

# The Freethinker

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IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, Joseph McCabe remarked that the average Roman Catholic layman knew no more about the inside of a Catholic monastery than he did about such a Buddhist set-up in Tibet! And if this is still true about Catholic Monasteries, what of the Vatican? Who really knows what goes on in the labyrinthine corridors of the Holy of Holies of Roman Catholicism, as well as of practical affairs, the headquarters of a vast bureaucracy of celibate priests? Someone once said that the unexplored areas of the world can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Vatican City can probably be added to them.

## Light on the Vatican

A number of books have been written in recent years to outline the way of life of the Papal City State, now fully sovereign since the Lateran Treaty of 1929, and enjoying all the normal diplomatic privileges of an independent state. The best known here is Bernard Wall's *Report on the Vatican*. Now however, *The Sunday Times* has undertaken the perhaps impossible task of summarising the life and problems of Vatican City in three sequential articles under the general title of "The Vatican Today". John Raymond has described the major problems and preoccupations that, at present confront the headquarters of the Papal Army. For the "Mons Vaticanus" (Hill of Prophecy)—once sacred, as its name implies, to the prophetic rites of Roman Paganism—has been a Christian centre since the third century A.D. when it seems that the legend that Peter, the first Pope was buried there, had already taken root. And since the 16th century it has been both the permanent home of the Papal Court and the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Raymond has done his job well. His three articles are interesting, informative and by no means uncritical. If he has failed to give his readers an authoritative summary of the life and problems of the Papal Court, that is no doubt because the task is intrinsically impossible to be compressed within the confines of a single volume, let alone a short series of articles.

## What is the Vatican?

Several answers are possible to the above question, for the Roman Palace of the Popes—now enlarged to the limits of a small town with a permanent population of 921 and a temporary one of about 2,500—discharges simultaneously several functions. It represents the Pope's permanent residence and it is the permanent headquarters of international Catholicism. (Formally it had yet another major function, as the capital of the sizeable Italian principality, the States of the Church, not finally absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy until 1870.) Today, however, after reading Mr. Raymond's articles as well as other more detailed accounts, we should suppose that the most conspicuous everyday feature of the Vatican is as the headquarters of a vast cosmopolitan bureaucracy. The Papal Civil Service, as one might relevantly term it, is an even more comprehensive, and certainly more cosmo-

politan, bureaucracy than that of any secular regime. From what we have read about it we rather imagine that the also cosmopolitan, secretariat of the United Nations might bear the closest resemblance to it; though of course, with the inevitable differences between an ecclesiastical autocracy centring round one man and the secular civil service of a federation of democratic states. The bureaucratic atmosphere of the Vatican is at any rate, obvious;

it emerges clearly from even Mr. Raymond's necessarily thumbnail sketches, and has been extensively commented on by more detailed observers—such authorities note that the everyday atmosphere of the Vatican is not primarily of sanctity or scholarship, though of

course the Vatican Library is world-famous in its own right (perhaps the finest MS Library in the world), and quite a few Popes have been canonised, though sometimes for reasons which, while doubtless comprehensible in Heaven, are somewhat difficult to comprehend upon this terrestrial plane. Normally, the atmosphere of the major departments of the Vatican—which has its separate ecclesiastical ministries like its secular counter-parts—have the same sort of atmosphere as that of the great departments of state in a civilian regime. The same sort of qualities that carry a man to the top in civil service life elsewhere, count equally in the mainly ecclesiastical civil service of the Popes. An efficient bureaucrat who, in a secular administration, would become a permanent Under-Secretary or Ambassador, will become—other things being equal—a Cardinal or a Papal Nuncio at the headquarters of Catholic Christianity. One would probably be justified in adding that the same is also true of most Popes as well. Saints and scholars have been notably few among the successors of St. Peter (and such exceptions have not, as a rule, been among the most successful). The most successful Popes, such recent ones for example as Leo XIII and Pius XII, have been efficient bureaucrats and astute career diplomats. Pacelli, for example, had always been the latter. How far the personality of John XXIII "sets the tone" in the Vatican must be conjectural. Perhaps not very far? For, whilst the Pope is, in theory, the most autocratic ruler on earth from the moment of his election—no one, Cardinals included, enjoys any kind of equality with Christ's unique Vicar!—one must suppose that the age-old routine of the Vatican has long ago acquired a definite momentum of its own. One, in fact, that is not greatly affected by the personality of whoever happens to be Pope. And in any case, the average duration of a Papal reign in modern times is only about eleven years! Here, John Raymond perhaps exaggerates the difference made by the succession, for Popes come and go, but the Vatican continues.

## Terrestrial not Celestial

Mr. Raymond relevantly cites the Protestant Professor Harnack as a hostile but authoritative witness to the remarkable growth of the Papacy in both religious and

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

# The Vatican in 1960

By F. A. RIDLEY



political influence within the present century (last century he could have cited another Protestant historian, Lord Macaulay). This can certainly be explained by terrestrial rather than celestial phenomena, in particular to the fear of change and, in the social sphere, of social revolution. The Vatican still pursues its traditional policy of the Counter-Revolution (as Michelet described the Jesuits) in periods of sudden and violent change like our own. In which connection one may recall the observation of the German historian of the Jesuits, Herman Muller: "The Jesuits have never desired a Jesuit to become Pope. For they have always assumed that every Pope would be a Jesuit!" And, in fact, the modern Papacy is largely a

creation of the Society of Jesus.

#### The Future?

Will this always remain so? At present it seems clear that the inner circles of the Vatican are acutely divided upon current policy. For, as we have indicated before, nuclear weapons have made medieval crusades rather out of date. The Vatican as a world power is facing stormy seas. Will it be able, eventually to surmount them? Will another John Raymond be able to record new triumphs for the Papacy in 2,060 A.D.? Or will it have run its course by that time? Time alone can answer this question, but it is one of the most intriguing, as well as important questions that confronts us in 1960.

## Ask at your Library

By F. A. HORNIBROOK

**UNDERCOVER AGENT—NARCOTICS.** By Derek Agnew. Published by Souvenir Press. 18s. 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1.

THERE IS LITTLE REALISATION, even amongst otherwise well-informed people in Britain, of the magnitude of the traffic carried on by the peddlers of dope. It is one of the greatest evils facing the whole world to-day, causing fear second only to that instilled by talk of the Atom Bomb, and its scope has assumed colossal proportions.

The end of the First World War saw the emergence of the gangsters of the Al Capone type, whose activities involved the selling of illicit alcohol, with side lines such as "protection" money from shop keepers, and it led to practically a civil war between the rival gangs, in which scores of murders were committed. At the time, Chicago was held to be the main centre of this crime, but the Chicago gangs' activities were mild compared with the work of the narcotics merchants first of all because of the enormous profits to be made by the heads of these organisations, and secondly of the fact that the sales of these body and mind destroyers were world wide.

After the last World War there were, amongst the population of nearly every country, millions of men and women, the tenor of whose lives had been so upset that their nervous systems had been absolutely deranged. To such people, drugs afforded a temporary ability to forget; but this oblivion was only a respite, productive of the most appalling results. As the author points out, the police of any one country are all but powerless, but working together through The United Nations and the International Criminal Police Organisations, they are able to launch a non-stop attack across oceans and frontiers against the common enemy.

*Undercover Agent* tells us of the fight that was being and is being waged against the criminals—not so much the addicts themselves as the men behind this evil, who are making fortunes by supplying the stuff. The wretched addicts have reached a stage when they will do anything to obtain the drugs, while those who provide them will not hesitate to stoop to crime—even murder—if they think their profits are in danger.

Quoting from the author of this splendid book—"The cases themselves are so dramatic that they read like powerful fiction—yet not only did they happen, but others like them are continuing at this very moment".

Once in Egypt, a detective seized 23 lbs. of maryuane which would fetch in London £15,000.

In a raid in France, the agents seized over 13 lbs. of morphine—enough to condemn hundreds of people to a living death.

Although every decent person deplores the terrible toll

of deaths on the roads—so often the result of criminal negligence and craze for speed—and politicians and the papers rightly hold up their hands in horror at the needless slaughter and maiming thus brought about, the figures are not high compared with the appalling one in killing, prostitution, degeneracy and organised crime caused by the narcotics. And the worst feature of this is that practically no country, civilised or only partly civilised is exempt.

When you ask at your libraries for this book, if it is not in stock, keep on asking for it and, in most cases, the Librarian will procure a copy for you. This is nearly always possible as long as the request is not for fiction. This book is not fiction. Although more exciting than most crime stories, what you are reading is the truth.

### IF!

If God Almighty made the trees,  
The birds, the buttercups, the bees;  
Then all of Nature reaffirms  
He made the viruses and germs,  
The blight, the fungi and the worms  
And every foul disease.

What can a prayer or hymn be worth  
If God Almighty made the earth?  
Is He not deaf to cries of pain  
From babes with tumors on the brain?  
How can our pious friends explain  
A child deformed at birth?

God moves in a mysterious way  
And sends us blessings every day.  
Think of a backbone split in two,  
Of fingers fused, or skin that's blue  
And praise the Lord above that you  
Were never born that way!

RICHARD I. BRIGGS (U.S.A.).

#### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE RECEPTION AND SOCIAL

The N.S.S. Executive Committee cordially invites delegates and friends to the above at the

IMPERIAL HOTEL,  
TEMPLE STREET, BIRMINGHAM  
at 7 p.m., SATURDAY, JUNE 4th

#### THE CONFERENCE

(for Members Only)

will be held at the

IMPERIAL HOTEL on SUNDAY, JUNE 5th  
at 10.00—12.30 2.00—4.30. Lunch at 1 p.m.

AN OUTDOOR DEMONSTRATION WILL BE HELD  
in Calthorpe Park, Pershore Road, Edgbaston

ON SUNDAY EVENING, 7 p.m.



# Thoughts on Stoicism

By G. I. BENNETT

THAT MY OUTLOOK on life is fundamentally stoic (as I am sometimes told) I am well aware. I am not, of course, a Stoic in the sense of subscribing to the ancient Stoics' cosmological theories: credible enough in their day, they do not accord with the knowledge of our times. But I uphold their belief that life must be accepted on its own terms, be its vicissitudes what they may, and also their view that a man should not see himself merely as a member of this or that community, a citizen of this or that state, but of the great community of the world.

It is of course easy to say that life must be accepted on its own terms, whatever they happen to be. But how difficult may such an acceptance be in daily life in face of an indifferent and perhaps cruel world! What fortitude may it entail! The truth is that a degree of fortitude is needed to live well even a fairly untroubled life, and great fortitude is necessary in the unhappy and sorrow-filled lives of certain people. I am not an advocate of punishment for its own sake, and I would reduce to the utmost the hard knocks that are the portion of some during the course of life. But time and again it has been borne in on me that soft living and easy circumstances do not, as a rule, bring out the best in men and women.

I think of Abraham Lincoln. There we have a man *par excellence* who was to a remarkable extent moulded by the hard upbringing and sad experiences of his eventful life. Imagine that extreme poverty had not dogged his early days; that he had received a college education instead of a few broken years in the rude schools of the backwoods; that he had not drifted from one job to another until he tried his hand with moderate success at law, and finally achieved prominence in politics; that he had not sustained the traumatic loss in boyhood of a mother whom he loved and, in manhood, of a sweet girl whom he would have made his wife; that he had not been damned, but instead blessed, in marriage. If we imagine all the favourable things that *might* have happened in Lincoln's life, what manner of man would he have been? Amiable, easy-going, understanding, a *raconteur* with a delightful sense of humour—yes. But would he, who had been so much acquainted with suffering, have had so much in common with those who suffered, so great a store of imaginative sympathy, so much unimpassioned tolerance, so broad and benevolent a vision? Would he, as President of the United States, have been one of the most venerated and best loved of men, whose personal qualities were even finer than his qualities as a statesman, whose name everyone knows, and whose memory is yet green as though he had died but yesterday?

What moral does this point? Simply that human character is not a hot-house plant; for its full development it needs to be exposed to the variable winds of the world. Yet some who are thus exposed, unconsciously seek to insulate themselves from adversity by taking refuge in the comforting belief that there is a Power on High who is man's friend in need. On Him we can lean, in Him confide, in times of trouble. He absorbs the shock, He softens the impact, of life's losses and griefs. Because this world is His, there exists ultimate justice, and—somewhere—there is a heaven and a haven for the weary and care-worn wayfarer.

Such affectingly simple consolation is not for me. I hold, like the Stoics of old, that a man steers his own frail craft on the great ocean of life, and that through sixty or more years he must remain at the helm, riding through

rough waters and calm. Being alone, as the inquiring mind knows, is one of the facts of existence. We come into the world alone; we go out of it alone; and in between there are a number of situations where, whether conscious of it or not, we are alone. Though others may be kind, and out of sympathy or love offer their help, willy-nilly we must resolve our own conflicts and fight our own battles. I think that this must be the experience of many who are without faith in the traditional sense, and it is the beginning of the astringent wisdom of philosophy, the bedrock of Stoicism.

Life has its pleasures and joys, of course, its tender and rewarding experiences. I am the last person to decry them. And in an article I wrote a few years ago entitled "The Necessary Stoicism" (THE FREETHINKER, July 9th, 1954), I counselled that, since our years are so short and uncertain, we should in wisdom live, laugh, and love while we may. But I was not then and I am not now a hedonist, whose view of life I think shallow and selfish, a self-centred fair-weather outlook unworthy of a man of thought and feeling.

With Epicureanism it is different. Epicureanism, which flourished two thousand years ago contemporaneously with the Stoic philosophy, still has its adherents today. Contrary to the popular idea, it is not the espousal of a self-gratifying life. Its founder Epicurus lived austere enough, believing that happiness was realised through restraint and moderation in all things. In many ways, it is a wise and admirable philosophy, although it does lay what to me seems to be a self-regarding emphasis upon the achievement of happiness and serenity as the supreme ends of life. Some have accepted this ideal with enthusiasm, feeling that, in a world where pain and evil always are, one is entitled to whatever insouciant happiness one can obtain. Others have felt differently; and if they have been Stoics they have seen as pre-eminent a life dedicated to right-doing and the performance of moral duty, whether productive of personal happiness or not.

Some writers have seen in their outlook dourness and joylessness. They have brought Stoicism and hopelessness together in a neat equation, seeing Stoicism as characteristically Roman in the days of the decline of the Empire when life had lost its savour and chill winds were beginning to blow through a darkening world. I think they are partly right and partly wrong. Right in that in times of adversity and disintegrating values men are more apt to turn to religion or to philosophy, ask soul-searching questions, and seek some code or creed to which they can hold fast. Wrong in that Stoicism was never mere bleak resignation. That great ethical thinker, Albert Schweitzer, saw it—authentically, I believe—as the conscience of the ancient world. He called it "the winter seed of the coming world civilisation".

Particularly do the writings of the Roman aristocrat Seneca, the recorded discourses of the former slave Epictetus, and the unsystematised jottings of the emperor Marcus Aurelius make this plain. But these men did not simply express high moral verities: they practised them. In a world of declining standards and growing corruption in many places, their lives were examples of chaste simplicity and uprightness. Not surprisingly, this did not lead to popularity. Epictetus outside his circle was scorned and derided. Marcus Aurelius, always a lonely man, found

(Continued on next page)



## This Believing World

In the BBC blurb advertising Sir Mortimer Wheeler's programme on "The Grandeur That Was Rome", it says that "The Paganism of Rome collapsed under the weight of its emptiness. In its place arose the universal church"—this "universal church" naturally ousting the "remote gods of Rome" and ushering in "the triumph of Christianity". This is the kind of "universal" drivel which appears always to accompany the "ushering in" of Christianity.

★

In actual fact, what was ushered in was a kind of "universal" blotting out of civilisation. For something like a thousand years we had "The Dark Ages" when the classical learning of Rome and Greece almost disappeared, and in its place we got hordes of filthy monks all over Europe battenning on the poverty-stricken peasants who mostly lived under appalling conditions of dirt and vice. As far as it is possible to judge from the scanty records which have come down to us, the Christianity of its first thousand years meant nothing for the mass of people but ignorance, superstition, prison, and hunger. This and this alone then was the "triumph" of Christianity.

★

But if the influence of Christianity—the kind which we are told "triumphed" over Paganism—is becoming less and less in the West, what about Turkey, once the happy home of Islam? It was the late Kemal Ataturk, after the first World War, who did his best to westernise his country, and in particular to suppress the influence of Islam by disestablishing it from the State and closing training colleges for Muslim priests. But the Turks simply cannot be modernised in twenty years or so, and Islam with its priests and training colleges are all coming back. Like Christianity, Islam breeds ignorance and superstition, and thrives on downright credulity.

★

In a survey as to why children don't go to Sunday school, by the *Daily Express*, we are told that Bible class attendances between 1938 and 1941 fell by 121,000, and that after the age of 10, "there was a discouraging fall in the attendance of both boys and girls at Bible class". In a way, we are sorry. A good knowledge of the Bible helps to make first-class Freethinkers for, as the children grow older, they are bound to see that only sheer ignorance and superstition can perpetuate the nonsense in the Bible about Devils, Angels, Miracles, Hell, and Heaven. Some of our greatest Freethinkers knew the Bible far better than the average priest—or even the average bishop.

★

Although it may be true that "spirit healers" are more or less despised by the average doctor, this need not stop our healers from curing incurable diseases in our hospitals. Supposing it is also true that our Medical Councils strenuously oppose hospital wards from being entered by the unorthodox, untrained "spiritual" healers most of whom could hardly diagnose a boil—what of it? They claim that they are just as effective at "absent" healing—that is, healing without seeing a patient at all but just by wafting across healing thoughts or prayers. Why don't our thousands of "well-known" healers set to work and give us some precious and unequivocal examples in this way of their powers?

★

Of course we are always being told that even doctors are now taking advantage of "spiritual healing" not only for themselves but also for the patients they cannot cure. Why can't we have some names of both the doctors, the

patients and the healers? That cures do take place sometimes may well be true, but cures also take place without any "spiritual healing" in hundreds of thousands of cases, quickly and efficiently in and out of hospitals, and with far more certainty than under a "spirit" healer. Where are the people who, suffering say from diabetes or coronary thrombosis, would contemptuously refuse a fully qualified doctor and go to a "spirit" one?

★

We are pleased to report that another great Bible discovery authenticates one of its most famous incidents. Dr. J. Free excavating in Jordan has discovered the well into which Joseph was thrown by his pious brothers. We are only sorry that he did not find also Joseph's Coat of Many Colours. Perhaps it has already been discovered, and is held with due reverence in some Roman Catholic church. With a slice of luck somebody might find even one of Joseph's many dreams!

## Nuns At Work

MANY READERS will have seen the film, *The Nun's Story*, in which—as a lady friend remarked to us—Peter Finch is absolutely wasted because he never kisses anybody! But the story, though by no means unsympathetically told, depicts a much greater waste than that: the terrible waste of young womanhood. *The Sunday Express* (22/5/60) told of a more extreme community of nuns, rejoicing in the name, the Benedictine Adorers of the Sacred Heart. Bound by a vow of silence, these nuns never go outside the convent walls. "They sleep on straw mattresses covering bare planks" and "Each in turn rises once in the night to spend an hour's solitary vigil in the chapel". "Most of the day is spent in the same small chapel, where the air is grey with incense and tall candles burn day and night in the gloom". The Superior of the convent, which stands on the traditional site of the old Tyburn gallows, told the *Sunday Express* reporter, "The religious vows we have taken commit us to pray every moment of the day, whatever other duties we may be engaged in".

Still it must be admitted that they pray to good effect. That is, if good is measured in L.S.D. For the Community has raised £15,000 in seven weeks by selling their prayers. "The most costly means of buying their prayers", said the *Express*, "is a 105 guinea subscription" conferring on the giver the status of Tyburn Shrine Founder. He is commemorated by a brass plaque in the convent chapel and the nuns pray for him by name every day. For £50 a year you are prayed for, but get no plaque; for £10 you may have your name on a list of donors, but you get no individual mention: the nuns pray collectively for these somewhat small fry.

## THOUGHTS ON STOICISM

(Continued from page 179)

himself driven into a position of increasing isolation. And Seneca, who incurred Nero's wrath because of his hardly concealed repugnance of that emperor's dissoluteness and cruelty, was finally ordered to take his own life, his devoted wife choosing to die with him.

(To be concluded)

—NEXT WEEK—

RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN CHILDHOOD

By A. W. A'HARA



# 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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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

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 5 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.

N.S.S. Conference Demonstration (Calthorpe Park, Pershore Road, Edgbaston. If wet, Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street, Birmingham), Sunday, June 5th, 7 p.m. Various Speakers.

## Notes and News

THE BIRMINGHAM BRANCH of the National Secular Society has gone to a great deal of trouble to ensure a successful Conference this weekend. Centre of social and business activities is the Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham, where the Saturday evening social and the Sunday business sessions (for N.S.S. Members only) will take place. The N.S.S. President Mr. F. A. Ridley will preside. On Sunday evening, weather permitting, an outdoor demonstration will be held in Calthorpe Park Recreation Ground, Pershore Road, Edgbaston, under the Chairmanship of Mr. J. W. Barker. We look forward to meeting delegates, members and friends from different parts of the country.

SPEAKING AT AN Industrial Sunday Festival Service in De Montfort Hall, Leicester, the Lord Mayor said "that no man could conduct himself or his industry with understanding unless he was fortified by a deep sense of the Christian religion and a true appreciation of Christian life and service" (*Leicester Evening Mail*, 2/5/60). A week later, when opening the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of Scotland in Edinburgh, the Rev. Thomas Mearns of Coatbridge seemed to think differently. "After passing through half a century of rapidly developing industrialism", he said (*The Scotsman*, 10/5/60), "the Church was no nearer to defining the nature and function of work in a Christian Society in terms of the Scriptures".

"WELL HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN IT THEN?" That is the question the faith-healer—or more likely his *Psychic News*—reading follower—asks when his Supernatural powers are called in question. Well here's one for the faith-healer.

In Tampa, Florida, 16-year-old Charles Trotter was pinned by his right leg under a 3,300 lb. car when a jack slipped. His step father, Maxwell Rogers, "knew that nobody could raise the car by hand, so he started to fiddle with the jack" (*Time* 9/5/60), but Charles's mother "grabbed the rear bumper in the middle . . . kept her legs straight and simply heaved with her arm and trunk muscles. The car rose enough for Charles to scramble out with only minor bruises". The enormous effort injured Mrs. Rogers's spinal column and she is in hospital recovering. But she suffered no paralysis, and what "amazes Mrs. Rogers's physician" is that she should have exerted herself at all. "She had been ill at home for two weeks, recovering from a rheumatic disorder of the left knee and an attack of thrombophlebitis in her right leg".

THE SAME ISSUE OF *Time* contained an admonitory letter from Theodore J. Kondoleon, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Rosary College, Illinois. "Your religion editors must and have been nodding", wrote the Assistant Professor, "when he let 'Under the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus . . .' get by him uncorrected. The passage would have us believe that Our Lord had a brother". And it would, of course, play havoc (if we may put it that way: Prof. Kondoleon didn't!) with "the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God". Replying, *Time* said: "Biblical scholars have long been in disagreement on the relationship of 'James, the brother of the Lord' (Galatians 1.19) to Jesus" and then tried to hold the balance between Catholic and non-Catholic views.

AMIDST ALL THE—no doubt justified—denunciation of Communist intrigue in the Trade Union movement, the menace of that other sectarian group, Catholic Action, has been very largely overlooked. We welcome, therefore, an article in *The Socialist Leader* (21/5/60), in which Harry McShane warns "Beware of Carron and O'Brien". These leaders, and others, says Mr. McShane, base their attitude on the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, whereas Socialists like James Connolly and John Wheatley, though Roman Catholics, refused to accept the encyclical. Mr. McShane may or may not be right when he says that "The Carrons and the O'Briens can be defeated with the help of Catholic workers", but we can surely all agree with him in trying to prevent the trade unions from becoming a battle-ground between Communists and Catholics.

IN ITALY, we can see the terrible consequences of Roman Catholic dominance in political life. "In the Christian Democrat Party"—wrote Bruce Renton in the *New Statesman* (14/5/60)—"the M.P.'s have a habit of consulting the local Bishop before they make any political decisions. There is a very practical reason for this: it is the Bishop who procures the votes". And no less a person than Cardinal Ottaviani has declared that "8 million of the Christian Democrat party's 12 million votes were the votes of the Church's organisations and only 4 million votes belonged to the Christian Democrat party proper". Ottaviani, like Cardinal Siri, leader of Catholic Action and—as Mr. Renton described him—"Italy's number one political priest", is opposed to any collaboration between the Christian Democrats and the Nenni Socialists, but the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini is not. And "Some 84 Bishops have been cited as being in favour of a centre left government". The Church, like the Christian Democrat party, is thus divided, and Italy moves from one political crisis to another as Signor Tambroni forms a "six-month" government.



# The Dead Sea Scrolls and Catholicism

By H. CUTNER

ALTHOUGH IT IS ALMOST impossible to come to really definite conclusions regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls until they have all been thoroughly examined and adequately translated and edited with erudite notes by scholars, it has been possible to come to some inferences from what has already been published. And some of the most interesting of these have come from the Roman Catholic camp.

As far as it is possible to judge at the moment, a few things have arisen which have quite disturbed the Roman Church. If it is true that in the writings of the Qumran sect, whether they were or not the sect known as the Essenes, we find particulars of a Teacher of Righteousness and his Wicked Enemy—that is, if we get something of the same idea of a perfect Jesus and a perfect Devil in writings which now most authorities are convinced must be dated at least 100 years before any of our Gospels were written, what becomes of the “uniqueness” of Jesus?

This is dealt with in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Originality of Christ* by Geoffrey Graystone, a little work published in 1956, though it actually consists of reprints of articles from the *Irish Theological Quarterly*. From any point of view, they are very interesting because the author is obviously greatly disturbed that the experts may find that after all, there was a “Christianity” before Christ, that, in fact, there was a “Jesus” of sorts before “our Lord” appeared, and therefore the exponents of the Myth Theory have been thoroughly justified.

Of course, as was to be expected, Mr. Graystone does his utmost to save Jesus; but he is obliged to admit that the Qumran Community was at least an offshoot sect from Judaism, that it accepted the teachings of Moses and the God of Moses, and that, those of its followers who were led in it “by the spirit, come under the influence and rulership of two opposed powers: the Prince of Light (Angel of Truth), and the Angel of Darkness (*Belial* or *Mastema*.)” And it appears that, “according as men follow the one or the other, they are ‘sons of light’ and ‘sons of justice’ or ‘sons of darkness’ and ‘sons of iniquity.’”

These are certainly remarkable expressions to be used a century or more before the date given for Jesus. As everybody knows, Jesus called himself “The Light of the World”—and, as a true Sun God, that is what he really was. But why should not the Qumran “Prince of Light” not be equally a Sun God? And why should not the Angel of Darkness be the prototype of our own famous Christian Devil?

To oppose this Devil or Angel of Darkness, it was necessary for the Qumran Community to live as God’s “elect” or as “saints” awaiting (Mr. Graystone tells us) “the time of God’s intervention”—just as our modern Seventh Day Adventists await the Second Coming when 144,000 of the “elect” will be gathered into the Lord’s Bosom and live happily ever after. (I hope I have the figures right!) Surely the whole Christian idea came from the Qumran sect long before anybody thought of starting another sect on the same lines with a Teacher of Righteousness in Christ Jesus?

But as a good Catholic Mr. Graystone feels that “we should be slow to admit contacts between the early Christians” and members of the Community “simply on the score of verbal likenesses”; though his reasons are extremely vague. Everybody who has studied the Qumran sect knows of their “Teacher of Righteousness” and his

Wicked Adversary, and though attempts have been made to identify both as living historical personages, the scholars who have studied the ancient documents, are not at all unanimous that they were *meant* to be historical. Though they may not have said so outright, the conflict between the two may have been another echo of the similar conflict running right through Paganism. The struggle between Summer and Winter, between Day and Night, between the Sun as Light and the Darkness of Night, runs right through nearly all ancient religions. It runs through Christianity in the struggle between the Son of God and the Devil—and in some form or other it is perpetuated in so many of our own modern stories. What else is the desperate fight between the good Sherlock Holmes and the wicked Professor Moriarty?

Mr. Graystone insists that the “Qumran sect was rigidly exclusive—for Jews alone”, but in the course of time rules were bound to be changed; and perhaps the early Christians after the fall of Jerusalem found that there was then no Qumran sect left, so they took over its “assets” including the Teacher of Righteousness and his wicked Adversary. As the years went on, they managed to “lift” a hefty bit more from the current Paganism—for example, the “doctrine” of the Virgin Birth which had up to then been the exclusive property of a number of Pagan Gods. To expect Christianity to copy only the “remains” of the Qumran sect is really too much to expect. Besides, quite a lot was also taken from Judaism—like the teaching, “Love thy neighbour as thyself”, which so many Christians really imagine even now came originally from Jesus.

If, adds Mr. Graystone,

Christianity did not in any sense owe its origins to the Qumran sect, may we say that it owed something to it by way of borrowed terminology and ideas, granted that these expressions and ideas were invested with new or fuller meaning? In actual fact, he contends, “resemblances between the New Testament and the Qumran writings should not surprise us”. They certainly do not. Resemblances between Paganism and Christianity never have surprised us—they did not surprise Justin Martyr writing about the year 150 A.D. Why shouldn’t Jesus be born from a Virgin, he angrily asked, when so many Pagans Gods all had Virgin Births? In any case, for Jesus, “the Old Testament basis was there [and] its language was used”,—though naturally, “with a fullness of new meaning”. Only grudgingly in all this does Mr. Graystone admit how much Christianity owed to other religions and teaching, though always protesting on the “originality of our Lord”. And it is quite interesting to note how he admits “Strack and Bilberbeck were able to fill four volumes with material illustrative of the New Testament from Jewish traditions later collected in the Talmud and Midrashim”. It would be just as easy to show how Christianity absorbed Paganism in much the same way.

Naturally “surface resemblances” often conceal “fundamental differences”. Well, why not? This does not lessen the “borrowings”, whether from Judaism, the Essenes, or let us say from Christianity’s great rival, Mithraism. They are there, they always were, and only now within the last century or so, are scholarly Christians beginning to realise that the “uniqueness” of Jesus and his religion is pure “myth”. Even Mr. Graystone is constrained to give us some examples of all this borrowing—for instance, “It is well known that the canticles of Luke 1-2 are full of Old Testament allusions”—though, indeed, it is *not* “well



known" to the vast majority of those Christians who come on the radio and TV to bolster up their "Faith".

For their general point of view is as Fundamentalist as that of the once famous, but now almost forgotten, Spurgeon.

Mr. Graystone also admits the high "moral teaching" of the Qumran sect from which, we are told, "three fundamental attitudes . . . link the moral outlook of the sect with that of the New Testament". However, from what I have said, the reader can judge how very disturbed are so many Church leaders about the once stoutly maintained "originality" of Jesus and his religion.

Mr. Graystone deals with that much discussed question as to whether Jesus and John the Baptist were or were not Essenes and many other relevant questions, and of course,

in the end, insists that there is a "tremendous gulf" between the teachings of Qumran and Christianity—and this, after giving us many details of the resemblances!

Whatever the conclusions of the scholars who are studying the Scrolls may eventually come to, one myth has been entirely exploded and that is the "uniqueness" of Jesus. As many readers are aware, I cannot find any evidence that "our Lord" ever lived—but that the religion he is supposed to have founded is merely a relash of Judaism and the beliefs of some of its sects, as well as many aspects of Paganism—sun and astral worship and phallicism—seems to be incontrovertably established; and thus the work of so many of our Freethought pioneers has been thoroughly justified.

## Mr. Ben-Gurion and the Exodus

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER, Mr. Ben-Gurion, certainly set the cat among the Rabbinical pigeons with his recent Bible criticism (previously mentioned in *This Believing World*), and one member of the Knesset moved a motion of no confidence in the Government. The motion was rejected by 61 votes to 6 with 6 abstentions, but the Premier had to listen to some strong strictures.

"In an impassioned speech"—*The Jewish Chronicle* (20/5/60) tells us—"Rabbi Y. M. Levin declared that the Israeli people had been shocked by the publicly-aired opinion of Mr. Ben-Gurion, which rejected a basic tenet of Judaism." "The Torah is not a museum exhibit or an archaeological discovery", said the Rabbi. "It is Divine writ of which every syllable is true". And he added: "You may think what you like but you should not say it". Dr. Peretz Bernstein, of the General Zionists similarly said that "one should not be provocative", because it was liable to pain large numbers of the public.

What was it that Mr. Ben-Gurion said which, in the words of the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, "undermined the Torah and the bases of Judaism?"

Speaking to 400 journalists and artists, the Israeli Premier said that "since the foundation of the State he had been considering the problem of the Exodus and had come to the conclusion that while the main points of the Biblical story were correct, they should not be taken literally". When the Israeli Bible Circle met at his house, he had questioned the scholars and among the questions were: "Why did Jacob leave Canaan?" "Why did Abraham go to Shechem?" "What happened to the 318 members of Abraham's household who were circumcised with their master?" "Why did Terah leave Ur?" Most of the scholars could answer the questions said Mr. Ben-Gurion, "but many referred to the theories [that] some of the Tribes of the Children of Israel, especially the northern ones, never emigrated to Egypt".

The Prime Minister regarded the claim that the Children of Israel were in Egypt for 430 years as "very exaggerated", and he quoted the Septuagint that they spent 430 years in Egypt and in Canaan, not only in Egypt as in the Masoretic text. The Talmud added the Land of Goshen, which Mr. Ben-Gurion identified as the Negev. Then, in the words of *The Jewish Chronicle*:

The Prime Minister pointed out that the Bible names the male Hebrews who went down to Egypt and those who left. In the case of the descendants of Levi, the Bible gives 25 names who together with their wives must have amounted to 50. Multiplying by twelve (the number of the Tribes), Mr. Ben-Gurion arrived at the figure of 600 people who left Egypt. Explaining why he preferred the figure 600 to 600,000, Mr. Ben-Gurion asked: How could 600,000 people wander in the desert 40 years without food. The Bible said that the

Children of Israel ate manna, but what happened to the flocks and how could they survive in Sinai? How could Joshua march unopposed from Devir in the South to Merom in Galilee, to fight against the King of Hatzor? All these problems had led him to believe that only 600 people left Egypt. When they arrived to Canaan they found there some 400,000 Hebrews, the descendants of the 318 members of Abraham's household, who helped them to re-establish the hegemony of the Hebrews.

The very "fact" that the bulk of the Hebrews remained at Canaan, Mr. Ben-Gurion added, was of great historical significance as it proved the uninterrupted ties between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

Whatever one may think of Mr. Ben-Gurion's theories, it is refreshing to know that he wasn't content just to think them and not to voice them, even if they might pain the orthodox.

## REVIEW

### Evolutionary Theories

JOHN BOWDEN is an occasional contributor to *THE FREETHINKER*, and readers would expect his pamphlet, *Evolution and its Mechanism* (2s. Australia) to be stimulating. They will not be disappointed. Mr. Bowden is not afraid to criticise professional biologists when he thinks they are wrong. And if I sometimes agree with the professional biologists, let me say right away that the criticisms are far from idle. Mr. Bowden sets out to shed "new light on a controversial question" and, though the light is not altogether as new as all that, at least it is illuminating. What Mr. Bowden is really trying to do, it seems to me, is to reassess, and particularly to suggest that some old theories (e.g. Mutual Aid) have been ignored or dismissed too summarily; that the time has come to reconsider them. And this in itself is admirable.

Unfortunately, it is hard to see who the pamphlet is directed at. The public at large is hardly in a position to reassess evolutionary theories and, frankly, I can't think that it will influence biologists. In the first place it is deplorably printed. Not only are there a lot of simple misprints, but the printer (ironically named "Ital-Print") seems to be totally unaware of the existence of italics on all but about three of the 60 pages. And this, in a biological essay, is a serious deficiency, since it is the practice to print the world-widely accepted Latin names of animal and plant species in italics. In the second place it is insufficiently documented (even for the lay reader it isn't good enough to write: "As one caustic critic has observed . . .", and then follow it by, "As the aforementioned critic remarks . . ." [p. 49] or again, "As one critic remarked . . ." [p. 51]). In the third, it is haphazard; arbitrary. Inevitably, of course, because of the enormous subject. But for these and other reasons, I can't imagine the pamphlet being read in biological circles.



In fact, it falls between the two stools of the popular and the scientific, though I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to the non-professional who is interested in biology. This, though I think it overrates Kropotkin, and though I have other criticisms to make.

Dr. Warren H. Lewis—says Mr. Bowden—"gave us a glimpse of the kind of evolutionary machinery employed in fashioning a highly purposive structure such as the eye" (p. 25). Surely it would be preferable to substitute for the last eleven words, "*operating in the production of a highly specialised structure such as the eye*". And it is very dubious to say (p. 43) that "In the economy of nature nothing that can serve a useful purpose is discarded". We know what Mr. Bowden means, but he would better have confined himself to the negative and less all-embracing statement that non-functional organs tend to atrophy.

It is precisely because Mr. Bowden's pamphlet is worth while that I deem it worthwhile to be so critical. It is presumably obtainable direct from the printer, Ital-Print, 50 Gladstone Street, Enmore, N.S.W., Australia (no publisher's name is given) and if I think it could have been very much improved in production and perhaps slightly amended in text, I nevertheless recommend it as an extremely useful two shilling's worth.

COLIN MCCALL.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE CROSS

Ref. Mr. Howell Smith's letter on Mr. Cutner and crosses. While it is true that *crux* did not mean "stake" to the Romans, I think a case might be made out for the confusion. Mr. Cutner is right in saying *stauros* does not mean a cross, to the Greeks. But only two writers before Christ use *stauros* or the verbs derived from it, where the traditional translation is "cross" or "crucified". And while I have not seen the Diodorus Siculus passage, the passage in Polybius cited by Liddell and Scott, with its reference to the walls of the camp, does not seem to me to need a translation of "crucified". Of the Greek words for "stake", *stauros* was much the most common, and a compound of its verbs and another was frequently used of "impaling" as a punishment in Greek literature of classical times. Hence if Christ had been impaled on a "stake" the Romans would have written *palus*, and the New Testament writers and Christian Fathers *stauros*: if on a cross, the Romans would have used *crux*, but the non-Greek Christian Fathers writing in Greek could find no parallel distinction to *crux*—*palus*. Hence they used the commonest word with implication of torture—*stauros*.

Since there was no parallel word in Greek to *crux*, it becomes a matter of historical conjecture whether Christ was nailed to a cross or a stake. Arguments from language have little validity.

Much more important are the arguments from art. Mr. Howell Smith has hardly given the full details of the Alexamenos tablet. Anyone who has seen a copy of the inscription (there is a reproduction in W. Brend, *Sacrifice to Attis*, published sometime in the thirties, with discussion) will doubt whether the scratched lines which Mr. Howell Smith so confidently calls a cross, are not just the artist's guiding lines for his central character. Mr. Howell Smith's certainty is at any rate not shared by the majority.

A. W. A'HARA.

### WHAT CAN WE OFFER?

Mr. McCall in his article "What Can We Offer?" (April 22nd)—states "An Anti-Bible might in turn become a bible, a dogma, and that is contrary to the very spirit of Freethought".

I ask: Why so?

After all The Creed has been recited and perpetuated as dogma for centuries; the Bible as The Word of God. Surely, organised Freethought cannot be content to remain on the outer fringes of religious dogma and belief without an alternative system of its own?

Freethought must as I see it continually offer itself as a "challenge" to organised religious dogma and superstitious belief in its efforts to replace supernaturalism with naturalism.

"If it is good enough for them, surely it is good enough for us," I would say! Finally, I do not for one moment believe that with all the variety of organised humanist knowledge at our disposal, we should bicker over the difference in interpretation between the

words "substitute" and "alternative" To my mind they are complementary.

JULIUS LAKE.

### SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM

I should like to ask Dr. J. V. Duhig what Scientific Materialism has to offer us in the way of happiness and the fear of growing old, and the fear of death. For if Scientific Materialism can do no more than tell us that matter is the be-all and end-all of all things, and by doing so destroy faith and teach us that the whole living world is moving towards a knowledge of inevitable old age and death, it becomes questionable if this doctrine should be taught seeing that it can give no antidote for the fear of old age and death. Scientific Materialism seems to be bankrupt in that respect, and all the kick you can get out of it is a mere criticism of religion which soon wears off when one becomes philosophically mature in thought. I often wonder whether Scientific Materialists really believe in their own doctrine, and whether it satisfies them in this bitter struggle between life and death.

R. SMITH.

### OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we report the death on May 7th, of Frederick McVeigh of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a member of the National Secular Society and regular reader of this paper. A victim of Infantile Paralysis at the age of 4, Mr. McVeigh characteristically left his remains to the Anatomical Department of King's College, Newcastle, for the benefit of medical science. We send our sympathy to his sister, Miss Olive McVeigh, who describes her brother as "a great advocate of freethought, who looked forward each week with great anticipation to the delivery of THE FREETHINKER".

We regret to report the death of Arthur Ashcroft, for many years a member of Blackpool Branch of the National Secular Society. Mr. Ashcroft was a prominent figure in the Trade Union Movement in Lancashire and was a lecturer for the National Council of Labour Colleges.

Jane Glyde of Keighley, Yorkshire, who died on May 17th at the age of 83, was an Honorary Life Member of the National Secular Society, as she was of the Labour Party. And she had been active in the movement for women's suffrage.

Miss Glyde was—writes Adrian Pigott—a fearless advocate of Truth and Honesty, who gave up religion in her teens. She worked hard for her ideals right up to the end, and she used to enjoy visits from Mr. Baldie of Bradford, who used to go over and see her occasionally.

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