifixion."

The crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are then described with all the usual trimmings, including the Roman centurion's remark that Jesus was "indeed the Son of God."

The author then gives the text of a letter written by Pilate to Rome, in which he says: —

There befell of late a matter which I myself brought to light (or made trial of) for the Jews through envy have punished themselves and their posterity with fearful judgments of their own fault; for whereas their fathers had promised that their God would send them out of heaven His Holy One Who should of right be called their king, and did promise that he would send Him upon earth by a virgin.

He, then, came when I was governor of Judea, and they beheld Him, enlightening the blind, cleansing lepers, healing

(Concluded on next page)

THE YEAR'S FREETHOUGHT  
THE FREETHINKER FOR 1959

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## This Believing World

In spite of the fact that Evangelist Eric Hutchings has been dubbed the English Billy Graham, five Birmingham parsons have angrily denounced the methods he uses to bring men to Christ. They think these methods are "deplorable"—in other words, they object to Mr. Hutchings's competition. He may well land his converts safely into the arms of Jesus but, as the Church of England is not "officially represented," Mr. Hutchings has to be, or ought to be, boycotted.

★

And what does 'our Lord' himself think of all this? Does he object to the methods used in bringing people to him? Alas, as in so many other things, the heavenly voice of Jesus is silent. So is Mary's. And there are no census papers in Heaven. So we cannot test the claims either of Mr. Hutchings, or of the Church of England, or even of Heaven. But one thing we dearly would like to know — have any converts to Christ been made by Mr. Hutchings from people who are not Christians?

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We just love recording the birth of a new religion and so are delighted to learn from Mr. David Attenborough (who has given us on TV so many fine nature documentaries) that one has just been born in the New Hebrides. At one time the islanders adored the Bible and obeyed the missionaries—but now they are awaiting the Second Advent of a mythical American airman named Johnny Frum, and the islanders are building aerodromes and warehouses to store the immense amount of goods the new God will bring with him when he comes. On this day, we understand, the whites will vanish, and "the blacks will never have it so good".

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We believe in the Second Advent of Johnny as much as we do in that of Jesus. And of course when "our Lord" returns, those of us who are selected will also never have it so good. The Second Advent of the new God is the direct descendant of the Second Advent of Jesus, and we fervently hope that more of the unique teachings of Christianity will be appropriated by the happy and pious people of the New Hebrides.

★

Whether any Spiritualist really believes these days in the wholesale table-rapping, materialisations, levitations, etc, which used to distinguish so much old-time Spiritualism, we do not profess to know. Most of these have almost disappeared, and in their place we get reports of thousands—nay hundreds of thousands of spirit cures of incurable cases of illness all done either through Jesus Christ himself, or through various spirit doctors. Among the invalids who regularly visit our spirit healers are — so that convinced believer in spooks Mr. Hannen Swaffer in *The People* declares — "British and continental royalties, cabinet ministers, privy councillors, peers, M.P.s, generals, admirals, judges, conductors of orchestras, Olympic athletes and (of course) many doctors." Similar lists can be found — and named — as stout supporters of our British Israelites.

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The real point to note is that we do not get names except only very rarely — perhaps only when the "patients" are dead. We never, or again only rarely, get the names of doctors who discard their own medical methods and rely completely on medical spooks. According to Mr. Swaffer, the most famous of the spirit healers is Mr. Harry Edwards—but some of us still remember his complete failure to prove anything whatsoever on T.V. when he had to face a couple of ordinary medical men. They thoroughly bowled

him over. We can only repeat what we have said here over and over again — let a few spirit healers into a hospital ward of incurable patients and cure them. That would confirm their claims without a single dissentient voice. But they cannot do it.

★

Exactly why any genuine believer in the Holy Bible should be surprised that a Jehovah's Witness would rather see his children die than disbelieve a word in it, we do not understand. Either the Bible is God's Word or it isn't. If it is, then every Christian parent should be ready to see his children die for the Glory of God — as a Mr. Jehu recently did in Australia, and the Christian court which tried him only asked him to be of "good behaviour" for the next five years.

★

We used to be (and perhaps still are) blessed here with similar believers in the Bible known as "Peculiar People"; one of whom got four months hard labour at the end of last century for refusing to call in a doctor when his child was ill. The child died, and its father said it was his duty to obey God rather than man even if it meant the death of his son. Jesus said, "They that be whole need not a physician," and who are we to disbelieve anything "our Lord" has said? Better let a child die than argue with Jesus.

### JAMES LEASOR AND PONTIUS PILATE

(Concluded from page 155)

the palsied, driving devils out of men, raising the dead, rebuking the winds, walking upon the waves of the sea dry-shod, and doing many other wonders, and all the people of the Jews calling Him the Son of God.

The chief priests, therefore moved with envy against Him, took Him and delivered Him unto me and brought against Him one false accusation after another, saying that He was a sorcerer and that He did things contrary to their Law.

But I, believing that these things were so, having scourged Him, delivered Him unto their will; and they crucified Him, and when He was buried they set guards upon Him.

But while my soldiers watched Him He rose again on the third day: yet so much was the malice of the Jews kindled that they gave money to the soldiers, saying: "Say ye that His disciples stole away His body."

But they, though they took the money, were not able to keep silence concerning that which had come to pass, for they also have testified that they saw Him arisen and that they received money from the Jews.

And these things have I reported for this cause, lest some other should lie unto thee . . .

It is a great pity that this letter was not available nineteen hundred years ago, as it would have been a great help to the early Christians. Even the Emperor Constantine who naturally had all the Roman records at hand, never produced this piece of evidence from Pilate's own hand! But Mr. Leasor has to confess that he has been unable to find out what finally happened to Pilate, though the legend, we are informed, says that he and his wife became Christians.

It is regrettable that Mr. Leasor was not able to discover the exact date of the death of Jesus so that the Christian Church could then avoid shifting its commemoration with every new year's almanack.

### DOXOLOGY

Praise all, from whom our blessings flow;  
Praise them, all creatures here below.  
While false "God" concepts, round us grow,  
Praise all who strive to lay them low.  
Who banish futile fallacies,  
Concerning all the Deities;  
Expose the myth, that one above,  
Like as a Father, shows his love.  
While Superstition's weeds grow fast,  
Give praise to the Iconoclast,  
Who these uproots, that they may be  
Replaced by Seeds of Sanity.

C. E. RATCLIFFE

# 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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*Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. 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. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 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.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, May 15th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Is It Peace?"

## Notes and News

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY would like to express its thanks to an American friend for his donation of 100 dollars towards the cost of purchasing its new premises.

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THE SUSSEX BRANCH of the National Secular Society broke new ground on Sunday, May 1st, by holding two meetings on Brighton front, though, because of the rather cold, showery weather, the afternoon meeting was held at the Fish Market and not at the Peace Statue as advertised. Despite the weather, says Hon. Secretary, Mr. F. Pearce, interested audiences gathered at both meetings, and they seemed — with the exception of an hysterical Roman Catholic woman — very receptive to Freethought views. Mr. Pearce would like to thank the two speakers, Mr. J. W. Barker and Mr. Graham Cornes, and the London members who travelled with them on a somewhat bleak May Day. We would add our thanks to Mr. Pearce for organising the meetings and join with him in hoping that others will follow.

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ANOTHER N.S.S. BRANCH SECRETARY, Mr. William Cronan of Edinburgh has resigned to make way for a younger man. The branch has been fortunate, says Mr. Cronan, in getting Mr. Donald McRae to accept the Secretaryship. The new Secretary's address 32 Hutchison Place, Edinburgh, and we wish him every success in his post, but we know he will understand if we devote the rest of this paragraph to his predecessor. Mr. Cronan took on the Edinburgh Secretaryship when the Branch was suffering from the aftermath of the war. He devotedly built it up and was responsible for reviving the highly successful open air meetings on the

Mound, at which he himself was a regular speaker. We know that he and his wife will continue as loyal members of the Society and we hope they will derive a good deal of pleasure and benefit from their present holiday.

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A SOUTH AFRICAN correspondent, Mr. W. T. Hawks, informs us that, according to the South African Government Gazette, *The Bible Handbook* by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball, published by the Pioneer Press, is banned in the Union. We consider this an honour.

★

WE SUMMARISE WITHOUT COMMENT the tragic story of "a heartbroken, lonely farmer," of Clear Creek, Iowa, as reported in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* (21/4/60). In 1946, Richard Hammes was married in the Roman Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul. On October 25th, 1956, Mrs. Hammes survived a crash between the car she was driving and a train at a level crossing, but all their eight children were killed. Fifteen months later she gave birth to a son and "the couple planned for more children in a 'second' family." "On Easter Sunday the 41-year-old mother joked as she entered a hospital for the impending birth of her tenth child" but "The strain of labour proved too much for Mrs. Hammes's heart. She died, together with the unborn baby." Mr. Hammes has placed a "long low, marble headstone" over the graves with the inscription, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

## Youth fined for Assault on Tom Mosley

ON MAY 4th, at Nottingham Guildhall, 18-year-old Michael Trafford Drayton, a fairground labourer, pleaded guilty to assaulting and causing bodily harm to Thomas Mosley, 76-year-old National Secular Society speaker. Drayton was fined £2 and bound over in the sum of £10 for 12 months.

Tom Mosley was speaking on Nottingham Old Market Square on Sunday, April 24th, and Drayton continually interjected by asking the meaning of the word "secular". He was asked to be quiet, and was told that questions would be answered later, but he continued to interrupt, said Mr. P. K. L. Danks, prosecuting. Mr. Mosley then said words to the effect: You are a most curious kind of young man and must be a psychological freak." Drayton didn't like this, said Mr. Danks, and attacked by pushing the platform over, causing the speaker to fall backwards and hit his head on the pavement. This necessitated stitching the back of the head, and Mr. Mosley remembered nothing until he woke up in the casualty department of the General Hospital.

Drayton ran to a policewoman saying: "Take me in. Put me away." He appeared to be afraid of something, said Mr. Danks, possibly a second man who was shouting. "I will knock your teeth in. I will kill you if the old man dies." The accused then ran to P.C. Headland, who went to Mosley's aid and arranged for his removal to hospital. Later Drayton said, "I didn't mean to hurt him," and in the court he apologised to Mr. Mosley.

After hearing that Drayton had no previous convictions, the Chairman, Mr. A. S. Shelton, told him: There are two things in your favour — your age, and the fact that you were decent enough to apologise in public." He added: "Heckling is an accepted form, but if followed up by a serious and deliberate attack, it becomes a serious matter."

Finally, for FREETHINKER readers the most important aspect of the affair. Tom Mosley's improvement continues, and letters we have received from him, show him to be his own genial self again.

## More Light on the New Testament—3

By H. CUTNER

ON THE GOSPELS, Mr. Bruce in his *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?* devotes over thirty pages of "close" reasoning, and quotes something like fifty "authorities" to prove that they (the Gospels) are not only reliable but literally credible and authentic. He insists that the Gospels are "history", and should be treated like other historical works—just as Mr. Geoffrey Ashe did. But if by other historical works and events Mr. Bruce means those in which the complete absence of devils, angels, and miracles is conspicuous, how can they possibly be compared? We Free-thinkers allow, even if no thoroughly reliable evidence can be produced, that the conquests of Alexander the Great are humanly possible. We cannot allow that devils, angels, and miracles, are possible, under any circumstances whatever. It is not a question of evidence at all. No evidence could possibly prove any "miracle".

People like Mr. Bruce, Mr. Ashe, the Pope, Salvation Army young ladies, Seventh Day Adventists, and Christadelphians, believe everything in the Bible on "Faith" and on nothing else. The "authorities" Mr. Bruce quotes are for the most part unknown outside theological circles and, as most of them were writing this century, they are no more authorities on the Gospels as "authentic" and "credible" than I am.

Most of what they say (as quoted by Mr. Bruce) is laughable, and merely represents an opinion based on Faith, and of no more evidential value than a boy's "Comic". We are told, for example, of the "opinion" of Dr. W. Temple that "the Synoptists may give us something more like a perfect photograph; St. John gives us the more perfect portrait." What this actually means may be very apparent to Mr. Bruce. To me it is almost drivel. What "photograph" do we get in the Synoptists—Jesus cursing Pharisees, fig trees and lawyers? What kind of portrait do we get of Jesus in John? The sweet and tender picture of "our Lord" contemptuously attacking "the Jews", utterly unable to talk sense to a poor Samaritan woman, and confusing her with a lot of gibberish? The lady thought he wanted a drink of water, and all he could say was that God would have given her "living water"—about as silly a piece of "empty babble" as one could imagine.

Or we get an "opinion" by a converted Jew called Dr. P. P. Levertoff, who tells us that "the first Gospel was to the Jewish Christians a new Torah, divided like the Mosaic one into five parts", as if, even it were true, that meant anything more than that the first Jewish Christians shared with the Gentile Christians a boundless credulity. If the first Jewish Christians really knew their "Torah", they could never have believed that the God described therein had a "Mother" and a "Son". Of what earthly use is such an opinion anyway? How does it enable anybody to vouch for the authenticity and credibility of the New Testament documents?

So hopelessly confused are the Gospel authors, that they were quite unable to tell the difference between Hebrew and Aramaic. This is not too surprising if we look upon them as more or less ignorant; but the Gospels were "revealed" to us—they were "inspired" by God Almighty who could never, never, make a mistake.

Mr. Bruce tells us—there is not a particle of authority for the statement quoted—that Prof. T. W. Manson says, "the more one studies the data, the more one is confirmed in the belief that there is an Aramaic document behind the Greek Q". In spite of the "Inspiration" we were once

taught was behind all the Bible, even the most pious theologians have had to face the undoubted fact that the "original" Gospels are in Greek. Now, it is most unlikely that anyone in the Palestine of the supposed period of Jesus who heard him knew any Greek—any more than most people in England know French though France is only across the Channel. If Jesus spoke at all, the language he used was Aramaic—yet so little did the Gospel writers know about it (as Mr. Bruce confesses) they "usually call it 'Hebrew' thus not distinguishing in name between it and its sister language . . ." and he quotes Papias as saying that "Matthew compiled the Logia in the Hebrew tongue (i.e. in Aramaic)"—which proves that even a Bishop like Papias did not know the difference between Aramaic and Hebrew. But the question had and has to be faced—who translated the divine words of "our Lord" into Greek? Who took down any of the "teachings" of Jesus at all? There is no evidence that anybody "took down" anything whatever in Aramaic or Greek. *No one knows* who translated the Gospels, when and where they were translated; and I can assure the reader no one would be a bit wiser if he read every one of Mr. Bruce's fifty authorities.

The Gospels we know are in Greek, and they had very early and hastily to be translated into Latin—hence the Latin versions of the Gospels. But so bad were they—they still are in "old Latin"—that St. Jerome had to overhaul them as early as the fifth century or so, and his translation, known as the Latin Vulgate, is now the "inspired" version of the New Testament in the Catholic Church.

Some of Mr. Bruce's authorities do not always agree with him. For instance, Prof. Easton tells us of the dependence of Mark on Matthew's *Aramaic* Gospel (this Aramaic Gospel is pure conjecture) and the *Greek* Matthew on Mark presents "a problem of great complexity that certainly will always defy final solution, but we should not forget that the problem exists". Mr. Bruce however thinks this "satisfies" the arguments for the Markan "hypothesis" as well as the arguments used by Zahn, Chapman, and Butler, "on the relation between the first two Gospels". But it would be tedious to try and sort out any more arguments from Mr. Bruce on the "authenticity" of the Gospels. Nowhere does he face the fact (which no theologians deny) that the Gospels as we have them were quite unknown *by name* before about the year 180 AD. There are many references to other writings, some said to be by various Apostles perhaps, but none whatever to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Mr. Bruce shirked that problem as he shirks many of the other Gospel difficulties.

He has a chapter on the Gospel "miracles"—and as far as I understand him, they *all* must be believed. He actually tells us that the "miracles" attributed to Jesus are of a "different" category from those other "monstrosities" in the Apocryphal Gospels. They are just "the kind of works that might be expected from such a Person as the Gospels represent Jesus to be". If this means anything at all, it means that while the Apocryphal Gospels show Jesus making birds out of mud which later were able to fly, for example—a particularly "monstrous" miracle—the true Gospels represent Jesus "telling off" a *tempest*, and causing it to cease because it was frightening some of his followers! This "miracle", and the cursing of the fig tree one, are just the kind of "miracles" we must expect from Jesus, says Mr. Bruce. And this kind of argumentation or exposition or apologetics proves that the "miracles" of Jesus took

place! What complete idiots must Mr. Bruce take his readers for.

But the cream of his defence of "miracles" by Jesus can be seen in his explanation of some of the "fish" stories in the Gospels. He knows of course that Jesus was represented for centuries not as the "Lamb" of God but as a Fish. Dozens of the pictorial representations of "our Lord" as a Fish—the most wonderful Fish that ever lived—have come down to us. As Tertullian says, "We are little fishes in Christ our great fish". Jesus is shown as "the fisher of men". If Jesus is really, as he called himself, "The Light of the World", that is, the Sun, it is not altogether surprising that he is represented as a Fish. For the astronomers of the day began to notice that the Sun, which used to be in the Sign of the Ram (hence the "Lamb" of God), was beginning to be in the Sign of Pisces—the Fishes—so of course Jesus had to be a Fish. The initials of the five Greek words which mean "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour", form the Greek word "Ichthus", that is "Fish"; and so we get St. Augustine—knowing perfectly well he was talking nonsense—telling us that through the word Ichthus, "Christ is mystically understood"; though nobody has ever explained what that means.

However, it would require a book to deal with all the "probables" and "possibles" which distinguish Mr. Bruce on the Gospels. But as Paul and his hopeless Gnostic nonsense are here rarely dealt with, I shall examine what Mr. Bruce says about him—and Luke—in my next article.

## The Vital Square

By FRANCIS WALSHINGHAM

WORLD POPULATION IS 2,800 millions, and inhabitable land area 40 million square miles. Therefore, with uniform population distribution, 70 persons would be living on each square mile, or one person to every 200 x 200 yds. square. Now imagine total world resources and techniques for supporting human life also to be uniformly distributed over the inhabitable land area. *It now follows that 200 x 200 yds. square must supply the total needs of one individual.* Can it do this? Let us see, basing ourselves on the requirements of a middle-class Englishman, and expressing each requirement in terms of land area. Our hypothetical person will need:—

A small timber plantation for building one quarter of a small house and its furniture (assuming an average family of four) fuel, repairs, etc., say 20 x 20 yds., plus space for the  $\frac{1}{4}$  house itself, say 20 x 20 yds.; a small orchard for apples, oranges, cherries, pears, etc., say also 20 x 20 yds.; a small farm for pigs, a sheep, cow, rabbits, hens, a turkey, etc.; a small stream for water and fish; a space for growing a dozen different vegetables and cereals; space for growing textile plants; a small coal, lead, tin, copper, etc., etc., mine.

Long before we complete our list of raw materials, our 200 yds. x 200 yds. square is filled. But raw materials are only the fringe of requirements! Food, clothing, building materials, all require a multitude of factories to process them. One person's proportional share of any factory is very small, but so many factories are required that the aggregate requirement deals a mortal blow to our remaining space. But still requirements pour in. Factories need machines — and machines need *other* factories to make them. And we still need our proportional share of the world's roads, railways, shops, stores, places of recreation, sufficient vegetation must be left to supply the air we breathe and for retaining moisture in the soil. It becomes starkly evident that not two squares, nor three

squares, not even four squares, will suffice. And it is quite futile to invoke "improved distribution" as a solution, because distribution has been completely eliminated by our assumptions.

The conclusion is obvious. *Total world population can never even remotely attain English middle-class standards of life.* And now let us see how mankind is reacting to this situation.

1. Every 24 hours that pass, total world population increases by some 80,000. Our quota of 70 persons per square mile is shrinking, which means that our 200 x 200 yds. square is shrinking.

2. Every 24 hours, also, inventions and innovations are produced to complicate human living. In other words, the sum total of requirements for the square is increasing.

This, reduced to its simplest terms, is the fundamental contradiction, the downright insanity, which is causing human civilisation to knock itself to pieces. This is the root cause of poverty. This is why, little by little, the amenities and spaciousness of life are disappearing. This is why people are being condemned to live in flats like stalls. This is why costs of living are everywhere rising. *There are far too many of us living on the face of the earth.*

And for this situation we have to thank religious neurosis, and in particular the Roman Church!

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THOMAS PAINE COMMEMORATIONS IN BRITAIN

I am assisting Colonel Richard Gimbel, the leading American authority on Thomas Paine, to compile details of events in honour of Thomas Paine, and should be most grateful to any readers who can help me. Apart from dates and places of these occasions, the names of the speakers and their topics would also be of value.

As far as I have been able to find out so far, the first was the 1895 exhibition at the South Place Institute, Finsbury, to commemorate the publication of the *Rights of Man*; there was a further exhibition the following January to mark the 159th anniversary of Paine's birth, followed by a meeting and banquet in Lewes on 8th June, 1904, the 95th anniversary of his death.

I have seen references to other events in London and Thetford in 1909, and in Thetford in 1937, but lack the details. If readers would kindly send me any information they may have, it would be most welcome.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL,  
76 Addison Road, London, W.14.

### ROBERT H. SCOTT REPLIES

In THE FREETHINKER'S correspondence column of April 8th, I was abusively assailed by S. W. Brooks because of my article entitled "God is no Gentleman!", which appeared in THE FREETHINKER on April 1st.

In that article I argued that among the best of reasons for the atheist's disbelief in the existence of God, particularly an omniscient and omnipotent deity. "are the facts that human beings are partly carnivorous; that they must endure, in common with all other mammals, certain repellent physiological functions; and that the human body undergoes a revolting decomposition when it has ceased to live." Mr. Brooks advanced no counter-argument. Instead, he resorted to opprobrious epithets and belittling aspersions. Truly, one of the glories of atheism is the verbal impotence of its enemies!

Mr. Brooks alleged that my temperament must be "shrinking, languishing, and old-maidish." I assure Mr. Brooks that it would be unequivocally attested by anyone who knows me personally, especially my wife! that the reverse is true.

It "occurs" to Mr. Brooks that the "real reason" why I wrote my article is that I am a "very superior person" who resents having been "formed in the same mould as common people . . . who may consume beefsteaks and may regard death and dissolution with stoical fortitude." I am pleased, rather than displeased, with this back-handed compliment. It actually amounts to an admission that the argument in my article is sound. But I am first of all a realist. I, too, eat beefsteaks, and, at the age of seventy, I, too, regard death and dissolution with stoical fortitude.

True it is that the various unaesthetic bodily features which are inseparably part of human life and death were logically to be expected to result from a biological process in which the only test

for survival-fitness was and is adaptation to the environment. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the backward-looking, progress-retarding God-belief still dominates most of the Western World, I shall continue to point out, without "screaming and fussing," that the human body's unaesthetic conditions and necessities greatly serve to prove that "God" is a nonentity. Though Mr. Brooks suggested that my concern over these several features "has a neurotic unhealthy aspect," I suspect that this and his other assertions were made only because his God-belief, though it probably has been modified for the better by his reading of THE FREETHINKER, is so deeply implanted within his brain that it cannot, as yet, be dislodged or even loosened.

ROBERT H. SCOTT.

#### CATHOLICISM AND FREEMASONRY

I was interested in the article in your journal relating to the persecution of Freemasons by the Roman Catholic Church. Only last year, when I was still a Roman Catholic and a Knight of St. Columbus, I attended a Brains Trust in the K.S.C. Club in Berkeley Street, Glasgow, in which Fr. Cowley, then and now Chairman of A.C.O.S.A. (Archdiocesan Council of Social Action) accused the Freemasons of practising "diabolism", or at any rate, those above the M.M. degree.

Rome will never cease trying to extend its influence. I am informed that, at an A.C.O.S.A. meeting early this year the same Fr. Cowley asked Catholic Actionists to collect the names of Roman Catholics who were members of neutral societies, whether these members belonged to R.C. organisations or not. The object was to compile a register of Roman Catholics in neutral societies in Glasgow, so that they might be contacted with a view to spreading R.C. principles in their societies. Fr. Cowley said also that as many Catholics as possible should join such societies.

I regret that I cannot sign my name as my family are bigoted Roman Catholics and it would go badly with me if it was known I had written this, though, if anyone wishes to check, I think they will find my information accurate.

F.S.

#### CIRCUMCISION

Your correspondent Walter Steinhardt will find the reasons why routine circumcision is today discouraged in most modern books dealing with child care.

The report of the first year of the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Thousand Family Survey (Spence et al. 1954) showed that of the boys circumcised no fewer than 22 per cent. suffered from post operation complications. The Registrar-General's returns show that every year there are about 16 deaths from the operation. Some of the unfortunate physical results of the operation are given by Selingworth in his book *The Normal Child* (1957).

The psychological effects of the operation have been the subject of comprehensive study. Reference to this can be found in Allendy and Lobstein: *Sex Problems in School* (1948.)

With reference to cancer of the penis, whilst the statement quoted by Mr. Steinhardt is true, proper hygienic measures in the uncircumcised would appear to give equal protection.

ALASTAIR C. F. CHAMBRE.

#### MR. CUTNER ON CROSSES

Mr. Cutner asserts that the Greek word *stauros* has never meant anything else than "stake". Yet in the writings of Josephus, and in all early Christian documents (including the New Testament), it is the equivalent of the Latin *crux*.

Did *crux* only mean "stake"? If Mr. Cutner had consulted Daremberg and Saglio's *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaine* and Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, he would have learned that the Romans used several kinds of crosses as instruments of punishment. Among them was the *crux commissa*, shaped like a capital T, and the *crux immissa* (the "Latin cross") — a post with a cross-bar placed a little below its top. When this kind of cross was used a *titulus*, stating the crime for which the crucified suffered, was placed above the cross-bar. He might further learn that the post was fixed on the site of execution, and that the condemned bore the cross-bar fastened to his shoulders. The victim was laid on the ground, his hands nailed or bound to the cross-bar, he was then raised to the post.

It is true that there is no representation of the Crucifixion in Christian art before the seventh century. But Mr. Cutner has forgotten a remarkable wall engraving, which has long been shown in a museum at Rome. This is a Pagan caricature of Christianity. A man appears, making an act of adoration to another man with a donkey's head, who is fastened to a *crux immissa*. This engraving has crude lettering in it, "Alexamenos adores God". Experts date it from the third century. The word "crucifixion" does not occur in the New Testament, but "crucify" and "crucified" do. Even if we concede to certain mythicists that the crucifixion was originally an astronomical symbol or myth, for all the early Christian writers it was an historic event — "suffered under Pontius Pilate". The Emperor Constantine I abolished crucifixion as a punishment. If the Roman *crux* was then only a stake, Constantine was abol-

ishing in honour of Jesus an object on which the Saviour had not died, and no one believed he had.

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

#### LAZY?

Dr. Duhig is most unkind to the founder of Christianity in his excellent article "Materialism", where he refers to Jesus as a "lazy vagrant". "Vagrant" perhaps, but "lazy"?—Never!

He may have abandoned the trade of his foster-father, but he laboured tirelessly at his own specialities.

In medicine he achieved results rarely known elsewhere. He was a complete and comprehensive Health Service in himself, effecting cures that should, had he been paid on his merits, have made his fortune. In the world of Catering he had no equal, feeding multitudes with the minimum of supplies, while his experiments in the realm of Aviation, culminating in his successful ascent into Heaven, without visible means of propulsion, rank him among the greatest scientists of all time. As a magician, also, he was without parallel.

In addition, he was a prototype of the Angry Young Man, assaulting the traders in the Temple with a vigour worthy of a better cause.

Can the world show his like today?

"Lazy" is hardly fair, Mr. Duhig.

H. A. ROGERSON.

#### "CO-EXISTENCE"

A few days ago, while reading Mr. Cutner's pertinent comments on reactions to Sir Julian Huxley's Darwin Centennial address FREETHINKER, March 18, 1960 I recalled an experience you may find of interest.

I had the good fortune to be able to attend the special commencement exercises at which the address was delivered, and in the course of which he, Sir Charles Darwin, and others were presented with honorary degrees. The proceedings took place in Rockefeller Chapel, a church—one of the most beautiful in Chicago, incidentally—presented to the University of Chicago by the original John D. Rockefeller, a Baptist by profession. Like most American university commencement exercises, the proceedings were both begun and concluded by clergymen asking for the blessing of "God" upon the assembled congregation, the same "God" who according to Sir Julian Huxley, speaking from the pulpit, was created by man in man's own image at a particular stage in his cultural development.

The situation was paradoxical, to say the least, yet characteristic as well of the peculiar kind of "co-existence" which religion and science have established in our present western society. Sir Julian and the two clergymen courteously, but studiously, ignored one another's existence.

WALTER L. ARNSTEIN.

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