

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXX—No. 24

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON has been known for many years as a leading exponent of Rationalism, and as a prolific author, notably in the special sphere of religions—in particular, Christian history. In which capacity he has always pursued a line that marks him out rather sharply from the general run. Mr. Robertson has always been a man of the political Left, and has usually buttressed his rationalist critique with arguments of a sociological character based upon a Marxist approach. (In a review in these columns of his fine book on the Reformation, I drew attention to this aspect.) Mr. Robertson, who turned author late in life after a long career in the Civil Service, recently resigned from his Lectureship at the South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, London. For which reason, perhaps, as being now (in the famous phrase of Gladstone) “in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility”, his latest production, *Socialism and Religion* (Lawrence and Wishart, 3s. 6d.) is written from an avowedly Communist and Marxist angle. It represents an open and unqualified defence of the policy of International Communism in relation to religion. Not only does it differ widely and fundamentally from the positions taken by more “orthodox” brands of Rationalism, some of its assertions are difficult to reconcile (to put it mildly!) with the standpoint taken up by the Ethical movement. Since Mr. Robertson explicitly describes the ruling class of this, as of other capitalistic countries, as people “who have degenerated from mere thieves and cheats into homicidal and suicidal maniacs”, to preach ethics to such people would be much like presenting man-eating tigers with recipes for a vegetarian diet! Homicidal and suicidal maniacs would appear *ipso facto* incapable of comprehending, let alone practising, ethical behaviour of any sort.

## Communism and Religion

However, the booklet is undoubtedly of interest, and this, not only on account of its author's remarkable knowledge of religious and social history, but still more as it represents the (more or less) official line taken up by Communism everywhere in relation to religion. Mr. Robertson writes from the standpoint of a Communist party in apparently permanent opposition in this country, but this resembles very closely the point of view embodied in administrative practice in lands where the Communists are in power. And, since around one thousand million human beings live under such regimes, that official attitude towards religion is surely of great importance? When I was in the German Democratic Republic (August, 1957), I was fortunate enough to be able to discuss this precise problem with the Deputy President of the East German Parliament and the Lord Mayors of Leipzig and the “all-socialist” city of Stalinstadt and others. Making due allowance for the differences that must exist between Communist parties in power and in opposition, their view corresponded pretty accurately with that expounded in

*Socialism and Religion*. This basic attitude may, I suggest, be summarised in these terms:—

Religion is, from the Marxist-Leninist attitude, “the opium of the people” (Marx). As such, it represents a social necessity in and to any society marked—as all societies have been hitherto since prehistoric times—by the exploitation of the masses by a ruling-class, and by resulting poverty and misery. Religion, says Marx, represents

“the heart of heartless conditions” and, as such, will only finally disappear when the social conditions that cause it have disappeared. Or, in other words, when a class-divided social order has been superseded by the classless “co-operative commonwealth” of international

Communism. From which it follows logically that the struggle against religion is normally subordinate to the struggle against class society, in the present instance, capitalism. Robertson explicitly endorses this point of view. It would be “idealism”, he tells us, to put the struggle against religion before that against capitalism. The correct tactics against religion must be viewed from the standpoint of the class struggle: e.g. if the Churches or, more likely, individual Christians are prepared to co-operate in the struggle against war or for socialism, their help must be accepted, and their religious views must not be unnecessarily antagonised. In lands like East Germany and Hungary, where Communist parties are in power, subsidies are paid to the Churches and Freethought propaganda is specifically forbidden; as in Russia, the old League of Militant Atheists was suppressed during the war on the ground that to promote religious strife is to endanger the regime upon a secondary issue. At the same time, education in the state schools is secular, and some types of religion are illegal as inimical to human welfare: e.g. Christian Science and Anti-Semitic cults are both illegal in the G.D.R. Historically, Communist theory distinguishes between *official* Churches, past and present, which represent the ideologies of contemporary ruling classes, and the rebellious religious cults that spring up amongst the submerged masses and tend to represent the standpoint of the exploited classes. Mr. Robertson goes into this division in some detail; viz the Roman, Anglican and Lutheran Churches are all in the first category; the Hussites, Lollards and Anabaptists, in the second. The original Christian movement itself, is held by some Marxists to have started as a revolutionary movement against the Roman Empire, a point of view learnedly endorsed by Archibald Robertson, both here and in previous books. (Mr. Robertson believes in an historical Jesus, but Lenin himself was a mythicist!)

## Will Socialism Finish Off Religion?

Well, that is briefly and broadly, the Communist thesis. And certainly Mr. Robertson's colleagues may be congratulated on having acquired the services of this able writer and erudite specialist to put over their point of view in this Socialist monograph. Naturally it raises many

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Socialism and Religion

By F. A. RIDLEY

highly controversial questions which it is impossible to discuss adequately in a brief review like this. Some criticisms appear obvious. Since the author himself admits that earlier class revolutions, which began by opposing religion, ended by supporting it (e.g. the French Revolution), how can he guarantee that the proletarian revolution won't similarly end by either watering down, or even by totally abandoning its present materialist principles? "Past and present" political opportunism does not encourage too much optimism in such matters. In my opinion, the real problem before the Vatican today is how to do a deal with Communism. I think that its "Left" critics, including Mr. Robertson, tend very much to underestimate the political flexibility of that very worldly-wise organisation, the Roman Catholic Church.

## Thoughts on Stoicism

By G. I. BENNETT

(Concluded from page 180)

But it was in Marcus Aurelius that classical Stoicism attained its finest expression. In him are exemplified pureness of life and a completely developed social consciousness. To make one's word one's bond, to honour private obligations, to fulfil personal responsibilities, to steal no mean advantage of another, to be honest and upright in all things—these with him are of a piece with living as a good member of society, of being truly a citizen, not merely of this or that city or state, but of the world. With him, moral obligation begins in the home and radiates outward in ever-widening circles to encompass the whole earth. In imperial times, the good Roman was a universalist by political conviction. The Stoic of retiring disposition and studious life who became emperor was more: he was a universalist also by philosophical and ethical conviction. Believing in world community he came near to accepting the postulate of the brotherhood of man. Yet the private cross he had to bear was the frontier warfare in which his last years were perforce spent and which seemed to cut at the roots of man's brotherhood.

Seventeen or eighteen centuries have elapsed since the time of such men as these. Possibly no thought has been more sublime and certainly no ethics have been purer than theirs. I dare say that the Stoicism of old still exerts an appeal to some as it does to me. But I doubt whether it has ever moved men to throw off the jacket of theistic faith. Few will submit to the passionless rule of reason, alike in thought and life, and the philosophy that enshrines that rule is not calculated to make converts among the votaries of conventional religion—even the more ethically spirited of them.

I had been a rationalist some years when I made my first acquaintance with Stoicism. And I remember very clearly my sense of delight—and of wonder—that here was a moral philosophy, a moral conception of life, so similar to my own. Having much the same belief in reason as the Stoics of antiquity, I had arrived independently at an outlook upon the world, an attitude towards men, that had a lot in common with theirs, although they had lived nearly two millennia ago in an age greatly different from ours. But I feel less wonder now.

It is almost platitudinous nowadays to say that ethics are relative to the time and place in which we live. I admit there is some truth in this. Standards of judgment, conceptions of right and wrong, change. Ideas of propriety (especially, perhaps, as regards the relationship of the sexes) are not fixed and static generation following genera-

Again, how can one possibly be sure that Socialism will eventually create the conditions for the disappearance both of human misery and of its religious opium? It *may*, but can one say definitely yet that it will, or that religion may not succeed in reconciling its continued existence with a future era of prosperity for the masses, as incidentally, it appears to be doing in present-day America? In any case, where Socialist parties are neither in power, nor opposed to religion (as here!) and where a monolithic alliance of Church and State confronts rational critiques of religion, presumably even Communists will admit that, say, the National Secular Society does useful work in attacking religion? Archibald Robertson's long and distinguished career in the Rationalist movement can surely, itself, be cited in proof of such a contention?

tion. As we better understand the human mind, criminality covers a less and less extensive sphere. Views about whether a man should be judicially punished or psychiatrically treated for certain acts or tendencies are undergoing continual modification. But fundamental thinkers in all ages have held to what has well been called the Golden Rule (behave towards others as you would wish them to behave towards you); and integrity, truthfulness, and honourableness in all human relations, are virtues that have been esteemed as such by men the world over since the dawn of civilisation. These things have timeless and universal validity.

It was in the timeless and universal that the Stoics, being ethical thinkers of a high order, were interested, and upon them that they took their stand. But the essence of their thinking was wonderfully realist. They saw the things of which the human will is capable, but against the enormous canvas of the cosmos where man appears infinitely small, insignificant, and lonely. They knew how short are our years and how soon are we all swept away like leaves before the wind. They believed and taught that man has at best but limited control over external nature and events, but that *within* and *over* himself he can be a sovereign. That is a grand if austere conception. When it is united and fused with the other Stoic view that human citizenship is not local or regional but universal and world-wide, I think it represents a high-water mark of thought. It is truly "the winter seed of the coming world civilisation".

From these ultimate reaches of ancient philosophical thought I return to my starting-point; and there, on its immediately personal level, we see that Stoicism will always have a place in human life wherever there is need of courage, of moral conviction, of seeking out and affirming the truth, however unpalatable, and of accepting *with* simple dignity facts and circumstances that cannot be changed.

### READER WARNED

"ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOT THE SAME. There is only one true religion—Christianity." "He (Christ) showed us the correct beliefs, and it is from that Christianity began." These two infallible pronouncements came from Miss Janette Flynn of Glasgow, and "L" of Fife. Between them in a letter to the Scottish *Daily Record* (2/5/60). FREETHINKER reader Mr. S. C. Merrifield of Renfrewshire managed to point out that "Anyone who has studied religion will find that Christianity is a hotch-potch of pagan beliefs common to countries round the Mediterranean long before Christ was born". For his pains, Mr. Merrifield received an anonymous warning lest in his last minutes he "die in terror".

# Religious Conversion in Childhood

By A. W. A'HARA

READING DR. SARGANT'S *Battle for the Mind* recently, led me to consider in detail the technique used in the case of my own childhood conversion. Previously I had looked upon it as a pre-adolescent result of the emotions of bewilderment and insecurity which plague the boy of thirteen, but on considering Dr. Sargant's book some ten years after my conversion I realise how it could be explained in other terms.

In the summer of 1950 I was persuaded by a friend to go with him to a summer camp run by the Scripture Union, I think, or it may have been the Scottish Christian Mission. The terms, if I remember rightly, were moderate, and no doubt my mother would be glad to get me off her hands for a fortnight, especially since the camp was socially very U, the majority being public schoolboys. Some "campers", incidentally, came from as far as Orkney and the Western Isles. The camp itself was at that beautiful East Coast University town in Scotland, St. Andrews.

In the light of Dr. Sargant's book I can understand the state of mental disruption which the first arrival in a strange atmosphere creates, particularly in youth. There it was, of course, a sense of excitement and of childish exhilaration, coupled with, in my case, as a secondary grammar, in England) schoolboy, a sense of loneliness, or, we might say, "lostness". Thus at the very outset the childish brain has its behaviour pattern altered just as the organisers, whether they knew it or not, would wish.

There were three other features of the camp life which together produced the necessary physiological changes for a religious conversion to be successfully carried out. The first, which it would be an exaggeration to call the debilitating factor, but had a similar effect, was the use of games. Morning and afternoon inter-tent competitions were organised (with religious books as prizes) of specially devised games: one, a mixture of baseball and rounders, was called, believe it or not, "puddox", another, a type of rugby free-for-all, rejoiced under a similar esoteric name which I have now forgotten (I don't think it was so mundane as scrummage-ball). Fortunately, football and swimming allowed a withdrawal from the group verbal-associations of the others. Such strenuous exercise in the fresh air reaped a substantial reward for the organisers in the next feature of camp life which I will describe.

After the evening meal attendance was compulsory at the marquee, where the leader of the camp, called, strangely enough, the Commandant, preached the gospel. This proved to be the climax of the camp routine. It lasted, I think, for about an hour and a half: sixty or so tired boys at the mercy of the sonorous Commandant. There was singing, of course—not from the Authorised Hymn book, but from the organisers' own brand of Sankey. I cannot remember a single line of them, unfortunately, but I recall they were fiercely passionate songs, giving the perfect excitatory introduction for the Commandant's exhortation. Here group suggestibility was at its highest. Tired anxious minds, momentarily exalted by the hymn singing, were now told of their guilt and sin. We must know we were sinners—a sense of sin at thirteen, very often thought of as what you get smacked for by your father, was not hard to arouse in the most virtuous schoolboy. This did not all happen on one night, of course: there was a meeting every night for a fortnight, and twice on Sundays. But once the Commandant's powerful oratory

had the boys dangling in a state of nervous tension, the outlet was given. "The way to Salvation lies in being Born Again, Born Again . . ."—on and on went the list of joys that awaited us once we were "Born Again". Hell was not very seriously stressed: it was only Judgment Day that we had to worry about. "When you face your Maker, and give an account etc, etc". As Dr. Sargant pointed out in the case of Billy Graham, the alternative to acceptance was left to the individual's imagination—perhaps an improvement on Wesley before a (potentially) intellectual audience. It took one convert, after about five days, before there was a group-reaction, and eventual hundred per cent conversion.

One feature is left to discuss—that in which consolidation took place. This was very competently done, on similar lines to class-meetings in Wesley's scheme of conversion. After "Prayers"—I think now that was the name given to the nightly performance in the marquee—the boys retired to their respective tents, where their leader, an older boy usually at University, encouraged them to discuss the various doctrines implanted at "Prayers", and of course repent for their sins. Being the youngest in the tent I was spared by a genuine ignorance from the heart-felt misgivings about masturbation (to the neophytes "lust of the flesh"), which comprised the most frequent confessions of guilt. I must admit, however, I sincerely repented for my previous artistic representations on lavatory walls. We were assured in a hushed voice that nocturnal emissions were not our fault. I did not know what they were (in such phraseology) and being too shamefaced to ask, accepted Christ as my Saviour despite them.

From reading Dr. Sargant's book I think this conversion success could almost be guaranteed, in the case of a schoolboy living in such an atmosphere for the first time at any rate. The imperturbable temperament, which Dr. Sargant considers necessary to refute brain-washing, is, it seems, seldom found in thirteen and fourteen year olds. Hence the success of the system, though of course I was told it was the Holy Ghost at work. That my conviction did not remain secure presupposes some state of mental disruption when the beliefs were implanted. In fact I attended a shorter Easter camp less than two years later, and then approaching the age of reason, had the confidence to be, and had the distinction of being, the only person not saved from whatever nameless torture awaited my non-material soul.

I should have liked before writing this to have met some of the boys who had been at the same camp to see whether these types of implanted beliefs have any lasting efficacy. Unfortunately I only know the whereabouts of two, one of whom is now a Church of Scotland minister (but he is a minister's son in any case, and can hardly be taken as a typical example), the other being a friend who introduced me to the camp in the first place. I hope he cannot be taken as a typical example either: he turned a Roman Catholic two years ago. One minister, one converted Roman Catholic, one Agnostic. A strange record.

—NEXT WEEK—

ROMAN CATHOLIC DELINQUENCY

By COLIN McCALL

## This Believing World

The members of the Lord's Day Observance Society must be by now livid with anger at the Football Association's permission to allow football to be played by *anybody* on a Sunday. This day may not after all be the Biblical Sabbath, but it is the day of the Lord—even if the Lord is the Sun! So it must be kept holy. And this goes for the Royal Family too who have been bitterly criticised by the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland for actually *travelling* on a Sunday! And the BBC has the nerve to tell us that Christianity, which is the champion of the Lord's Day, in this "triumphed" over the outworn Paganism of Rome!

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**We can hand it to a Community of Roman Catholic nuns**—they have just raised £15,000 by *selling* prayers. As the *Sunday Express* says—"they pray, the faithful pay". This is just like a heaven-sent repetition of the famous missionary trick so well practised in Africa. The missionaries went there with their Bible and taught the natives to kneel and pray with their eyes shut. In time, the natives found on standing up and opening them that it was they—the natives—who had the Bible, while the pious missionaries had the land. There is nothing known so effective for raking in money—or land—for nothing as our Christian religion.

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**It would not be unfair to say that** most of our newspapers are *afraid* to criticise religion; but the London *Evening News* the other week drew attention to the remains of a "stone age man" found near the river Jordan who lived 500,000 years ago. In spite of this, most of our Bibles still have the date of "Creation" printed in as 4004 B.C.—a date always taught in our religious classes in schools. The theory of Evolution has now been actively publicised for over 100 years—yet a national newspaper like the *Evening News* seems astonished that primitive man was living on the earth 500,000 years ago. It would no doubt still prefer to believe in the 4004 B.C. myth.

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**Just as the sun danced about the sky** when some little Portugese children saw the "miracle" of Fatima, so we should not be surprised of its similar gyrations when a huge statue of Jesus was recently erected at Almada near Lisbon. In the *Irish Independent*, there is an account of the erection by a priest, and he vouches for the truth that the sun really did "dance in continuous rotations". It "turned to the right and left", and even "changed colour". Of course, a "dense black cloud" also took part in the miraculous happenings.

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**As the "Irish Independent"** piously points out, "the phenomenon of the dancing sun was first seen on October 13, 1917; then in the Vatican Gardens by Pius XII on October 30, 31, and then on November 1, 1950; and also on May 17 last". So who can doubt all this Divine proof of the way God Almighty—who alone can cause the Sun to dance—helps his Own True Church!

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**In its Annual Report, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children** regularly gives cases in which thousands of parents torture, ill-treat and even murder their children—but they never refer to one significant fact. This is that they are nearly all, if not all, Christians. They were baptised and confirmed and taught the Christian religion in our schools. Perhaps the Society will now tell us—of what use has Christianity been to them? And why is it that we never or very rarely get non-Christians as child and animal torturers?

**We are again pleased to record** the public exposition in Malta of another marvellous relic. This is 12 links of the chain which bound Paul when he stood trial nearly 2,000 years ago. Paul was shipwrecked on the island—or rather, we are told so which is quite a different matter—and the only comment we can make is to express our sorrow that, as Paul was a tent-maker, we have never seen one of his original tents. But perhaps one or more will be found later. The Roman Church is always in a position to oblige its faithful sheep.

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**ITV gave the other Sunday a particular good boost-up** of the incredible superstition of Fatima in Portugal with the commentator, Anthony Brown, almost, if not quite, believing every word of it. He presented a film of the thousands of pilgrims visiting the shrine which now outdoes Lourdes for sheer credulity—and he seemed rather sorry that it was not all quite true!

## "Spiritual Healing"

THIS JOURNAL OF OURS has been almost the only one in England which has for years strongly criticised the hopeless nonsense of "spiritual healing"; and time after time asked for genuine *evidence*. It may interest some readers that I myself tried to find out what it could do in my case when I was seriously ill for some time. I attended a well known healer, and for sheer impudence and credulity, I think the "healer" would take a lot of beating. Needless to add, I was *not* cured—but the experience was worth having.

In a couple of articles in the widely circulated *Daily Express*, Mr. Merrick Winn recently gave the results of his own special investigations, and his conclusions are devastating. He did *not* find thousands of literal cures of completely incurable diseases which all our Spiritualists journals have for many years past so confidently reported. In fact, he found even among the best "healers", an appalling ignorance. Mr. Harry Edwards, for instance, actually called the prostate the "prostrate", and told Mr. Winn that cancer of the prostate was commoner in men than in women! And this, be it noted, after years of "successful" healing not merely of ordinary people but of many doctors.

Mr. Winn watched some of the cures and described how Mr. Edwards worked. He saw

some (patients) who had very grave complaints, others thought they had. Some were desperate, all were pathetic. Many were hospital chuck outs and this was their last hope. All had waited months for these magic afternoons.

It is true that one or two of the patients felt a little better after the "laying on of hands", but, said Mr. Winn, "neither I nor two independent witnesses could see any difference whatever". In fact, he adds, "Mr. Edwards and his 2,000 healers have, in my view, no outstanding gifts beyond a complete and possibly dangerous belief in themselves".

But Mr. Winn thinks—and I agree with him—that "it would not be right to turn them (the healers) out of the hospitals . . . it might be cleverer to let them in". Of course. Nothing else would show not only their utter incompetence, but their utter failure to cure anybody seriously ill through mythical "spirit doctors" or, as Mr. Edwards insists, "through Jesus Christ".

This has been the position of THE FREETHINKER, and it is something of a feather in our cap that a journal with such an immense circulation as the *Daily Express* reaching out to people who have never heard of us, has so many years after we pioneered our protest, come to the same conclusions.

H.C.

# THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1.

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717.

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

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

London (Tower Hill).—Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.; Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

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

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 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.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1), Sunday, June 12th, 11 a.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "Atheism, Agnosticism and Religion".

## Notes and News

ON MARCH 11th, we published Mr. Colin McCall's examination of two American (Catholic) Professors' answers to questions on the possibility of a Catholic President. The magazine *Look*, has since (May 10th) printed "A Protestant view of a Catholic for President", in which Presbyterian the Rev. Dr. E. C. Blake and Methodist Bishop G. B. Oxnam answered a number of questions on this all-important subject. The two clergymen were very reasonable in their answers. They recognised that a Catholic President would "probably not" use his office to promote a new Roman Catholic relationship between Church and State; they regarded it wrong to inject the religious issue into politics in order to stir up prejudice and bigotry, but considered that "when any citizens honestly worry about how the religious affiliation of a candidate may affect his fulfilment of his official duties, they surely have a right to ask the candidate honest questions, and the right to expect candid answers from him". They admired Senator Kennedy's "candid and fearless" replies to questions on the use of public money for parochial schools and the appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican but, it was important to note, they said, "that Senator Kennedy was vigorously attacked by many important Roman Catholic journals in the United States for just those views". They concluded: "Our votes are not dictated by our religious principles, or by our Church. We do not believe that any American's vote should be. Our votes will be determined by the quality of the candidate himself, by his campaign, his political record, his platform—and, no matter what his

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED, £129 12s. 9d.; W. Scarlett, Jr., 15s.; S. C. Merrifield, 3s.; A. Harvey, 5s.; J. Barrou, 2s. 6d.; D. Partington, £1 1s. 3d.; Anon, 1s.; O.A.P., 5s.; In memory of Wm. Ingram, Canada, £2. Total to date June 1st, 1960. £134 5s. 6d.

faith, by his position on some of the matters discussed in this article".

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THE CHURCH OF JUDAS which has been set up in Kensington, describes itself as being for "the Judases of this world, who are not afraid to acknowledge that they are weak, and who can gather together and jointly attempt to do a little better". "First Missioner", Mr. Kenneth Saunders, has—according to *The Kensington News* (27/5/60)—undertaken a long walk across England in the form of a cross. He started from the North of Scotland on April 17th and by May 13th was in Carlisle, bound south for Portsmouth. Then he intends to travel west—east from Glastonbury to Speakers Corner, London. Mr. Saunders is carrying a white cross and, not surprisingly, "has already aroused considerable interest in Scotland . . ." At Marble Arch, of course such sights are commonplace.

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WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED a most interesting letter from Dr. Walter Rose of Cape Province, South Africa. It is about 55 years—Dr. Rose writes—"since I co-operated with Miss Edith Vance in founding the North London Branch of the National Secular Society, and my ideas have remained unchanged". At about that time, he goes on, "I had the honour of meeting the late G. W. Foote, and still vividly remember the really beautiful manner in which he 'christened' the baby of one of our members in Kentish Town". Dr. Rose enclosed a copy of a letter that he had printed in the *Cape Argus* (12/3/60) from which the following excerpts are taken: "In my humble, but carefully considered opinion those articles supporting the idea of immortality boil down, on critical examination, to a farrago of illogical special pleading based on man's natural egocentricity. As to each of us the world has existence only by its impact on our own consciousness, we find it difficult, probably impossible to conceive of its existence without that consciousness and so reject the idea. Actually the only rational, indeed the only tolerable, immortality is that carried on by our children and their children, to whom, by our example, we may pass on the desire to leave the world just a little better than they found it, to show a preference for what is honest and upright; footprints we can all leave on the sands of time". South Africa being so largely under the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church, we can well appreciate that Dr. Rose was surprised to find his letter printed. We offer him our congratulations and our best wishes.

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TWO ITEMS in the same issue of *The Universe* (6/5/60) referred to the very serious decline in the Roman Catholic priesthood. "Latin America's death of priests has made it difficult to find men, fitted for episcopal office from among the local clergy", and, as governments are reluctant to allow foreigners to be bishops in their countries, the Holy See has revived the system of independent prelatures—"territories governed by priests who have virtually all the powers of a bishop except that of ordaining". In Spain, a priest's work has doubled in the last 40 years, said Bishop Eijo of Madrid. In 1920, there were 34,420 priests to minister to over 21 million people: one priest to 619 persons. Now, with a population close to 30 million, the number of priests has dropped to 23,372: one to every 1,264 persons.

# The Tongue of Angels

By GUSTAV DAVIDSON

IN *Jubilees*, A PSEUDEPIGRAPHIC WORK of Jewish lore (c. 100 BCE), as well as in *Targum Yerushalmi*, an Aramaic version of Old Testament scripture, there are statements to the effect that Hebrew was the language God used at the creation of the world and, later, in the Garden of Eden. In other writings of the period, Hebrew is said to have been the language of all mankind up to the "confusion of tongues," an event which occurred during the building of the Tower of Babel in the year 2247 BCE, according to the "authoritative" dating of Archbishop Ussher in 1650<sup>(1)</sup>. That the Torah was originally set down in Hebrew is likewise a generally accepted view. The latter fact alone makes Hebrew, in the eyes of many, a holy language<sup>(2)</sup>.

As far back as the 3rd century BCE, Ptolemy II, reigning in Alexandria, was "moved by divine compulsion" to order a translation of the Hebrew Law into Greek. The translation became known as the Septuagint<sup>(3)</sup>. In the long centuries that followed, and throughout the Middle Ages, and even down to our own times, orthodox Jews and Christians have regarded scripture as an "exact dictation from on high." In the United States, in the early settlement days, Hebrew was similarly looked upon as a sacred language. In 1776, for example, when the Colonists declared their independence from the mother country, many here advocated substituting the language of the heavenly King Jehovah for that of the British King George<sup>(4)</sup>.

More recently, in 1861, in a sermon preached at Oxford University by Dean Burgon, that eminent theologian declared the Bible to be "none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter, every verse, every syllable and letter of it is the direct utterance of the Most High"<sup>(5)</sup>. Dean Burgon was referring, of course, not to the King James version (as some of his rapt listeners naively supposed) but to the Bible in the original tongues.

That Hebrew is the official language of the Celestial Court was also, once, a widely held view<sup>(6)</sup>. God, naturally, being All-knowing, is conversant, *ipso facto*, in all languages. He is reliably reported to have spoken Egyptian (Hamitic) at the Exodus and in the Wilderness<sup>(7)</sup>. Why, one may be permitted to ask, did the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob speak to his Chosen People in a heathen tongue? The answer is simple: the Hebrews themselves spoke it. It was the language they had learned during upward of 200 years' sojourn in the land of their masters. Be that as it may, the Chosen People must have acquired, or re-acquired, the use of Hebrew after they crossed the Red Sea, for the commandments conveyed to Moses were in that language: of this there can be no doubt since ten of the commandments, the famous Decalogue, were "written with the finger of God" and in Hebrew, as the Tables of Stone attest<sup>(8)</sup>.

While God is omnilingual, angels, like demons, with few exceptions, are strictly monolingual: they speak and understand Hebrew exclusively<sup>(9)</sup>. Hence, prayers in any tongue other than the holy one (possibly also Aramaic) have little chance of being acted upon, unless they are addressed personally to the three angels especially designated to "weave acceptable prayers into garlands for conveyance to God," the three being Gabriel, Zagzagael, and Metatron; or, according to another view, Akatriel (Kitriel), Metatron, and Sandolfon. In Catholic liturgy, Raphael is the angel designated<sup>(10)</sup>.

Angels not only speak Hebrew, they write it. This is vouched by Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic (1688-1772). In Chapter 29 of his *Heaven and Hell* he avers that "a little paper was at one time sent to me from Heaven on which a few words were written in Hebrew"<sup>(11)</sup>. This remarkable document was never produced for public scrutiny or, as far as anybody knows, preserved. Swedenborg adds: "In the speech of angels there are no hard consonants" (sic) and "angelic language has nothing to do with human speech" (are we to conclude that the Hebrew spoken by angels is not the same as the Hebrew spoken by men?). In a preceding chapter we are assured that "angels who talk with man do not talk in their own (i.e., angels') language, but in the man's own language . . . because, when angels speak with man, they conjoin themselves with him; and this conjunction of angel with man causes the two to be in like thought; and as the man's thought clings to his memory, and this is the source of his speech, the two have the same language." All this is doubtlessly derived from Thomas Aquinas's lucubrations on angels, or takes its authority from Acts 2, 2-19: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they (i.e., the followers of Jesus) were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." etc.

Not until we get to the book of Daniel do we come upon a *named* angel, Gabriel. And it may be proper to ask, in what language did Gabriel hail the Hebrew prophet with the words: "O Daniel, I am now come to give thee skill and understanding." The meeting took place in Babylon around the 7th century BCE. Originally from Judea, but raised and educated in Babylonia, Daniel must have spoken Aramaic (in supposedly its Chaldean dialect) in addition to his native Hebrew. So it is likely that the strangely met pair used Hebrew or Aramaic.

As for Raphael, alias Azarias, who served Tobias in the role of guide, philosopher and friend, and later revealed himself as "one of the seven holy angels who offer up the prayers of God's people,"<sup>(12)</sup> this most "affable archangel" (so called by Milton) in all probability spoke Aramaic to the young man, since Tobias was a Jew living in exile in Nineveh. Had Tobias been a *learned* Jew, a priest or a scribe, Raphael would have spoken to him in Hebrew.

(To be concluded)

(1) Archbishop Ussher also figured out that the creation of the world occurred on October 23, 4004 BCE, at 9 o'clock in the morning. In this he was confirmed by the calculations of another eminent divine, Dr. John Lightfoot, vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Lightfoot and Ussher helped to formulate the Westminster Confession.

(2) Only a few, Philo among them, maintained that the original language of the Torah was Chaldee (Aramaic).

(3) The translation comprised at the time only the first five or six books of the Old Testament. Subsequently, in the course of the next hundred years or so, other books of the O.T. were included in the steadily expanding Greek version. See Harry M. Orlinsky's *The Septuagint* (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Cincinnati 1950) and Moses Hadas's *Aristeas to Philocrates* (Harper & Bros., New York, 1951).

(4) See H. L. Mencken's *The American Language* (New York, 1938).

(5) See *Unravelling the Book of Books* by Ernest R. Tractner (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929, p.32).

(6) "Hebrew, the speech of God and the angels" — *Apocalypse of Paul*. The Muslims are convinced, on the contrary, that the

tongue of God (i.e., Allah) and the angels is Arabic. A Dominican father, Bonaventure Crowley, professor of theology at Fordham University, basing his view on the Roman Catholic tenet of the immateriality of angels, contends that the "speech" of such pure spirits is soundless and, therefore, does not enter into the question of spoken language. To convey their thoughts, says Professor Crowley, angels simply orient themselves toward the person (fellow-angel, man or God) with whom they wish to communicate.

(7) "It was not a Hebrew word but an Egyptian word (*Anoki*, "I") that Israel first heard from God at Sinai."—*Legends of the Jews* by Louis Ginzberg, Vol. I.

(8) "Legend has embellished the story, adding that the Torah was later engraved by Joshua on the unhewn stones of the altar at Mt. Ebal, not only in Hebrew but in the languages of every nation."—*Bible Translation in Progress* by Edith Brodsky (Congress Bi-Weekly, Nov. 30, 1959). It should be noted here that in the days of Joshua the nations totalled 70. So Moses's successor, the mighty sun-and-moon stopper, must be numbered not only among the great generals of all time but among the great linguists of all time.

(9) See *Hagiga 16a*. The exceptions were, as we learn from *Targum II Chronicles*, (a) Gabriel, "who commanded the use of seventy languages including Chaldee and Syriac"; (b) Zagzagael, prince of the Torah, who not only knew seventy languages but taught in them; and (c) Metatron, who was adept in Aramaic and Greek, in addition to mishnaic Hebrew. The seventy languages, by the way, were those spoken at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel. Gabriel taught all of them in a single night to the patriarch Joseph, according to a legend quoted by Solomon Zeitlin in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, October 1955.

(10) In the postcommunion of the Feast of St. Raphael, the Catholic Church makes it clear that "prayers are by themselves of little worth, so may the archangel (Raphael) present them for God's blessing."—See Pie-Raymond Regamey's *What Is an Angel?* (Hawthorn Books 1960). When the Church started reprobating angels, as it did in the 18th century—when the manufacture of new angels threatened to glut the market—it recommended that prayers thereafter be addressed to Mary as the one most likely to answer them. In this quarter, Mary rated higher even than her divinely conceived son.

(11) *Heaven and its Wonders* (Swedenborg Foundation, 1956, chap. 29). Among animals that spoke Hebrew were the snake in Eden and Balaam's ass. Mohamet's horse, Al Borak, spoke Arabic exclusively, also a holy tongue.

(12) *The Book of Tobit*.

regained its activity. When it was applied to living bacteria it changed their hereditary characteristics by a process of "transformation", a test of the potency of DNA.

Marmar and Doty discovered what happened in this heating and cooling of DNA. When the solution neared boiling point, the twisted strands of the DNA molecules untwisted and separated into single strands with no biological potency. If the solution was cooled quickly the strands stayed that way—separated and non-potent. But when the solution was cooled slowly, the separated strands had chance to come together, twist again and regain much of their power to transform living bacteria.

Moreover, DNA from related species of bacteria can be mixed together, heated so that the strands separate and then slowly cooled so that strands from the different species come together, producing chemical hybrids. And these in turn can be used to transform bacteria into living, fertile hybrids. The full implications of this work cannot yet be imagined, but it is clear that the possibilities are enormous. Biochemistry has made tremendous advances in our time and has banished any "vital principle", any "life force" forever from the scientific scene.

C.McC.

## Report on Austria

AUSTRIA IS STILL one of the foremost Vatican colonies where it can happen that the two ruling coalition parties—the Demo-Christians or "People's Party" and the Social Democrats—can haggle about the problem whether the Concordat concluded between the late Pope and the late Hitler is still valid for Austria.

The League of Austrian Freethinkers—before Hitler a mass organisation—has been virtually ground down in its vain effort to serve two masters—freethought and the Social Democrats, who as bed-fellows of political Christianity have made their truce with the Church. In Graz, however, a group of nationalistic civil servants have formed the "Koerperschaft der Kirchenfreien", i.e. a corporation for the protection of those who renounce allegiance to any denomination or organised Church. They are by no means atheists, but in a state where the Roman Catholic Church reigns supreme it is essential for all groups of dissenters to have their body of mutual protection.\*

It is gratifying to hear that both groups, the Freethinkers and the "Kirchenfreien" have agreed to join forces against the Catholic moloch.

In 1782 Joseph II—the only liberal Habsburg (he died soon)—sequestered unused Church property (the so-called Dead Hand). A news item in *Salzburger Nachrichten* (23/4/60) divulges plans of the Coalition government to propose to the Holy See the restitution of 10% of these estates and to indemnify the RC Church for the remainder by paying indefinitely 100m Schillings rent per year. The next items on the agenda are "reforms" of the laws on school education and matrimony, that is, revision in the interest of the curia.

In contradistinction to this, it must be stressed that, unlike West Germany, Austria has not yet seen fit to indemnify the victims of Nazi persecution. As far as these have become Allied citizens, the State Treaty would compel Austria to grant some payments. This undertaking has so far been shirked by a Jesuitical stratagem: the necessary Bill has been passed in Parliament, but not the complementary regulations, and in case of a complaint they retort

\* The Church of Rome is the shock troop of political reaction and any RC politician is its tool, whether voluntary or under spiritual pressure.

## Science News

TWO HARVARD UNIVERSITY biochemists, Dr. Julius Marmar and Dr. Paul M. Doty, recently published reports on "Strand Separation and Specific Recombination in Deoxyribonucleic Acids" in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* (U.S.A.), but I take my data from *Time Magazine* (2/5/60). The title is not likely to attract the non-specialist, but behind it lies a story of fascination—and importance.

For Deoxyribonucleic Acid, DNA for short, is found in tiny quantities in every living cell, and it carries the traits of heredity. In normal cell-division, the complicated, twisted molecules of DNA, untwist and separate. Each then attracts bits from the surrounding fluid to form a new, twisted, rope-like structure. And, as *Time* expressed it in typically dramatic terms: "Apportioned between the halves of the dividing cells, the duplicated DNA molecules determine whether the new individuals will be men or muskrats, pine trees or pineapples. The hereditary characteristics of the next human generation—of about three billion people—will be controlled by one fifteen-thousandth of a cubic inch of DNA".

However, back to Doctors Marmar and Doty. The remarkable achievement of these biochemists and their assistants, has been the extraction of solutions of DNA from bacteria and the heating of these extractions to boiling point for ten minutes. With the most interesting results. If the solution was cooled quickly, it lost nearly all its biological potency. When cooled slowly, given several hours to return to room temperature, half the DNA

with a sweet smile: Everything is OK, we have only to wait for the Regulations to be published.

There was a rumour, these legendary Regulations would come into force at long last on the 15th anniversary of Austria's liberation; everybody thought that meant May, 1960, i.e. 15 years after the Nazis were thrown out. However, the authorities seem to have the nerve to twist it to mean after the liberation from the Allied Occupation Armies! On the other hand, Acts and Regulations were very quickly produced for the benefit of other parties: 3,000m. were paid to indemnify Austrian Nazis who "suffered" through "Denazification"; 2,000m. is the value of assets in Germany whose restitution has been foregone, and 200m. was paid to the Catholic Church as a first instalment on claims for war damage done to their property.

O. WOLFGANG.

### MR. RIDLEY IN YORKSHIRE

MR. F. A. RIDLEY, President of the National Secular Society, recently made two visits to Leeds and one to Hull, giving two lectures and taking part in a debate.

We have good reports of all three meetings, Mr. Ridley earning the respect even of his Roman Catholic opponents at Hull University, where a procession of students wearing clerical collars filed into the lecture room singing a papist hymn. They stayed to listen and presumably, in their way, to admire. At least they remained silent thereafter.

On his first visit to Leeds (May 1st), Mr. Ridley spoke to the local Humanist Group. On the second occasion (May 16th) he represented the Group in debate against Dr. D. A. Norris, Lecturer in Chemistry at Hull University, a Christadelphian, at the Leeds City Museum, with Dr. P. P. Townsend (Leeds University) in the Chair. The subject was: "Objective study of the Bible provides no evidence of Divine Inspiration", and Mr. Ridley spoke first and convincingly.

Dr. Norris began by reading disdainfully from THE FREETHINKER—obviously *not* of Divine Inspiration—and spoke impressively, but humourlessly. Despite a majority of Christadelphians in the very large audience, most of the questions were directed at Dr. Norris. Then each speaker wound up for 5 minutes. It was a most interesting contest—and contrast—between two very different speakers.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MR. STANLEY PUZZLED

As a graduate in Latin and Greek, I think I know more of the use of such words as *crux* and *stauros* than Mr. Cutner. But I am content to advise Mr. Stanley, as I did Mr. Cutner, to defer to the knowledge of the experts whose dictionaries of Classical Antiquities I mentioned.

Mr. Stanley has read my *Jesus Not A Myth* so inattentively that he thinks I was putting up a plea for the divinity of Jesus. If in a work on Islam I referred to "the Prophet", should I be regarded as a Muslim? If I call "the Buddha" the founder of Buddhism, does this make me his follower?

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

It is quite reasonable that questions should be asked in clarification of publicly expressed ideas or opinions but it is surely not necessary to ask clarification of an author who has published his opinions in detail so clearly as the author of *In Search of the Real Bible*, *Thou Art Peter*, and last, but certainly not least, *Jesus Not A Myth*, which Mr. Stanley says he has read. If the reading of this book does not answer his question, I take it is hopeless to try to do so. I have not the honour of knowing A. D. Howell Smith, although a native of the town of his youth, but I regard his books on the "Bible" and the "Myth" theory as the most scholarly works from a rationalist standpoint, of any present-day writer.

*In Search of the Real Bible* contains more in a small space

than any book of comparable size. In conclusion I say that if Mr. Stanley is interested to know, my opinions are not necessarily those of Mr. Howell Smith. I am an atheist and an extreme mythicist, but I hope that criticisms of those with whom we differ will be on more important issues than the use of "capital letters".

JAMES H. MATSON.

### CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

It is a pleasant change for a writer of my style to meet such constructive, temperate and sensible criticism as that of Mr. Sidney H. Hoddes (THE FREETHINKER, 15/4/60).

In my original article, for space reasons, I deliberately dealt with general patterns of function and his commentary is completely correct. I know that Catholic canonical opinion on post-marital modesty has been modified. But my young couple, the female half of which had been advised by the Jesuit parish priest to remain as modest after as before marriage had been married over a year and they, particularly the husband, were intensely neurotic as a consequence. But not nearly so much, however, as the couple who had expected the Holy Ghost to do the job of impregnating the wife: they wanted a baby and the only way they had heard about was that of the Holy Family.

On the question of libido, I confined myself to the broad general average of women. One of the most remarkable cases I had, though, was a wife whose libido was almost wholly confined to the last week of a normal cycle, the maximum occurring about the 23-24th day. In her case complete apparent infertility occurred. They wanted a baby but in their case the "safe period" ineluctably worked. The wife was not keen about any other time for intercourse but on adopting my advice for the wife to try the 10th to the 16th nights, they became happy parents. I found too, like Mr. Hoddes, that a surprising number of women had strong libido just after the period about the 5th or 6th day. But my original statement on the average pattern stands. My experiences spread over many hundreds of women.

(DR.) J. V. DUHIG.

### RELIGIOUS NEUROSIS

Mr. Colin McCall's description of the wedding of postulants to Jesus Christ resembles that shown in the film, *The Nun's Story*, which is showing in British cinemas at the present time. I recommend the film as giving a good insight into convent life, and it will be particularly interesting to the careful observer. When, for instance, the heroine is told she must in no circumstances "touch" a fellow nun.

J. ANDERS.

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