

The Freethinker

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ABOUT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, the American sociologist, Brooks Adams, outlined the history of civilisation from the standpoint of the rise and decay of successive races and cultures. Since his now rather remote day, several important works have appeared on this intriguing theme—the more intriguing since it is never likely to be solved. Of these, the grandiose work of Oswald Spengler—*The Decline of the West*—is probably the best known, but

is, I should surmise, surpassed in intrinsic merit by the important works of Sir W. Flinders Petrie—*Revolutions of Civilisation*—and by the unhappily little known but masterly work of Professor J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*. In an also masterly essay under the same title, that *enfant terrible* of Protestant Modernism, Dr. W. R. Inge, concisely investigated the concrete workings of Brooks Adams's famous "Law". What emerges with certainty from these multifarious inquiries is that civilisation has been up to the present time, a transient and frequently interrupted phenomenon. "Where are the builders of yesteryear?" Where, today are the antique builders of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World? It is a matter of elementary information that the most advanced nations of the 20th century were unknown or barbaric when civilisation erected its oldest surviving monuments by the banks of the Euphrates and the Nile.

Three to One
Is our own civilisation destined to be any more everlasting or immune from ultimate decay? This urgent query now assumes a note of unpleasant topicality with certain recent events in both the political and the technical spheres: it has just been alarmingly commented on by the most famous living philosopher—perhaps the most famous living Rationalist also—Bertrand Russell. For in the course of an interview given to the press on his 88th birthday, Earl Russell, assuming the mantle of a modern Jeremiah, declared that he saw "a most lamentable future" for the world, and that the odds were three to one in favour of such a proximate calamity. If these odds are reported correctly, they have risen sharply since the Cambridge sage last mounted the prophetic tripod, for we seem to recall an earlier, in itself sufficiently alarming pronouncement by him that mankind stood a 50-50 prospect in the atomic age of either survival or destruction. But 3 to 1 is long odds against any long continuation of at least, *our* civilisation. Earl Russell, who must be one of the few surviving observers who can contrast from personal experience, the stability of the Victorian age with the continuous tensions that mark our own world, may derive some support for his most recent and most gloomy prognosis from the ironic coincidence that the ignominious collapse of the Summit talks were finally announced on the self-same day that he gave his later, and longer odds, against the survival of civilisation. *Post hoc, propter hoc.*

Is there a General Law of Decay?
Writing soon after World War One had ended the long

period of relative peace and stability (in Europe at any rate) that followed upon the Franco-German war of 1870-71, Dr. Inge put it on record that the beginnings of the "Decline and Fall" of modern civilisation were already visible. Now Earl Russell, after the Second World War, takes up this position and heightens the odds. Since Dr. Inge was a Christian (of sorts) and a die-hard Tory in politics, whilst Bertrand Russell is a leading spokesman of Rationalism, besides being a left-wing Socialist (or possibly an Anarchist) in his outlook on current affairs, it seems evident that the pessimistic outlook of these two singularly acute critical thinkers does not derive ultimately from their sociological outlook. Both answered

—VIEWS and OPINIONS— *The "Law" of Civilisation and Decay* By F. A. RIDLEY

the question. Is our own civilisation declining? in the affirmative, though not necessarily for the same reasons. But neither seems to have got round to the fundamental question: is there *any* law of civilisation and decay or has the indubitable fact that few earlier and no original civilisations have actually survived merely due to an unfortunate sequence of accidents—one damned thing after another? Other thinkers have, of course, discussed this important theoretical problem with varying conclusions: Brooks Adams and (from a very different angle), Oswald Spengler asserted that such a recurring Law, some kind of an inevitability of rise, meridian and decay actually existed. Whereas both Petrie and Bury categorically denied that there was any "Law" as a result of which, progress must always progress. "The Idea of Progress", stated the Cambridge historian, Professor Bury, does not go back (even as an idea) beyond the 17th century, and the origins of our present scientific culture which began with Galileo and Newton. And no one knows how long either the "Idea" or even the fact of "Progress" will continue. From which it would appear to follow that there is no determining principle, no "Law" of alternate progress and decline. Things just happen one way or the other.

The Marxist Critique
While the above view, the view that things (including civilisations) just happen to happen, appears to predominate in Western philosophical circles, East (and in so far as Marxist influence exists there), West of the Iron Curtain (the ideological, as well as the political equator of our era) this (haphazard) view of history comes in for the sharpest criticism. From the Marxist-Leninist standpoint, an Iron Law of social and economic Determinism dictates the various phases of history including presumably any "Law" of rise and decline in the case of the various civilisations of the past. This point of view was recently expressed in the correspondence columns of this paper by my learned friend Mr. P. G. Roy (a Marxist of the classical vintage), when he asserted that, on the economic foundation provided by the system of chattel slavery in the classical age, no industrial revolution was (if I understand him correctly) even a remote possibility. Similarly, with regard to the origins of Christianity this, or something like

it (say a Romanised Mithraism) represented the inevitable result of the decline and eventual breakdown of the great slave-empire of antiquity, Rome—a breakdown accompanied of course, by appalling misery amongst the slaves themselves. Or as a French Marxist (cited with approval by Mr. Archibald Robertson) concisely expressed it: "When Spartacus was vanquished, Jesus had to win". That is, when the Roman slaves lost all hope in this world as a result of the failure of the great servile insurrection of Spartacus, they had to solve their problem of emancipation in the next world under the celestial guidance of Jesus Christ. No doubt there is much truth in such a contention; but does it represent the whole truth? Was the rise and victory of Christianity really inevitable? Further,

The Holy Town that Never Was

By P. G. ROY

And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (Matthew, 2.23).

IMPARTIAL SCHOLARS ARE AGREED that among the various possibilities to explain the term of "Nazarene," the ordinary view of it meaning an inhabitant of Nazareth is both unproven and unsatisfactory. Two Greek adjectives are translated by this term in the New Testament, viz: *Nazarēnós* (Mark 1.24, etc.), whilst in the passage quoted above, the term is *Nazōraios*, which in Acts 24.5 is translated as "the sect of the Nazarenes." For it the Vulgate has *Nazaraeus* such as is used in Genesis 49.26 to describe Joseph as the *nazir*, i.e., prince or leader amongst his brethren (cf. Deut. 33.16). In our quotation, it is the operative word: in order to fulfil a prophecy, according to which the Messiah will be a *Nazirite* (devotee) or a *Nazōraios* (member of a sect comparable with that of the Essenes), the author of Matthew has the Holy Family take up a temporary abode at "a city called Nazareth."

Among the many Maries, one is given the distinctive attribute of Mary Magdalēna to denote that she hailed from a town called Magdalā — the Aramaic equivalent of Hebrew *mīgdol*=tower or fortress; similarly, a "Nazarēnós" could come from a locality Nazará. Yet for one, Jesus was *not* a native of Nazareth; he would rather be the Bethlehemite. Secondly, whilst Aramaic writings — particularly the Talmud — mention localities called Magdalā, *there is no mention in antiquity of a place called Nazareth*. It does not occur in the Old Testament nor the Talmud (or for that matter in Josephus), so we cannot even vouch for its proper spelling; it is first referred to, outside the New Testament, in the 4th century writings of Eusebius and Jerome; and towards the close of the 6th century AD it was a thriving place of pilgrimage. A Jewish writer of the 9th century AD, Eleazar Qalir, in an elegy, mentions "the priestly class of Natsareth." By now the place had been "invented" as it were and put on the map. Or, if it did exist before, it was an unimportant little settlement of no distinction.

F. C. Burkitt ("Syriac Forms of New Testament Names," in *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 1911/3, p.382) makes the point that *zeta*¹, the Greek letter in "NaZareth," is rarely the equivalent of Hebrew (or Aramaic) *tsadē* (sounding ts as in cats), but rather of *zayin* (z); therefore *Nazōraios* could not mean a native of Nazareth, but must be used for *Nazir*, a devotee having taken the Nazirite vow.

The "Nazirites" (Amos 2.12) — of whom the best-known examples are Samson and Samuel—abstained from intoxicating liquor, women, ointment and perfume; they vowed not to shave and to avoid ritual uncleanness through promi-

ity to a corpse. The early Nazirites were perhaps priests or holders of related offices, and later members of a holy order². Until the period of the Second Temple, Nazirite vows — temporary or for life — were rather frequent, even for women. Samson was an example of the rarer occurrence of a Nazirite *ex utero*: "for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb" (Judges 13.5). According to Luke 1.15, John the Baptist was a Nazirite from the womb. The Jesus of the Gospels, however averse he was to the opposite sex, drank wine and did not shun proximity to a corpse.

There was, however, a pre-Christian sect of Nazarenes (Nazaraeans) classed by Epiphanius (*Penarion* 29.7 and *Haer.* 24) as heretic because of their Judaizing activities. After the destruction of Jerusalem they, like the Essenes before them (with whom, incidentally, they had some characteristics in common), went to live in the waste lands around the Dead Sea. The well-known Bible translator Symmachus, was reproached of being a Judaizing Christian or Ebionite and his followers were called "Nazarenes." They kept the Mosaic Law, recognised both the Old and New Covenant and believed in resurrection. In Syria they flourished, particularly in the 4th century AD around the gentile city of Pella, east of the river Jordan; later again, they became prominent as "Ebionites."

However, the early history of this sect is too much shrouded in obscurity to give a clue whether or not the Jesus of the Gospels could have been an initiated member of it; it is, however, rather piquant to note that among gentiles and Jews the Christians were called "Nazarenes" (Acts 24.5) and this they are called to this day by the Arabs³. It is quite possible that the Judeo-Christian sect of the Nazarenes was split by a schism, with the secessionist fraction growing faster and persecuting the mother body who stuck to their genuine doctrine. Be that as it may, the fact that the term "Nazarenes" remained a substitute for the Christian community appears to be another argument against the prevailing idea that it denoted a local attribute of one individual.

St. Jerome (*Commentary on St. Matthew*) understood the quoted passage in the sense that it alluded to prophecies asserting that Messiahs would be despised (Hebrew *nez̄ur* = dregs). The Galilean country and people were held in contempt (John 1.46), and prior to his crucifixion Jesus was derided. However, this far-fetched explanation is only

(Concluded on page 196)

² N-Z-R is only dialectically different from *Nadar*, to vow, Arab *Nadhr*, Hebrew *nez̄er*=separation or consecration (of priests or kings), and *nizzr*=to abstain, devote oneself. Arabs frequently took a temporary vow for purposes of warfare or revenge. Until fulfilment they kept their hair (which is magically potent because it grows on its own) unkempt and unshorn.

³ *Nazarānī*—with a particular (glottal) s-sound; in Hebrew Christianity is: *natsrūth* or *natsārūth*, and *nats̄er* is: to baptise, to convert to Christianity. Mark here the *tsadē*!

¹ The Greek *zeta* had originally the sound of *zd* or *dz*.

The Tongue of Angels

By GUSTAV DAVIDSON
(Concluded from page 191)

In the New Testament (Matthew and Luke) Gabriel again puts in an appearance, this time as the Great Announcer. He first visits Elizabeth, the barren and "well stricken in years" wife of Zacharias, and tells her she is to be delivered shortly of a son (John the Baptist) who would be "filled from the womb with the Holy Ghost." Gabriel next calls on Elizabeth's cousin, the betrothed virgin, and tells her that she, too, is about to conceive in the womb — or had already done so (although she protests that she has as yet known no man) — and that, in time, she would be delivered of a heavenly offspring, a Saviour. Elizabeth and Mary were of common stock and so, presumably, spoke Aramaic. Gabriel, then, mindful of Swedenborg, must have spoken to both these highly privileged women in Aramaic.

In the book *Jude* we find Michael and the devil disputing over the dead body of Moses. It is said, there, that the archangel "durst not bring against him (i.e., against the devil) a railing accusation." Denied probably by protocol from venting his spleen, Michael had to content himself with saying, rather lamely: "The Lord rebuke thee." This must have been uttered in Hebrew, since Michael and Satan were both angels, reared in the same celestial academy.

Pius IX, who donned the triple tiara as late as 1846, came into possession, so he claimed, of an epistle emanating from Christ. The pontifex maximus caused copies to be struck off in gold print and offered for public sale at a fairly stiff price. This writer has not yet been able to discover whether the gold print version was in the original Aramaic (or Hebrew) or in Latin. Those who bought copies were assured of (a) "a great abbreviation of purgatory," and (b) "a rapid transit to heaven." The celestial epistle concluded with this adjuration: "If any one presume to doubt this, my sacred letter, or to say that it does not proceed from my holy mouth, I will abandon him"⁽¹³⁾. Many, rather than risk being abandoned, bought; but whether they received, in turn, (a) or (b) is not known.

Another communication from on high, likewise in the sacred script and likewise in the hand of Christ, but countersigned this time by the angel Gabriel, is claimed to have been found near a place called Iconium. The discovery was made, it is said, 53 or 65 years after the time of the Crucifixion. Right after that, the precious document vanished. Five or six centuries later this so-called "Letter from Heaven" reappeared, and was accepted as genuine by a Bishop Vincentius of Ebusa, Ebusa being a small island in the Balearic group⁽¹⁴⁾.

An additional heaven-sent item is the *Book of Mormon*, the "Golden Bible" of the Latter-day Saints, which Joseph Smith of the USA claimed to have received from the hand of an angel yclept Moroni (vintage 1823 or 1827) in a set of 24-carat gold plates⁽¹⁵⁾. The original text was in an unknown pictographic or hieroglyphic script. Prophet Smith had the plates long enough in his possession to have

succeeded, with the aid of a pair of magic spectacles called Urim and Thummim, in making an English version. The plates thereafter, along with the spectacles, were picked up by the aforesaid angel and borne back to heaven⁽¹⁶⁾.

The visit of an angel, however, did not satisfy, it seems, the ambitions of one who later offered himself as candidate for the presidency of the United States. In 1829 Smith announced that St. John the Baptist had personally ordained him in the priesthood of Aaron. As though that weren't honour enough, three other visitors from on high showed up at the prophet's premises: St. Peter, St. James (brother of the Lord), and St. John (presumably St. John the Divine). This distinguished trio personally enrolled Smith in the ancient and honourable Order of the Priesthood of Melchizedec, an order of which Jesus was already a member in good standing. Smith does not say in what language the ceremony was performed. Probably Hebrew — of which, however, Smith was ignorant.

Dr. John Ballou Newbrough, another American promulgator of still another "Word of God" with the cryptic title "Oahspe," announced in 1883 that the whole of this sacred tome, consisting of 36 books running to 890 pages, "was mechanically written through my hands (on a typewriter) by some Intelligence other than my own." The Intelligence was not named. The assumption is that it was an angel, dictating in English. One contemporary admirer of this book of "Jehovih" declared that "no man, no combination of literary men, no committee of poets, dramatists, or the world's greatest writers, could produce Oahspe." True enough. Scholars, however, have been unanimous in pronouncing the contents "a pretentious mass of unorganised and incoherent fancies," "commonplace and superficial," "A Niagara of nonsense," etc. And anyone who cares to examine the book, as this writer has done, cannot help but agree with the scholars.

It is safe to say that Dr. Newbrough's automatically transcribed bible is no more divinely authored or inspired (by "Jehovih," Yahveh, the Holy Ghost, Allah, Demiourgos, or any other supernatural intelligence) than are all the bibles that have preceded it, or are likely to follow it.

Let us conclude this piece on the tongue of angels by taking to heart the warning (Acts 2, 1-13; I Cor. 14,23) that to speak "with the tongue of men and angels," even at the dictate of the Holy Ghost, can be dangerous, especially in a mixed assembly, for such "prophesying" could easily degenerate (and often did) into sheer gibberish, mass hysteria, or downright madness. St. Paul, as we know, thought and taught that the coming of Christ dispensed with any further need of angels (i.e., intercessors or intermediaries). He must have been accorded a cold reception when he was "caught up to the third heaven," the seat of the Powers, and there heard "unspeakable words which it is unlawful for a man to utter" (II Cor. 12,4).

What concerns us here — bearing in mind Swedenborg, and the fact that Paul was fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek — is this: in what language did the Apostle to the Gentiles hear those "unspeakable words"? A good guess would be Hebrew.

⁽¹⁶⁾If this seems an extravagant claim, it should be remembered that it is an article of faith with the Muslims (and at one time it meant death to believe otherwise) that the Koran, chapter by chapter, all in Arabic, was handed to Mohamet by the Babylonian-Judeo-Christian angel Gabriel. This periodic conveyance occurred in the years 610, 613, and 632 C.E.—See Marshall J. Gauvin's *The Religion of the Mohammedans*.

⁽¹³⁾*Paganry, Popery, Pillage* by Constantine Labarum (Charles J. Thymne, London, 1911). In Jellinek's *Bet Hammidrasch* the tale is told of a letter sent from Paradise by the late R. Joshua ben Levi (in Hebrew, of course) through the agency of the Angel of Death—see Leo Jung's *Fallen Angels*, p.31 (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1926).

⁽¹⁴⁾See *Modern Apocrypha* by E. J. Goodspeed (Boston, 1956).

⁽¹⁵⁾On Hill Cumorah, four miles south of Palmyra, N.Y., there is a 40-ft. monument marking the spot where Smith received the gold plates. A statue of the Angel Moroni tops the monument. Moroni, by the way, had a human father, the prophet Mormon, putative author of the "Golden Bible."

This Believing World

Whether the Salvation Army these days indulges in the "show-pieces" of our youth, we do not know. In those faraway days, there were few meetings without its quota of wife beaters, child torturers, drunks, and sorry-for-themselves "sinners" of all kinds—all without exception then safely in the arms of Jesus. But the good work is still going on elsewhere, and we are happy to report the way the Rev. B. Peake recently baptised six "old lags" as the *Sunday Dispatch* so happily calls them. The six comprised one safe breaker, two embezzlers, and three burglars, and thank heaven, they all found God again.

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Properly to baptise them they were first dressed in "flowing white gowns" (probably washed in one of our modern detergents) and ducked in a large tank in front of the altar at the Free Congregational Church in North Kensington; and like so many of the old lags beloved of the Salvation Army, they must have found it heavenly to be with their Maker again. Mr. Peake must be a very happy man.

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But there are other experts in the art of getting sinners into heaven, among them a Son of God—according to the *Sunday Pictorial*—named C. W. Fox who claims to have had permission as the Spiritual Leader of the Christian World Movement to go to Wormwood Scrubs to perform miracles for its inmates. Mr. Fox and his chief disciple, Mr. Buck, appear to live on National Assistance and contributions from "devoted followers", but it has always seemed extraordinary to us that in so many similar Movements, miracles to provide the necessary cash never take place—even though the leaders are the Sons of God!

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No earthquake horrors like those of Agadir and the recent ones in Chile will ever shake the wonderful Design Argument always used by Christians as the one unerring proof for the existence of God. People may die through plagues and floods, but who else could have made the Universe but God Almighty? Volcanoes may engulf towns and villages with all their inhabitants, but the Great Designer is never blamed for anything so trivial. As for landslides and avalanches—so what? Somebody *must* have created the World, and that somebody *must* be God!

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One of the greatest discoveries in the history of the world took place 1634 years ago according to the *Dublin Evening Press*. This was the most memorable, the most momentous discovery of the Finding of the True Cross by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. She was at the time over 80 years of age, and after cartloads of rubbish had been removed from the site of the world-famous Empty Tomb, there were found the Three Crosses, though at the time it was impossible to say which was the True One.

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They were all therefore taken to the bedside of a very sick woman who touched Cross 1 and Cross 2 with no effect. But as soon as she touched Cross 3, she was *instantly* cured. As the *Evening Press* so piously concedes, "This clearly was the True Cross". Needless to add, it was then broken up into 86,751 pieces—they may be more or less but the figure given is our estimate which is as true after all as any. Though an old story, it has to be related every now and then to all good Catholics—it bucks them up and proves the Wisdom of God. Or does it?

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At last women are eligible as church elders in the Scottish Church, and no doubt the Church of England will one

day follow suit. After all, women in the pulpit, especially if young and well groomed, might bring in far more male backsliders than an elderly vicar. It may even be quite pleasant to be saved for Jesus by a pretty young woman; but in any case, it is most unfair to keep any woman eligible for Parliament right out of the pulpit. About the only thing now in which there are still no women are jockeys for the Derby. But that will certainly come one day.

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That well known author, reviewer, and ex-Member of Parliament, Sir Harold Nicolson, is never afraid of proclaiming his unbelief and his Agnosticism—but we note in an article on "I Believe" in the *South Wales Echo* his tremendous admiration and "reverence" for Christ "as a man of almost superhuman sympathy". We wonder how he reconciles this with the stern injunction uttered by Jesus that you must "hate" your parents to be his disciple. However, Sir Harold does not believe in attributing to Jesus "Divine Attributes"—though he insists on calling him "Christ", that is, the Messiah, who after all can only come from God. Sir Harold's "Agnosticism" seems to us here a little confused.

FROM THE WEST INDIES

MR. JAMES BIRBAL, Secretary of the San Juan (Trinidad) Branch of the National Secular Society, reports his recent experiences while on holiday in that other West Indian island, Grenada. Mr. Birbal called on a resident Freethinker, Mr. J. Prosper, and discussed the possibility of forming a Grenada Branch of the Society. But, all in all, Mr. Birbal judges Mr. Prosper's to be an "almost impossible task" at present. Church-attendance, both Anglican and Roman Catholic (the two principal sects) is on the decline, but there is a terrible fear of ostracism. "We went from parish to parish", writes Mr. Birbal, "talking to people with radical ideas, but some of these people are afraid to speak, even to their friends, about Freethought". Mr. Prosper, however, is courageously outspoken, and Mr. Birbal left him a large collection of pamphlets, FREETHINKERS, etc. People may read even if they fear to listen and talk, and in time Mr. Prosper may achieve the success he deserves. We send our very best wishes to him and to Mr. Birbal, and we know that all readers will join us in doing so.

THE HOLY TOWN THAT NEVER WAS

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mentioned because that same writer, Jerome, rejected the only sound explanation on the basis of Hebrew "Nêtsër," because Greek zeta in *Nazōraios* does not correspond to its (*tsadë*) in Hebrew. In fact, however, if given in Hebrew-Aramaic characters, Nazareth is always with *tsadë*; and *nêtsër* (rod, shoot, sprout, also meaning descendant, scion) is the only literal transcription. The prophecy in question refers to Isaiah 11.1: "There shall come forth a rod (*nêtsër*) out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots," similar to Jacob's benediction of Joseph (Genesis 49.22), calling him a "fruitful bough . . . whose branches run over the wall." The "word" that has to be fulfilled is the prophecy that the Messiahs will be a *Nêtsër out of the stem of David, son of Jesse* (Matthew 1.6). At the same time he is a branch from the root of Joseph, son of Jacob, duplicated in the New Testament genealogy as the husband of Mary (Matthew 1.16).

—NEXT WEEK—

ON CHRONOLOGY

By H. CUTNER

THE FREETHINKER

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

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717.

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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.

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.

The Ethical Union. Sunday June 19th. Country walk and Conference. Meet at Boxhill Station, 11.5 a.m. Tea at Star and Garter Hotel, North Dorking, 3.30 p.m. Conference at 4 p.m.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, June 19th, 6.45 p.m.—A Lecture.

Leeds Humanist Group (Brunswick Methodist Schoolroom, Wesley Street, Leeds 2). Sunday, June 19th, 7.45 p.m. Debate: "Scientific Humanism an Inadequate Philosophy of Life". For: REV. F. W. MILTON, M.A. (Methodist). Against: Mr. F. J. CORINA (N.S.S.).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1), Sunday, June 19th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "Francis Bacon: Ethics and Science".

Notes and News

THE REV. L. J. GILLESPIE, vicar of Holy Apostles Church, Leicester, wrote in his parish magazine: "In the Church of England we never try to sheep-steal members of another Christian Church. But, unfortunately, there is one sect the Roman Church, which lacks this courtesy" (*Leicester Mercury* 13/5/60). "A lot of rubbish" was the comment of Father J. Murdoch, Roman Catholic vicar of the Sacred Heart, Leicester. "It is an untrue suggestion—just one of those old chestnuts which keep cropping up. It has been refuted so many times that now we don't bother to answer it". All the same, he did. "We just don't go round chasing people about conversion", he said. "Mr. Gillespie should know that we are very particular about who we have in our church. Even the non-Catholic who is to wed a Catholic has no pressure brought to bear upon him. We leave it entirely to the individual's conscience". One of Mr. Gillespie's allegations that Father Murdoch didn't bother to answer was that last year's statistics showed that 800 Anglicans had been converted to Rome, while 3,480 left Rome to join the Anglican Church. We must leave Messrs. Gillespie and Murdoch to fight it out between themselves, less bloodily, thank goodness, than of yore.

"WE TAKE HEART from the fact that these losses are less than in recent years, but the continued large decline in the number of young people in our Sunday Schools is a most disturbing feature," said Mr. A. M. Bonser, General Secretary of the East Midlands Baptist Association at the annual assembly in Skegness. He then gave the cold facts for the area which covers Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. They were (*Leicester Mercury* 1/6/60): Lost—175 church members; 730 Sunday school scholars; 53 Sunday school teachers.

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"A YOUNG COUPLE IN WALES have just won enough money to buy a house." A lady in Doncaster won £3,000 on a penny points pool; a man won £1,500; another £4,003. We shouldn't have known of these happenings had we not received cuttings from *The Shetland Times* for March 18th and April 29th. Nor should we have known that in each case the lucky person or persons had a piece of the Wishing Cork Tree, Combe-in-Teignhead, Devon. And this is 1960, in case you can't believe your eyes.

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DR. JOHN SUTHERLAND, Senior Lecturer in Education at Moray House College, Edinburgh, thinks that Sunday School staffs have to be strengthened in three ways (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 16/5/60). "They have to be strengthened in their own personal faith; in their factual knowledge of what they are teaching and in their knowledge of children." Quite a task it seems.

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WHEN IS A "CALL" CLEAR? This is the question we couldn't help asking after reading about the Rev. Alexander L. Walker of Argyll, who was welcomed back into the fold by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on May 28th. Mr. Walker had left his charge in Mallaig in 1955 because of a doubt that had troubled him since his first days at university (*Scottish Sunday Express*, 29/5/60). "At that time", he said, "I came in contact with the Pentecostal Movement and was substantially influenced by it. Those of the movement I came in contact with were on the whole anti-Church and anti-clerical". "In spite of this influence", he added, "I know that I had clearly been called to the ministry of the Church of Scotland". Hence our question.

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"A GIRL FEELS SHE HAS a vocation—has a great longing for convent life—but comes from a poor family and is, therefore of great help to her parents. Should this girl try to forget her vocation . . . ?" This is a typical, artificial-sounding question asked in *The Faith*, June 1960. The answer, needless to say, is, no. "Sooner or later she will have to leave home anyhow, or home will leave her", and "Surely it is better for her to follow the Saviour's invitation". That call, we are told, "is one of the greatest graces for the girl" and "one of the highest honours for the favoured parents", and the girl will get "an intensive and extensive training in religion in the convent, to her lifelong joy and eternal bliss".

★

WE HAVE LONG BEEN fascinated by Catholic terminology, and from time to time we draw attention to amusing examples. Not infrequently they relate to the absurd personification of the Host, perhaps the craziest component of a crazy creed (which is saying something). Our latest one is taken from *The Trinity Light* (29/5/60), which informs us that the Forty Hours Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was due to begin that morning at the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, Deptford. During the proceedings, the Blessed Sacrament will be "enthroned".

Roman Catholic Delinquency

By COLIN McCALL

THE REV. H. D. LONGBOTTOM, author of the pamphlet, *Creed and Juvenile Crime* (Protestant Truth Society, 8d.), is Minister of the City Temple, Liverpool. He was a Councillor of the City from 1925 to 1935, when he was elected an Alderman, and was Lord Mayor in 1950-51. Before the war when, as he says, it was argued in some circles that poverty was the real source of crime, he proved that, even in the slum areas of Liverpool, Council schools were "fairly free from juvenile delinquency". Now many say that it is because the youngsters have too much money, but Alderman Longbottom doesn't believe it. He believes—with the *Daily Mail*—that juvenile delinquency "is bound up with the moral climate of a community, be it advanced or primitive, Christian or pagan. If the tone be good there will be little crime. If it is bad there will be a great deal. It is not the standard of living, but the standard of probity which determines the incidence of crime". And he knows, perhaps better than anyone, that one Christian community in Britain produces far more than its share of delinquents. It is, of course, the Roman Catholic.

A few years ago, he says, Social Science students at Liverpool University made an exhaustive inquiry into juvenile crime which, in Liverpool, is twice as high as in cities of comparable size like Birmingham and Manchester. The students examined every individual case in which a youth had been found guilty of an indictable offence over the two years, 1934 to 1936. And they found that "the overwhelming number of delinquents came from Roman Catholic homes and had been or were scholars in R.C. schools".

Until recently, police reports named the school from which a delinquent came, but Monsignor Traynor, the Roman Catholic representative on Liverpool Education Committee, "moved that the names of the schools in future be omitted from the report". This didn't surprise Mr. Longbottom, because Monsignor Traynor's own school, St. Bernard's had 17.77 per cent of delinquents among its scholars, compared with 0.31 per cent in a neighbouring Council school "in the same social stratum" (which Mr. Longbottom accidentally multiples by ten), and 0.11 per cent in the Church of England school, St. Cleopas. Here I must just regret a certain absence of documentation. There can't be too much in a pamphlet of this kind: the date when Monsignor Traynor moved the omission; the years the delinquency figures refer to, and so on, would be helpful.

So, too, would the name and date of Miss Edith Gaffney's pamphlet, a reprint from the *Irish Independent*. It may be called *Liverpool's Unmarried Mothers*; I am not sure, but it is certainly about this problem, mainly caused, says the Roman Catholic author, by "the astounding number of girls who land here without any money at all, or with but a couple of shillings, without any prospect of work, knowing nobody and ready to make friends with the first person they meet". Of "Irish criminal gangs" on Merseyside, and "men arrested for house-breaking within twenty-four hours of their landing in England", Miss Gaffney asks, "Does no one teach them what truth is?" The answer—as Mr. Longbottom indicates—is that they received their education in Roman Catholic schools. And he quotes *The Universe*, "recently" though not, alas, with date, that "the vice and immorality existing among the Catholic body in Liverpool are fearful". It is not a new

discovery, he adds, for Monsignor Nugent, "whose monument graces the gardens behind St. George's Hall", complained "in his day", that "the Devil's hosts of drunkenness, thieving and harlotry were largely recruited from his Church", and that "nine out of ten of the prostitutes plying their trade in the Lime Street area are Catholics". To discover "his day", presumably one has to search out the monument. I take it it will be on that, though not in Mr. Longbottom's pamphlet.

But, if my previous complaints of lack of documentation should be thought relatively unimportant, all must agree that dates, at least, are necessary when the statistics themselves are given. I know from the text that the figures relate to pre-war years, but which one or ones? I know that, "owing to R.C. pressure on our Educational department", Mr. Longbottom is "not able to obtain the most up to date figures". I know that, and I can appreciate it, but I know also that Roman Catholics will use every stratagem in argument. Their standard of probity is low. Every reference is therefore valuable.

However, Mr. Longbottom supplies a comparative table giving the percentage of scholars attending the three types of school in Liverpool, viz.: Council 54; Church of England 14; Roman Catholic 32. The corresponding percentages of juvenile delinquents from these three types of school were: 6 per cent, 12 per cent and 82 per cent respectively. And the author says that the percentages remain approximately the same today. "Four-fifths of Liverpool's juvenile delinquents are Romanists".

He gives further details of three districts, Kirkdale, Toxteth and St. Domingo, where "comparisons can be made between schools in the same social strata", and in each district, according to the latest statistics supplied to him, the Roman Catholic schools topped the list. In Toxteth, Parkhill Council School had 3.1 delinquents per thousand scholars; St. Bernard's R.C. 177.7; St. Patrick's R.C. 95.7; and St. Cleopas C. of E. 1.1. (Percentages from three of these figures were quoted earlier.) In St. Domingo, Loraine Street Council School had 15.6 per thousand and St. Saviour's C. of E. 14.1, while Our Lady's and Friary R.C. Schools had 64.6 and 108.0 respectively. In Kirkdale, Fonthill Road Council School had quite 30 per cent of its scholars drawn from the neighbouring Roman Catholic school, St. John's, and it had 37 delinquents per thousand (mostly Catholics, says Mr. Longbottom) but St. Athanasius's C. of E. had only 16.3, while St. John's itself had 83.7.

The problem, though, is not local, maintains this Free Church minister. He cites the *Daily Express* that, of the 53,763 persons sent to Scottish prisons during "this" (unspecified) year, 22,245 were Irish. That is, over 40 per cent, when their percentage of the population was less than 10. And going abroad: "The R.C. Priest, Father George B. Ford, R.C. Chaplain at Columbia University stated in the newspaper *P.M.* that 'more than three-fifths of the youthful delinquents arrested in New York in 1943 were Roman Catholics', as were '64 per cent of those dealt with in the Children's Court'. 'This means the Catholic Church has something to be greatly concerned about', said Father Ford, and Mr. Longbottom agrees, "especially as only one-fifth" of New York's population is Roman Catholic.

In an article entitled "The Siberia of America", the *New York Daily Mirror* dealt with Clinton Prison.

Dannemora, N.Y., to which most of the hardened criminals are sent. It found that "out of a total prison population of 1,989 no fewer than 1,200 are Roman Catholics". Similarly, the Roman Catholic journal, *Commonweal*, "admits" that "Catholics outnumber Protestants in Connecticut gaols, possibly by four to one". And, in a selection of figures from 28 States, given in *Crime and Religion* by Father Leo Kalmer (Franciscan Press), "the average Roman Catholic population in prison is 33.62 per cent".

Militant Protestants are often dismissed as bitter "sectarians", says the Rev. Longbottom, "but a moment's reflection shows that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy is demanding more State aid for its own sectarianism. While it calls any opposition to its demands 'Sectarian bigotry'." Mr. Longbottom wants to call an end to State aid. It already provides more than a pound out of every guinea it costs to educate Roman Catholic children, he says. The Protestants, he suggests, should meet propaganda for increased grants to Catholic schools with the slogan, "The Bible in the Schools—the Priest outside".

Secularists, of course, would like to see both outside. The Bible—and the Religious Instruction that goes with it—is at best a waste of time. It can be much worse for both teacher and pupil. For the former, it can mean deception, even lying about stories one doesn't believe: for the latter, it can be a handicap to clear thinking. And, incidentally, it contains some immoral stories like Jacob's deception of his father. Not to mention the brutalities and absurdities.

All in all, then, the Bible is not a particularly good school book, though I agree that it is preferable to the priest. But as I see it, we are not likely to be faced with this choice: Bible or priest? It is the Bible *and* the priest, though in different schools. And the only logical choice is: Bible and priest or Secular Education? Unfortunately the latter seems farther away than before the war, while the priest has advanced—at State expense. The Protestants (though not, I would think, Mr. Longbottom) have only themselves to blame for this: they took no notice of Secularist warnings. But we suffer, too, as *Creed and Juvenile Crime* shows. Moreover, we pay, too. The 1959 Act will give Roman Catholic schools about £22 million. We pay both ways, if you get my point.

National Secular Society Conference, 1960

A BLAZING SUMMERLIKE DAY greeted delegates and members of the National Secular Society when they arrived at Birmingham on Saturday, June 4th, for their Annual Conference the following day—though it must be admitted that the same sun greeted a number of religious societies who were in Birmingham for a similar reason! The youngest "delegate" was Miss Melanie Shipper, the seven-month-old daughter of Mr. Dave Shipper, and her grace and beauty naturally captured the homage and attention of the other delegates whenever the business at hand permitted.

The evening began in the Imperial Hotel under the Chairmanship of the Birmingham Branch President, Mr. William Miller. Mr. Miller's first duty was the unhappy one of telling us that the much-respected Birmingham veteran, Mr. Charles H. Smith, was unable to be present due to illness. Mrs. Smith, however, was happily able to be with us, and she reported that her husband was recovering. Then Mr. Miller called on Mr. T. H. R. James to greet the visitors from many parts of England and Wales

(Scotland, unfortunately, on this occasion was not represented). The remainder of the evening was spent in enjoyment of the entertainment provided by the Birmingham Branch and the refreshments.

The more serious side of the Conference started promptly at 10 a.m. on Whit Sunday, with the Society's President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, in the Chair. These proceedings were not public, and a report will be sent to all members in due course, but the unanimous re-election of Mr. Ridley as President, the election of Mr. L. Ebury and Mrs. E. Venton as Vice-Presidents, and the re-election of Mr. W. Griffiths as Hon. Treasurer, will be noted with favour by all friends of the Society. The Executive Committee was elected as follows: Scotland, Mr. R. Johnson; Wales, Mr. A. Arthur; N.E. Group, Mr. F. J. Corina; N.W. Group, Mrs. E. Ebury; Midlands, Mr. F. A. Hornbrook; S.W. Group, Mrs. E. Venton; S.E. Group, Mr. J. W. Barker; and London, Messrs. C. H. Cleaver and W. J. McIlroy.

Questions of finance and advertising were considered at some length, the Treasurer referring to the lack of legacies, the ever-increasing expenditures, and the necessity of selling securities to purchase the new premises at 103 Borough High Street, on expiry of lease at 41 Gray's Inn Road. The Executive Committee's Annual Report was read and accepted for printing and circulation to members, as well as for use as propaganda. It was decided that the venue of the 1961 Conference should be London, though Brighton had also been proposed. A number of interesting items on the Agenda had to be referred to the Executive Committee due to lack of time.

Then, after a thunderstorm, the weather cleared, enabling an outdoor meeting to be held in Calthorpe Park, Edgbaston. Mr. J. W. Barker was Chairman, and the Freethought case was ably put by Mr. Tom Mosley (now—to the pleasure of all members—fully recovered after being recently knocked off his platform at Nottingham), Mr. L. Ebury and Mr. E. Mills. There was clearly need for this forceful propaganda, which provoked heckling, notably from coloured opponents. Ironic indeed that, with so many white people discovering the falsity of Christianity, it should be defended by coloured converts. Park closing time came all too quickly, but it is to be hoped that the meeting will be followed by others.

With Monday come the regretful farewells, though a number of members paid visits to Stratford-on-Avon and other Warwickshire beauty spots. It had been good to meet old and new friends. We cannot name them all, but Mr. F. S. Houghton, Mr. F. E. Papps, Mr. A. Samms and Mr. W. G. Wilkinson were among the sturdy veterans we were glad to see again. Mr. P. W. Crabtree of Oriol College, Oxford, was the youngest participating member, and we look forward to his presence on many similar future occasions.

Finally, our thanks are due to Birmingham Branch for the work they did to make the Conference a success. And especially to Mrs. Miller who was responsible for much of the organisation. Two other ladies, Mrs. Griffiths and Mrs. Seibert of London, lent very helping hands.

CORRESPONDENCE

NEUROSES

May I suggest that Mr. McCall should look to his own neuroses. I had hoped that his marriage would have provided a normal channel of sublimation for some of the cruder compulsions which mar his literary efforts. But alas they continue.

May I therefore as a freethinking rationalist, protest that he is doing a grave disservice to the causes of freethought and rationalism. The rational freethinker is always courteous and never polemical. It is therefore amongst Roman Catholics, Communists and Fascists that discourtesy and polemics flourish.

Quaint, isn't it? A rationalist journal prints in the same issue a typical Communist polemic against sexual suicide and a typical Fascist polemic in favour of physical suicide. Brothels for our girlies and gas chambers for our grannies! Yeo ho and a bottle of rum!

RICHARD HOPE.

[At least we seem to have given Dr. Hope something to write about if not to think about! THE FREETHINKER prints an article if it seems to have something worth saying.—EDITOR.]

SUICIDE

Mr. Snook's attitude is not only pessimistic, it is paranoid. I quite agree that a man should have the right to commit suicide if he wishes, but I am not convinced that most human beings have contemplated self-destruction, and I think it is nonsense to talk about a death-wish "inherent" in humanity. Of course it is cruel to keep hopeless imbeciles confined in asylums, but I cannot agree that "In the long calendar of human brutality this careful preservation of useless and unhappy beings takes first place". Before the Nazis or the Spanish Inquisition? Mr. Snook has lost his sense of proportion and sport a good case.

Just one other (literary) point. If Somerset Maugham is a "great" playwright, how do we describe Shakespeare, Jonson, Sheridan and Congreve? Mr. Snook nas, I fear, exaggerated again.

ROBERT DENT.

SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM

Surely Mr. R. Smith, who reproaches Scientific Materialism with failing to provide "an antidote for the fear of old age and death", is looking for the wrong things in the wrong places. A philosophy or "cosmic outlook" (*weltanschauung*) is not supposed to be a crutch for the lame, a feather-bed for the weary, or a tranquillising pill for the morbidly anxious.

If Mr. Smith wants a brazen, dogmatic self-assurance, carrying with it "the solid conviction of the possession of eternal truths", he must look for it in the ranks of the religionists, especially in the Church of Rome. No philosophy can guarantee that Mr. Smith will wake from the sleep of death with the Everlasting Arms of the Heavenly Father about him. It is therefore quite futile to reproach it for not inculcating faith in such things.

S. W. BROOKS.

JESUS MYTH?

My acquaintanceship with THE FREETHINKER goes back to the year 1927, when I first read it in the Brighton Public Library reading room. It has been 15 years since I last saw THE FREETHINKER, until I started reading it again about two months ago, and have found it improved on Cohen's journal.

I am sorry, however, to see that you are still bringing in the Myth Theory constantly in the articles in your paper, mostly in those written by Mr. H. Cutner, for in spite of Mr. Cutner, there is *some* evidence that Jesus Christ existed at or about the time he is reputed to have lived. Not the wonder miracle worker of the Gospels, of course, but a Jewish rebel with messianic pretensions, who was crucified in Jerusalem on the orders of presumably Pontius Pilatus, and what is very remarkable in that, anyway? Anybody who has read Josephus's *Jewish War* will recall that many rebels against authority between A.D. 30 and 70 were crucified in or around Jerusalem by the Romans.

It is, of course, remarkable that the crucifixion of Jesus (presuming that it took place) is not mentioned by Josephus, at least as far as we know after 2,000 years. But I am prepared to accept (with many others) the genuineness of the passage in Tacitus's *Annals*, for there is no evidence whatever that it is not genuine, and it fits in the context in the passage about the Christians in Rome. This does not prove beyond all doubt that the crucifixion took place, and Christ existed—for it was written about 80 years later than the reputed event—but it does indicate (with other somewhat scanty evidence) that by that date there was a well-founded tradition that a man who was known as the Christ (or messiah) had been executed in Judea between 9 A.D. and 37 A.D. after whom the Christians had been called. Lack of space in your journal prevents my enlarging on this subject, but some of St. Paul's writings also lend support to this view.

E. M. KINGSTON.

EXODUS

In a further lengthy article P. G. Roy (27/5/60) seeks to establish that the Exodus is naught but a myth. His argument hinges on whether the Jewish priests and theologians had access to documents of the Egyptian 'Amarna period (latter part of the 18th Dynasty). If this is not the case, then Mr. Roy's remark about a "pseudo-Egyptian varnish in imitation of Akhenaton" is meaningless. My assertion that Ezra could not have access to such documents is dismissed by Mr. Roy, who finds it a matter for amusement. Yet in answer, all he brings forward is a letter from a petty king to Amenophis III, and he lordly declares that Palestine was an Egyptian colony—which I inferred when I mentioned the Tell-el-'Amarna letters. What else the letter is

supposed to prove I do not know. For one Mr. Roy ignores the later evolution of the Aton cult from the falcon headed deity Re-Harakhti; while evidence exists that Amenophis III paid limited court to a god known as Aton, none exists as to his worship of it in its later fully developed state as "King" Aton with its didactic names enclosed in double cartouches.

Regarding the remarks about the Hyksos—who are now known not to have introduced the horse into Egypt (See *Report of the Egypt Exploration Society*, 1958, p. 6); the translation of the name may be open to question, but whichever translation one uses the affinity between Hyksos and Hebrews remains. Both appear as Bedouin tribes, and the main characteristic is the possession of herds.

To conclude, P. G. Roy has failed to show that Ezra had access to documents of the 'Amarna period, his case rests on his ability to do so. Failing this we have to account for the fact that the story in the Bible contains much that can only be accounted for on the grounds that the writer or writers were acquainted with the period. This suggests a historical basis to the story. With reference to the runaway slaves theory, Mr. Roy's remarks are too over simplified to be dealt with seriously, they beg too many questions that are both complex and controversial.

R. W. MORRELL.

WHAT AN EVANGELIST!

In your issue of May 6th, you referred to Billy Graham in his mission in Africa as saying:

"If I rode down the street in rags on a donkey, the people would say I was doing it for publicity."

So he ignores what Christ was supposed to have done and is more concerned with "what the people would say".

What an Evangelist!!

M. D. SILAS.

OBITUARY

We are sorry to announce the sudden death at Wimbledon on Saturday, May 21st, 1960, of Arthur Conrad Coombs, F.S.M.A., formerly a director of H. A. Coombs Ltd., 10 Farringdon Avenue, London, E.C.4, now at Surbiton. The Cremation took place very quietly at Putney Vale on May 26th, without mourning or usual service. It was Mr. Coomb's special request that there should be no mourning and, to use his own words, "a happy send-off", a phrase typifying, to the end, his cheerful character.

"A.C.C." whose guiding principle in life was his duty to his fellow men spent the last years of his life in retirement, living close by Wimbledon Common, a reserve of nature he loved. His unexpected loss will move all those to whom he was a friend.

F.C.

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