

The Freethinker

Volume LXXX—No. 31

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

THIS SUMMER the General Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers will meet once again at Geneva, from September 2nd to 5th. M. Ferrero, president of the Geneva Freethought Society will receive us. On Sunday we shall gather with the society of Haute Savoie at Annemasse for the unveiling of the new statue to Michael Servetus, replacing the former one which was removed by the Nazis. We shall also meet members of the German-Swiss Freigeistigevereinigung as well as representatives of the Helvetic Freethought Society, which includes all Switzerland.

Geneva is cramful of attractions for the British Freethinker. The city itself has such a colourful history. When Julius Caesar knew of it, it was a town of the Allobroges, and the country was in the path of the west-moving Helvetes who have given their name to the Helvetic Confederation, which is the official title of what we call Switzerland. It became the capital of that Burgundian kingdom which was swept over by Attila and his Huns and which figures in early English literature. In the Middle Ages Geneva became a bone of contention between its Bishops, its Imperial Counts and the Dukes of Savoy. From these potentates the city was able to wring some privileges and to hold its own against them through alliances in the sixteenth century with Berne and Fribourg. In the midst of this broke the Reformation which the Genevese embraced with enthusiasm, and they drove out their Bishop to Gex in the neighbouring Jura. The Protestant leader was Guillaume Farel, and to him came the Picard Jean Calvin, who in a few years established a rigid ecclesiastical discipline. Castellion, who denied predestination, Calvin banished; Servetus, who denied the doctrine of the Trinity, he burned alive. A monument in the suburb of Champel, not far from the river Arve, celebrates this dreadful event. Stanley Weyman places his story, *The Long Night*, in Geneva of this time; it is a grim story of superstition.

Hither came Giordano Bruno seeking refuge from the Inquisition, and found it a sorry place. He, too, doubted the dogma of the Trinity, and he soon shook the Genevan dust from his feet to find a better welcome in France and then in the England of Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville. Nevertheless the city gained the reputation of being a bulwark of Liberty, and contributions were sent to it from all over the Protestant world.

When Rousseau was born here in 1712, the city was torn by dissensions between the "bourgeois" and the "habitants". Among the bourgeois established himself the banker Jacques Necker, who married Suzanne Curchod, daughter of a Vaudois pastor, with whom Gibbon had been in love. Their daughter was Madame de Stael, and the castle which Necker left her at Coppet is well worth a visit. Her descendants still live there; the rooms she used, rooms which probably Voltaire knew well, are kept as they were 160 years ago and may be seen on one after-

noon in the week. The lake steamer will take you to Coppet most agreeably; or, if you are in a hurry, the train takes but twenty minutes from Geneva.

Voltaire and Gibbon

François Arouet, dit Voltaire, knew well these parts. Clever financier that he was, having made his pile and escaped from the clutches of Prussian Frederick and of French Louis, he settled in what he called his three bolt holes: one at Monriod, Lausanne, one at Les Délices in Geneva, and one just outside Geneva at Ferney (now called Ferney-Voltaire). Les Délices stands much as it did when Voltaire lived there, and now houses a fine collection of Voltaireana under the

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Geneva for Freethinkers

— By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER —
(President, World Union of Freethinkers)

direction of Mr. T. Besterman, who is appropriately English. I say "appropriately", for Voltaire's Freethought may be said to date from his visit to England in May 1726, where, to his admiration, he found one poet Secretary of State, Addison, two others, ambassadors, Gay and Prior, and philosophers such as Locke and Newton held in honour. Moreover, to Voltaire's mind, the freedom of speech which he met with in this island was astonishing. In particular the Quakers fascinated him, and the Anglican Church too stirred his curiosity. However he dismisses the numerous sects to be found in the land of fogs, as "vilains hérétiques à brûler à tous les diables, comme dit maître Rabelais" (a lot of nasty heretics fit to be burned by all the devils, as said Master Rabelais). What appeared to Voltaire as the supreme revelation was that Locke, who cast doubts even on the existence of a soul, should be held in such high honour; and it was under Locke's inspiration that Voltaire wrote his criticism of Pascal's *Les Pensées*. Voltaire became the beneficent squire of Ferney, the genial host at Les Délices, enjoying from its windows the view of Mont Blanc, and looking upon himself as "le rat des champs", the country rat, for he found the Genevan bourgeois rather limited in conversational subjects. What Voltaire enjoyed was not so much the country as the society of a chosen few in an atmosphere of liberty—and in a house large enough for the presentation of plays. If he wearied of his own chateaux, he could play a visit to his friend Necker at Coppet or to Langallerie at Lausanne, where he met a fattish young Englishman, named Gibbon, who made no impression on the old man whatever; though I fancy that some of the chapters of the *Rise and Fall* show something of Voltaire's satirical spirit. Gibbon returned to Lausanne to finish his great history in a house with a pleasant garden on a slope with a fine view of the Alps; a house which exists no more—offices replace it—and a garden which is today covered by buildings.

Byron and Shelley

Some thirty years later, in 1816, Byron came to Geneva and at the Villa Diodati, near Cologny, wrote some of *Childe Harold*; here he met Shelley, and the two young men used to go boating on the lake, and on one occasion,

were wrecked near Meillerie in Savoy; storms may rise suddenly and violently on the great blue lake of Geneva. And there "far, far above piercing the infinite sky, Mont Blanc appears—still, snowy and serene—its subject mountains their unearthly forms pile around it, ice and rock" (Shelley).

On the shore of the lake you will find that astonishing castle of Chillon, which inspired Byron; Bonnivard was not just the character that Byron imagined; the bourgeois of Geneva found him awkward to handle. Half a century later Renan came occasionally to visit his friend Ritter at Geneva.

Freethought in Geneva

In the first decade of our century Geneva and Lausanne formed a very active centre of Freethought; to name a few of the leaders then—all now dead—Professor Auguste Forel, Professor Otto Karmin, Charles Naine, Ernest Peytrequin and my own kind master, Gustave Brocher. Brocher was a French *paysan* destined for the Church, whose theological studies led him away from it; he had a gift for languages, speaking most European tongues easily and correctly, taking a post at Fiume when he was over 70 in order to learn Croat. He had also the gift of generosity, and he and his wife, having no children of their own, adopted in all seven, four of one family. Towards the end of his long life he was representative of the short-lived republic of Azerbaijan in London; and became

Ghosts go West

DO GHOSTS GO WEST, THEN? This is the question we asked after reading the *Western Evening Herald* (16/6/60) account of the annual meeting of the Devonshire Society, held at South Molton on the previous day, with special reference to the 57th report on folklore presented by Miss Theo Brown.

Miss Brown, we learn, had "persuaded Miss Elizabeth Champernowne to write down as complete a list as she could of the family ghosts of Dartington Hall", and for this she surely deserves our eternal gratitude. How important it is to get the record straight may be seen from an example. One room was said to be haunted by a woman who had thrown herself from a tower room. Miss Brown and Miss Champernowne have, we hope, dispelled this mistaken notion once and for all.

"It is haunted", said Miss Brown, "but not by this lady". "There was a connection with a so-called countess [here we must reluctantly record our regret at Miss Brown's imprecision!] shut up in the reign of Queen Elizabeth because her husband thought she had been unfaithful".

There was also, Miss Brown told the Society, a lady in white who appeared before a member of the family was due to die. This happened in 1890, she went on, "three weeks before the Rector of Dartington died", though whether he *was* a member of the family or his was an additional decease is not, alas, indicated in the report.

Again we found an unfortunate note of doubt when Miss Brown spoke of a headless horseman who was "supposed" to ride through the woods and "legend had it" that a steward once opened the gate to let him through. Would it, by the by, be necessary to open the gate for a ghost? We must apologise for our ignorance of spectral affairs: we ask as openly-professed uninitiates.

And as such, we welcome the re-entry of certainty into Miss Brown's report as she comes to "the Champernowne time". There was a piano which played itself and a room where papers scattered themselves over the floor "on the very day the deeds were signed".

very bitter against the London *Times* on the one hand and against the Soviets on the other. He was for long at work on a biographical dictionary of Freethinkers, and provided J. M. Robertson with information which the latter used in his *History of Freethought*.

After 1936, alas, the once active and widespread society faded away. The weekly organ *La Libre Pensée Internationale*, became a monthly; became, strange to say, an organ without a society supporting it, kept going by a printer freethinker, M. Baud; then both died.

In 1954 by means of a meeting at Les Délices (most appropriately) the Genevan society was revived, and today with some help from the energetic societies of Upper Savoy and of the Ain is once more thriving. The Lausanne Freethought Society has also been revived and is active.

I would like to finish, if the Editor will permit, with Byron's lines. *A Sonnet to Lake Leman* (Lake Geneva).
Rousseau — Voltaire — our Gibbon — and de Stael —
Leman! these names are worthy of thy shore
Thy shore of names like these! wert thou no more,
Their memory thy remembrance would recall
To them thy banks were lovely as to all,
But they have made them lovelier . . .

If any of my readers feel drawn to visit Geneva and Lac Leman, we of the World Union General Committee will be very pleased to see you there between September 1st and 5th. *Au prochain revoir!*

It must not be thought, though, that Miss Brown confined herself to the ghosts of Dartington Hall. Not at all. She told, too, of "a very interesting case of wart-charming" (her own, surely justified, words) when at North Bovey in 1956, a woman bought a mare covered with warts and fit only for the butcher. As may be expected, "veterinary treatment produced no results", so that the owner got in touch with "a wart-charmer from Chagford who acted through an intermediary". The charmer never saw either the mare or its owner, but "the warts just vanished".

Now, who could disbelieve that?

If any reader should, we can only ask; Why? Had not Miss Wreford given Mrs. A. M. H. Carbonell "an example of caterpillars being charmed away from a cabbage patch at Sandford by spitting one on a hat-pin and roasting it before a fire"? And isn't the one as likely as the other?

MASS CONDITIONING

THE LEADING ARTICLE IN *Pulse*, the Guy's Hospital magazine, for June-July, considers the dangers of mass conditioning. "How are the lies hatched which make the fear and spread the hatred?" it asks, and answers: "The main method is the use of words with a dictionary meaning but with emotional overtones; thus there is no argument at a rational level with the phrases, but to a crowd they imply everything that they have been taught to hate or love". This, of course, is the problem that Freethinkers have always been up against: nowhere more than in the religious field do we find words heavily charged with emotion. "The true Patriot"—the *Pulse* article concludes—"must now be an internationalist, not a bundle of conditioned reflexes and encapsulated beliefs." The world, as we have long been urging, is in desperate need of freethinking.

—NEXT WEEK—
SENATOR KENNEDY AND POLITICAL CATHOLICISM
By F. A. RIDLEY

The Birth of the Gospel

By F. A. RIDLEY

The Birth of the Gospel by W. B. Smith, edited by Addison Gulick, Philosophical Library Inc., New York, 1957.

THANKS TO THE KINDNESS of my colleague Mr. H. Cutner, I have been able to read the posthumously published book of Professor William Benjamin Smith, already well known in his own lifetime as an eminent authority on Christian origins and in particular as the author of a daring and original theory of the origins both of the Christian Gospels and of Christianity itself. Professor Smith was an extreme mythicist, a fact that, along with the highly technical character of his latest book, may possibly explain the long interval between its author's death (in 1934) and its eventual publication—in New York—as recently as 1957. In his own lifetime, the author published several books on Christian origins, of which his *Ecce Deus* ("Behold the God"), is, I understand, the best-known. But it could well be that this posthumously published volume will go down to posterity as his most substantial contribution; a destiny that rather seems to be implied in the wording of his own preface.

For, *The Birth of the Gospel* is certainly an important book, though by no means easy to read. We learn from the blurb on the cover, that leading contemporary scholars who disagreed with Smith's mythicist position yet paid unequivocal tribute to his remarkable scholarship. His posthumous study indicates a mastery of his subject and I, for one, do not envy any orthodox apologist who should be faced with the task of refuting its central thesis. Rather surprisingly, though an extremist in his approach to New Testament scholarship and in particular to the existence of any historical Christ, our author is neither a materialist nor an atheist, but is apparently a Berkleyan Idealist in philosophy and some kind of Deist (or Unitarian) in religious belief. From the way he writes in his general approach to religion, he might even be termed a "reverent" Rationalist, with however, the notable exception that there is nothing in any way reverent about his iconoclastic demolition of any kind of historical Jesus who lived and taught in First Century Palestine.

Professor Smith's central and reiterated theory of Christian origins has absolutely no need for any hypothetical Jesus Christ, but contrarily excludes it by definition. What then, is the precise theory demonstrated by our American critical scholar with such formidable logic and vast (and often highly technical) learning.

Briefly, and stripped of its formidable technical apparatus—for the Professor studied in Gottingen, and shows his Teutonic training—it may be summarised as follows: Jesus Christ, the alleged founder of Christianity, was a symbolic, but in no actual sense, an historical individual figure, though in another non-individual sense he was actually historical. For Christ, the Jesus Christ of the Gospels, represented a symbolic personification of the collective people of Israel, the Chosen Race; one could, in fact, call the Christ of the Gospels a personification of the Holy Nation, Israel, whom God had chosen since the remote period of Moses, or even of Abraham.

Christianity, according to Professor Smith, started as—presumably—a fully self-conscious Jewish Gnostic movement, probably regarded by the orthodox Judaism of the day as heretical from the start, which sought to convert the Gentile (Pagan) world to Jewish monotheism. As Smith demonstrated, most of the New Testament authors—e.g. Paul, James, John, etc., knew this quite well—one

will, as he shows, search the Pauline Epistles, the Apocalypse, or the Epistle of James ("the brother of the Lord"), in vain for any reference to an historic Christ or to an authentic reference to any Gospel story; the few references that there are, bear all the marks of late interpolations. Even in the Gospels, most of the actions of Christ are symbolic—e.g. the Feeding of the Five Thousand represents a Eucharistic myth (*viz* Christ's body feeds the Church) and the casting-out of devils represented the overthrow of belief in Pagan gods and Jewish demons by Christian propaganda.

One even of the Four Gospels, John, was, or so our author claims, written by a mythicist who was not, and did not imagine that he was writing the biography of any actual historical person. As has often been pointed out, the Christ of John is a God and makes no pretence of being anything else but the Logos, the "Word" of God walking about Palestine in the form of a man. Whereas in the Synoptic (first three) Gospels, which (at least in their present form) cannot be traced back beyond about the middle of the 2nd century AD, it is already evident that the Evangelists (or their final editors), were beginning to take symbolism as literal fact; the original personification of Israel is already beginning to be transformed into an historical person—"the man, Christ Jesus", a process soon to be completed by popular belief and then dogmatically stated by the Church. Eventually, as the later evolution of Christianity irrefutably demonstrates, the original symbolism became transformed into historic fact—or rather, alleged fact. The Gnostic "hidden doctrine" of Israel as God's Chosen Redeemer of mankind, elected and crucified to save a suffering Gentile world, became transformed and (one could say), vulgarised into an individual Saviour God, who was born of a Virgin, lived, died and rose from the dead at a particular point in space and time, *viz*. First century Palestine under Tiberius Caesar and his deputy, Pontius Pilate. This transformation was no doubt connected with the wholesale conversion of Pagan Gentiles, who knew nothing about the Jewish Gnosticism whence Christianity had originated, but to whom Saviour gods, born of virgins, working miracles and rising from the dead, were (one might almost say) two-a-penny. The Jesus Christ of the Gospels ceased to be the ideal representation of Israel and suffered a sea-change into an individual god, simultaneously the Galilean Master and the Second Person of the Trinity—"perfect God and perfect Man" who, for our sins came down from Heaven and was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, etc., etc., the later and present credo of Orthodox Christianity.

A few weeks back, I indicated the also mythicist position taken up by the Lutheran pastor, Albert Kalthoff in *The Rise of Christianity*. A comparison of these authors' view presents special interest, particularly since both deny the existence of any historical Jesus and both regard the Gospel Christ as a collective creation. Here however, our American and German authors part company, W. B. Smith regarding the Christ of the Gospels as an ideal symbol of Israel, of the Chosen Race, whereas Kalthoff presents the Gospel Christ as a collective personification, as a symbol of the classes and races oppressed by Roman Imperialism amongst which the Jews were only one. A *via media* between these two points of view is however,

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

In the ATV discussion on "Heaven and Hell" the other Sunday, according to the R.C. Archbishop Roberts, SJ, there was no doubt whatever that there was a real Hell. People who obstinately refused to believe in God and to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour were bound to go to Hell—as indeed they deserved to go. The Archbishop should have added, they would *frizzle* there for all time. Would he have relished the prospect?

★

On the other hand, the Rev. N. Micklem and the Rev. V. Simon seemed to imply that there *may* be a Hell as described by Archbishop Roberts—but they were not quite so sure. And by manipulating the English language they used into an unintelligible gabble, they left the impression that if there really was a Hell, it could be that "unbelievers" mostly would inhabit it. But so confused were they that both reverend gentlemen could easily declare what they said meant the exact opposite. And this in 1960!!

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All this talk about Hell was followed the week after by an even sillier talk about Heaven in which Archbishop Roberts, SJ, often allowed the Rev. U. Simon to lose himself in an astonishing haze of words about as intelligible as the cackle of geese. What Mr. Simon, representing the Church of England didn't know about Heaven, as a place, and to which we were all going in the glorious days of the Resurrection for everybody promised by Jesus—or was it Paul?—is simply not worth recording. Mr. Simon loathed the idea, which most people held, that when we were in an earthly grave, that was the end.

★

The Rev. N. Micklem, though a stout-hearted believer in everything the Gospels say about Jesus did (to his credit) look not only astonished at his fellow Christians' knowledge of Heaven, but also had the courage to admit his own knowledge of Heaven was almost nil. He did not actually say that all who were fully believing Christians were bound to go there *alive* after death, but he appeared to have at least some doubts about it. The ATV should be congratulated on providing us with such a charming broadcast of religious imbecility.

★

In these days of pale pink Christianity, instead of the full blown rose one, we heartily welcome pleas that the bishops should introduce forms of prayers to "exorcise" evil spirits wherever these devilish instruments of Satan exist. The Guild of St. Raphael wants the Church to authorise the way it was done in 1549 when Devils were in such abundance that it became an absolute necessity to get rid of them; and nothing is so fatal, even to the most powerful Devil, as much as a form of exorcism supplied with such devastating weapons as prayers written by bishops, and any form of cross or crucifix.

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The 1549 prayer began, "I command thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost that thou come out". This appears to us to be piously very weak—for what happens if the Devil does not believe in the Trinity? We'll back any good bishop these days to beat this prayer into a frazzle—so we hope that the House of Laity or the Guild of St. Raphael or even the Good Fathers of the Holy Cross will set to work and give us a prayer with some body in it, something which would make even Milton's Satan tremble. It can be done—or can it?

Nobody could know what the late Aneurin Bevan believed in religion as well as his closest friend, Mr. John Buchan, and he emphatically declares that Mr. Bevan was not an Agnostic or Atheist because Dr. Soper and the Bishop of Southwark were his friends. But surely some of us who are convinced Atheists have Christian friends? In any case, all that Dr. Soper could claim was that "Nye was keenly aware of the spiritual values of all faiths", and "there was in him a great sense of reverence". All this might be true without making him a Christian. Have not quite a good many Humanists "a deep sense of reverence"?

★

So, after the wonders and beauties of the Prayer Book have been extolled for centuries, we now have the vicar of St. Cuthberts, Earls Court, strongly criticising it because some parts, including the Marriage Service, are not understood by the faithful! Preb. C. L. Gage-Brown writes that "the marriage service is one of the worst features of the prayer book and like the baptism, confirmation, and burial services, is turgid, overloaded with pompous exhortations and Old Testament references".

★

The vicar should thank his lucky stars that Freethought has made it possible for him to attack what has always been considered a beautiful and integral part of Christian teaching without being at once hurried to the stake or torture chamber. "Infidels" have in the past been burnt to death or had their hands chopped off, or similar religious punishments joyfully inflicted on any one who had the temerity to criticise the Prayer Book, or the Bible from which the Prayer Book sprang. Mr. Gage-Brown is a lucky man indeed, and we wish him more luck. Why not abolish all the Prayer Book for ever?

FOR ALL ETERNITY!

A WEDDING "with a difference" was reported from Aberdeen by the Scottish *Sunday Mail* (26/6/60). The service, it seems, was conducted by a woman, Mrs. J. G. Anderson and, as it was a spiritualists' wedding, the phrase "till death do us part" was omitted. "We of course believe in life after death", said Mrs. Anderson.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL

(Concluded from page 243)

perhaps possible. For, as Smith himself demonstrates, there were two rival trends of thought in Judaism: an exclusively nationalistic one (represented in the Old Testament by Daniel and in the New Testament by the Apocalypse); and a cosmopolitan missionary one that aimed to convert the Gentile world (represented in the Old Testament by Isaiah and Jonah and in the New Testament, pre-eminently by Paul and the Fourth Gospel). Upon both W. B. Smith's theses and (I would say) from the demonstrable facts themselves it was from this cosmopolitan pro-Gentile trend that primitive Christianity originated, whatever view one may form as to precisely how. I can only repeat in conclusion that this is a contribution to the study of Christian origins of permanent importance; it is greatly to be hoped that the book will soon be issued here.

[Footnote. Actually the most cosmopolitan and anti-"Chosen Race" book in the Old Testament is that admirable little composition The Book of Jonah, the real aim of which is to indicate that God cares as much for the Gentiles—symbolised as Nineveh—as for the Jews themselves. Unfortunately, this has been obscured by the famous whale, a synonym for Nineveh, the City of the Fish God, who not only swallowed Jonah, but also most of his critics.]

THE FREETHINKER

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

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 15s.; half-year, 17s. 6d; three months, 8s. 9d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25.)

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. MILLS and WOODCOCK. (Weekday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria statue.)

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.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Sussex Branch N.S.S. (Peace Statue, off Embassy Court, Brighton).—Sunday, July 31st, 3 p.m.: A Lecture.

INDOOR

Southend Humanist Group (12 Cedar Road, Thundersley, Essex).—Saturday, July 30th, 7.30 p.m.: A Discussion.

Notes and News

THERE IS CURRENTLY a small exhibition of drawings by Oswell Blakeston at the Coffee Pot, 40 Berwick Street, off Piccadilly, mainly cartoons of "readers". No. 6 in the catalogue is the portrait of a serious looking young lady and bears the caption: "She reads THE FREETHINKER". Incidentally, Mr. Blakeston's book about Northern Ireland, *Thank You Now*, suffered a last minute hitch with the printers and does not appear till July 29th.

★
"DOES ANYBODY SERIOUSLY BELIEVE that the clock can be put back?" asked an article in *Medical Press*, quoted by *Leicester Mercury* (15/7/60). It referred to the move to allow faith healers into hospitals, which it described as "asking the Ministry to sanction the resurrection of the witch doctor from the Neolithic cave", and "superlative impertinence". "Should any consultant"—it went on—"because of a desire to appear broadminded or of a leaning towards the miraculous, agree to admit a spiritual healer to his beds, we would remind him there is one body, at any rate, which holds the very strongest views on the subject of consorting with unqualified practitioners, namely the General Medical Council." This is comforting, as is the declaration that "A hospital management committee has no power whatsoever to say who shall or shall not enter the hospital for the purpose of treating patients", but it is disturbing to think that any hospital management committee should grant permission for faith healers to visit their hospitals. If some people had their way the clock obviously would be put back.

WITCHCRAFT, OF COURSE, has a special fascination for the ESP-addicts, and we were not surprised to read in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* (8/7/60) that Dr. Casimiro P. Navarro and Mr. Joel E. Fernandez of the Philippine Parapsychological Research Society "will soon begin tests to see just where in voodooism the physical ends and the psychic or spiritual begins". The "tests", we are told, will use hypnotism and "will include an attempt to 'transfer' a person's sensations to another subject or object, such as a voodoo doll or a glass of water." The two men, we should think, are admirably fitted for the investigation for, as the report says, they "hope to confirm the findings" of Dr. Jare Faher (President of the Psychical Research Society of Finland) who—according to Dr. Navarro—"transferred" the sense of touch of a woman's arm to a glass of water. When the water was pricked with a pin, the woman felt pain. We have no doubt that Dr. Navarro and Mr. Fernandez will "confirm" Dr. Faher's findings and even—as they plan—go still further, working on taste, smell, sight and hearing, as well as touch, not to mention the "sixth sense" or "power of clairvoyance". Our tests will necessarily include looking into that, said the Doctor who, we presume, is beyond the jurisdiction of the General Medical Council.

★

DEATH IS NOT a subject for levity, and it is with no such intention that we print the following announcement. It is out of sadness for human misguidedness. To avoid hurting anybody's feelings we leave out names and references. "I am so sorry to announce to you the passing away of our dear Sister—, R.I.P. It is with a very heavy heart that I do so, for no words can express the emotion that we all feel at losing a sister so dear to us all. We have been very closely united to you all during this great novena that you have been making for her. God's reply was that He wanted her for Himself . . . One of her last audible sentences was, 'Won't it be lovely when we are all in Heaven' . . . She gave 33 wonderful years of her life to the service of God, the poor and the sick and indeed all the people of— . . . and we commend her very sincerely to your prayers. A special Memorial Mass is being arranged . . ."

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NOBODY SINCE Joseph McCabe has understood this misguidedness so well as another ex-Franciscan priest, Emmett McLoughlin, whose *People's Padre* has often received mention in these columns. The book sold almost a quarter of a million copies, though, due to Roman Catholic influence, it received little notice in the press. Now, American publisher Lyle Stuart, announces another book by Mr. McLoughlin, *American Culture and Catholic Schools*, in which "He shows how priests and nuns are recruited at the dawn of their adolescence. He tells why the Bible is not taught in Catholic schools. He shows how parochial schools are exempt from state control. He details the propaganda in Catholic texts. He cites the censorship that warps the schoolbooks . . . and distorts the world's history". We haven't seen the book, due to be published this month, but it promises to be well worth reading. Please order direct from Lyle Stuart, 225 Lafayette Street, New York 12, N.Y., at \$4.95, postage free.

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WITH ITS PENCHANT for presenting the lighter side of religion—as of other things—the *Daily Express* reported (8/7/60) that "You won't be able to 'ride to heaven'" in the Bible Storyland amusement park going up in California this autumn. Protests from religious groups have also led to two other planned rides being dropped, "Garden of Eden" and "Dante's Inferno".

Science v. Theology

The Observer of Sunday, July 17th, 1960, staged an argument on "Science and God", between Sir Julian Huxley and the Rev. Dr. E. L. Mascall, to commemorate the centenary of the historic T. H. Huxley—Bishop Wilberforce duel on Darwinism. There was, no doubt that Sir Julian triumphed over his clerical opponent as effectively as his grandfather had over the Bishop of Oxford. He presented his case clearly and compactly and, his case being so overwhelming, Dr. Mascall never had a chance.

Distinguishing between religion and theology something in the manner of A. D. White ("religion is a natural phenomenon that can be scientifically investigated", whereas "Christian theology . . . implies a system of thought deriving from belief in a personal God, in the human soul as immortal", etc.). Sir Julian saw a very real conflict between theology and science, representative of "the larger conflict between two vast systems of thought that are competing for the mind of man—dualistic supernaturalism and unitary naturalism". One of these "radically different" systems was "destined to replace the other".

Being an "open system, capable of unlimited development", "automatically self-correcting" due to its reliance on the scientific method, humanism was superseding the entire god-theory. Let us remember, said Sir Julian, that god is a hypothesis. "This comes as a shock to many, but it is true". "Evolution was also originally a hypothesis. But in the course of a century it has not only developed into a single comprehensive framework of theory, but has become established as a fact".

He then went on to present a very brief but most impressive outline of "the findings of extended evolutionism as they impinge on theology". External existence was just as probable (or improbable!) as once-and-for-all creation, and "we can just as well think of an alternation of expansion and contraction as of the creation of an expanding universe at a particular moment".

He gave an instance of "double-talk" from Dr. Mascall's book, *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (viz. "Preservation and creation are really identical") and indicated that science was "providing a first outline of how 'life' could have arisen naturally from non-life, without any need for supernatural intervention". Moving to biology, Sir Julian showed his masterly powers of summarising a vast subject and, although his remark that "minute mind-like activities accompany all the processes of living matter" might seem to be stretching things a little, his general thesis on natural selection was, of course, incontrovertible.

"Moreover, it holds for the most important of all major biological improvements—the improvement of mind . . . Each improvement of mental awareness affects the further course of evolution. The development of colour-vision led to the evolution of visual warning signals, recognition marks and courtship displays: that of learning capacity led to play and primitive education and put a premium on experience".

"The evolutionary passage from anthropoid to man can perfectly well be accounted for in naturalistic terms", added Sir Julian. "So can the development of a mindless ovum into a thinking human being". Dr. Mascall's suggestion that "animation" of the human individual occurred at the moment of fertilisation failed to take account of "the continuity of living substance involved in reproduction". "If fertilised ova have souls", asked Sir Julian, "why not the hundreds of unfertilised ova and the hundreds of millions of unsuccessful spermatozoa?"

As for man's cultural evolution, there was "no need for recourse to spiritual guidance and intervention by gods. On the contrary, gods appear as a product of what we may call psychometabolism . . . metabolism in the psychological sense . . ." "The science of comparative religion shows that religions are just as much natural products of psycho-social evolution as are plants and animals natural products of biological evolution". Polytheism developed into monotheism, but "Unfortunately for the theologians, this proved to be an evolutionary impasse. The god-theory as well as often turning out to be unnecessary, is ultimately self-contradictory. The single absolute god of Christian theology is omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent: yet he permits suffering and waste of all life, and evil in human life".

"Such a god" [as the Christian god] Sir Julian Huxley concluded, "is a burden to the human spirit, a cloud heavy with frightening incomprehensibility, overshadowing the landscape of human destiny. To me—and I am sure to many others—it is an immense relief to shed this burden. To escape from this dark cul-de-sac of thought".

What could even an Oxford University Lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion, a former Wrangler in the Cambridge Mathematical Tripos and holder of a B.Sc. degree from London University, all of which the Rev. Dr. E. L. Mascall is, say in reply to such a plainly presented, factually sound case? Not surprisingly, Dr. Mascall made no effort to argue Sir Julian Huxley's case.

He chose to tell us instead that, in Christian belief, "the human organism which God the Son took from his mother, and in which he died and rose again, was not destroyed by the event which is called the Ascension; it was transfigured and made universally accessible". This is not arguable: it is meaningless.

The nearest Dr. Mascall came to making contact with his opponent was in trying to invest the uniqueness of man—about which Sir Julian has written a great deal, and which provided the title for one of his books—with spiritual import. "The uniqueness of man which biology can establish", said Dr. Mascall, "is, of course, only a biological uniqueness, the uniqueness of an intelligent species inhabiting this planet. The uniqueness which Christian theology asserts is something more than this . . ." There, in essence, is the difference between Sir Julian Huxley and the Rev. E. L. Mascall. The former deals with facts: the latter makes quite valueless assertions.

But non-readers of *The Observer* should purchase the issue for July 17th (from 22 Tudor Street, London, E.C.4), for Sir Julian Huxley's splendid essay.

DANGEROUS WOMEN

THE BUDDHIST PRIESTS of the Shugen sect, who live on Mount Sanjogatake, Japan, are worried, according to *Time* (18/7/60). Understandably, too, for women are now to be permitted on "their" mountain, and is it not their belief that "It is better to encounter a deadly poisonous snake than a woman"? One of the monks' favourite practices is to dangle novices carelessly over a cliff, pretending to let go from time to time to inculcate a sense of man's helplessness and, now the 75-year-old abbot, Kaigyoku Okada asks: "Can a man meditate on the Buddha in the midst of passing geishas? That is why we sought mountain solitude. But now girls are to be allowed on our mountain, presumably with their boy friends. If one of my priests doing a cliff exercise happens to see a young couple he may lose his balance and be killed".

Act of God

By COLIN McCALL

HUMAN TRAGEDY should not—and in our case does not—know any boundaries of race, colour or creed. To the Secularist, we are all human beings participating in the only life of which we have any knowledge. Every man's suffering, like his death, diminishes us (to echo John Donne) because we are involved in mankind. It is unthinkable, therefore, that the Secularist should make light, let alone gloat, over the misfortunes of the religious. On the contrary, for him an extra sadness surrounds such unhappy events, precisely because he sees and understands a little more of the human ignorance involved in them. His wrath is aroused by the clerical exploitation of that ignorance: by the way the Church, and especially the Roman Church, plays upon fear, extracts "offerings" for the dead, and so on. But that is different. And in the recent tragedy near Cuneo, Northern Italy, two of the dead were priests, the others being a 10-year-old child and a student. Twenty people were injured.

Hundreds of devout Roman Catholics had climbed some 7,000 feet up on Costarossa Mountain to witness the consecration of a new 40-foot high metal crucifix by the Bishop of Cuneo. In the words of the *Daily Mail* (5/7/60): "As the Bishop finished saying Mass the sky darkened. Heavy rain fell and the crowd scattered. Some sheltered in a tent. Others hid under the crucifix. As they covered under the lashing rain, there was an explosion. Those round the smoking crucifix were hurled to the ground. The pilgrims in the tent rushed out and fell on their knees. While they prayed screams from the 20 injured mingled with the rolls of thunder".

The lightning had struck the crucifix. It was what is known as an Act of God, but it was more appropriately described by one of the survivors as "like a scene from hell". "A huge flame shot from the crucifix as the lightning struck, the air was filled with an acrid smell from the smoking metal, people ran in all directions, many covered in blood. Others fell to their knees to pray. There were people lying everywhere. The four bodies seemed huddled around the foot of the Cross".

This terrible disaster assumes that hideously ironic aspect depicted by Voltaire in *Candide*, when an attempt is made to reconcile it with the belief in a beneficent God, and especially the Christian god. But before writing the comparatively detached *Candide*, Voltaire had given us his *cri de cœur*, the *Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake*.

And, despite the late Alfred Noyes's efforts (in his biography of Voltaire) to detect a religious reconciliation in the final lines, the poem is essentially an awful questioning of God—or at least, of His justice. Voltaire was not, of course, an atheist at any time of his life, but he was assuredly a sceptic, and more than sceptical of Christianity. In the poem, his doubts are expressed. He comes as close to atheism, I think, as he ever did: not to embrace it, but not completely to dismiss it either. Even at the end, which Mr. Noyes strove so desperately to interpret according to his (Mr. Noyes's) own predilection, Voltaire finds room only for a vague "hope" (which Mr. Noyes, by the way, gave a capital letter in translation, quite unwarrantably so far as I have been able to ascertain).

But, leaving the precise implications of the poem's ending on one side, it may be said with certainty that Voltaire's deistic belief in Providence was severely shaken by the Lisbon earthquake when, it will be remembered, faithful Catholics were struck down in church. I can't help

wondering if the faith of the Cuneo pilgrims was shaken by the disaster on Costarossa. Can people really witness such an event and keep their faith?

My question is pointless in a way, because I know that people can and do. But it is one of those things one knows but almost refuses to believe: it is just too monstrous. Yet it is true, only too true. Pilgrims prayed at the time; at least the great majority of them would return to Cuneo as strongly Catholic as they left it. The funerals of the dead would be conducted with full rites and without any sense of inconsonance. The injured would thank God for their escape from death; the remainder would thank Him for their escape from injury. Oh, the pity of it!

One or two, however, might just see the tragic absurdity of worshipping a God who caused—or allowed—lightning to strike dead two priests, a student and a schoolboy who were sheltering under a crucifix just erected in His honour. We can only use Voltaire's noun as a verb, and hope so. It won't lessen the tragedy they witnessed, but it will strengthen them in facing the future.

Another Lourdes Miracle

AS HAS SO OFTEN been pointed out, in the early days of Lourdes just after the Virgin Mary had spoken in perfect French to Bernadette, "miracles" of healing were nearly as common as flies—though it is only fair to remark that poor Bernadette herself was allowed callously to die young by Mary when a mere miracle would have saved her.

"Miracles" at Lourdes are these days very few and far between, but *Weekend* in its issue for April 13 gave a long, illustrated account of one described by the lucky and fully-cured young lady herself, all complete with the certificate that it was truly a "Miracle" from Cardinal Innitzer's own hand—and he ought to know. Rather strangely, however, no doctor, Roman Catholic or not, is mentioned by name admitting that the patient was really ill from the almost always fatal Addison's Disease. The patient was a young Austrian dancer, Edeltraud Fulda, and of course we get photos of her before and after the cure. Unless the medical books I have examined about Addison's Disease are wrong, the picture of Fraulein Fulda before she was cured shows no signs whatever of the disease. And though we are told that "specialists in Germany, Australia, and Italy" gave her no hope, we are not told even one of their names.

The cure took place as far back as 1950—yet the world knew then nothing about it. Why did the Roman Church do nothing to make the world see the Hand of God and Mary in this "miraculous" cure? Would it not have been a triumph for the "Faith?"

All that really happened was that after being ill for thirteen years, Fraulein Fulda went to Lourdes, dipped in its waters and drank some and came out completely cured!

On the way, she tells us that one of the assistants at the waters spoke to her in English! But why? And we are also told that "nobody there understood German". Fraulein Fulda gives no indication anywhere that she herself knew any other language but German.

The obvious truth appears to be that she felt too ill for many years to eat proper food—she could never have

survived for *thirteen years* suffering from Addison's Disease on poor food as well—and therefore she had an easily cured and more simple disease. After hoping, and no doubt praying to be well, she drank the waters at Lourdes; and then feeling hungry, she tucked in to some good meals—and she was cured! It was all pure self-hypnosis. In fact, millions of people have been cured in much the same way with patent and herbal remedies most of them despised by all good doctors.

H.C.

God and Billy

I scream
You scream,
We all scream
For ice cream. (Old song, circa 1928).

"I sin. You sin. We all sin. Yes! We do! All the time. Incessantly. Every day. Every night.(!) Yes. I mean you—and you—and you!"

Glaring into the T.V. camera Billy pointed a beautifully manicured finger directly at me. I quailed before his stern gaze. There was no escape. "Pax vobiscum," I muttered, but Billy would have none of it. Turning away with a contemptuous smile he faced his gaping congregation like a bull at bay. Or stag. The immaculate Billy resembles the antlered rather than the horned species. Letting rip again he went on: "I say you are sinners. All of you. We are all sinners. All of us. Every one of us". (Nobody can accuse Billy of obscurantism. Simple words. Simple sentences. I am all for simple words and sentences. The first paragraph contains 29 words—26 of one syllable. The clever fellow clearly knows his listeners.)

He is off again. "Why do we sin?" A pertinent question, this. The fellow appears to be obsessed with "saving" people. From what? Or whom? Or for? For eternal life, he says. I ask: can we imagine a more depressing prospect than a timeless existence with Billy and his ilk? I mean, what should we *talk* about? Or *do*?

In a well-known religious publication Billy recently wrote as follows:—

Until God gives the signal I cannot change this evangelistic compulsion that drives me on. I intended by the grace of God to continue in my ordained calling until he says, "It is enough". And again:—

At one time I grappled with the problem of the authority of the Scriptures. But the problem resolved itself when I finally said, "Lord, I take the Scriptures as thy revealed Word—by faith!" That ended my doubts.

And mine!

Magister locutus; causa finita est!

A.O.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

PLUTARCH AND SPARTACUS

Your correspondent, J. B. Bailey, will of course realise that it is no longer possible to check the statements made by classical authors like Plutarch. In the case he cites, no contemporary account of the Spartacus rising has survived. I do not, however, consider that Plutarch's statement that the Romans crucified the survivors *en masse* is necessarily false or exaggerated. Servile wars have usually been extremely ferocious affairs: when the negro slaves in Haiti expelled the French, they massacred their former masters indiscriminately. The Romans were an extremely brutal race, as is clearly indicated by their ferocious gladiatorial games. Moreover, we know that they waged their interminable wars with systematic brutality; e.g. when Titus stormed Jerusalem in 70 BC, he crucified his prisoners in sight of the besieged city. It is quite possible that, as Plutarch states, the surviving followers of the slave-leader, Spartacus, met the same fate. They obviously represented the most serious danger to the whole social system of Rome, which was founded upon slavery.

(N.B. Plutarch wrote about 100 AD, nearly two centuries after the Spartacus rising.)

F. A. RIDLEY.

[We regret that "the Roman General, Crassus", was misprinted as "the Roman Catholic General, Crassus" in Mr. Bailey's letter (15/7/60)—ED.]

HEAR! HEAR!

Mr. Dent and I recently crossed swords in your correspondence section; however, I hasten to say "hear, hear" to his letter re Jack Lindsay. In spite of having let my few remaining hairs down a little lower over parsons, in my article "Tolpuddle", nevertheless it is obvious that mild ridicule is a far more lethal weapon than savage tirades. The latter, as Mr. Hawton once remarked to me, only get the opposition's back up and close further discussion.

A. O. SNOOK.

NOT SERIOUS ENOUGH?

Would it be temerous to suggest that Eva Ebury takes her own illusions too seriously, and those of the religious not seriously enough? The important thing surely is that she is as happy with her mechanomorphic illusions about a self-sufficient universe which has produced absurd Man, as Christians are with their anthropomorphic illusions about a God-supported universe which has produced sinful man. I get the feeling that what your readers demand of you, and you enjoy giving, is not something to think about freely but something to yell at obsessively.

(DR.) RICHARD HOPE.

POSER

Catholics, and others, maintain that Jesus was God. If so, how do they account for the "voice" in Matthew 3.17, when he was baptised and in Matthew 17.5, when he was on a mountain with his disciples. The former reads: "And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". Was Jesus talking to himself on these occasions, or was he a ventriloquist?

(Miss) W. SMITH.

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