

# The Freethinker

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"A PARSON-FANCIER!" So a friend once called me. I did not resent the title. My friend—happily for him—was brought up on secular lines; he became indifferent to religious matters. It was far different with me. My father was a Methodist local preacher for over fifty years. When I was thirteen he took me to hear the Rev. Guinness Rogers—a sort of non-conformist archbishop. In course of time I heard the following: Dr. Joseph Parker, Rev. R. J. Campbell, Rev. J. D. Jones; Rev. Dinsdale Young; Sir Robertson Nicoll; Rev. W. L. Watkinson; Rev. Bernard Snell; Rev. S. A. Tipple; Gipsy Smith; Dr. John Hunter; Canon Scott Holland. On Sunday, September 25th, after the Conway Hall reunion, I decided to go to the City Temple, after giving up parson-fancying for forty-seven years. What I heard was a shocking hotch-potch of stale theology. What I hoped for was not, of course, what I believed. I thought, though, I might hear some artistry in words, such as came from the lips of the Rev. J. H. Jowett, or felicity of phrase such as Dr. Alexander Whyte commanded. (I never heard the latter, but I read with pleasure, in the *British Weekly*, reports of his discourses in St. George's Hall Church, Edinburgh.) There was nothing of this. The sermon was little better than the product of a local preacher.

**Miracles**  
The text was from the Book of Revelation—"Behold I stand at the door and knock . . ." Of course reference was made to Holman Hunt's famous picture in St. Paul's Cathedral. The treatment of God was puerile. There was talk of what God might have made man, but didn't. We were told that some had said God might have given man a religious instinct. The preacher gave no hint that he had heard of Darwin and Evolution. He seemed to have got no farther than Genesis and William Paley. The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead has now retired. Perhaps in his leisure he will go farther!

Then his appetite for miracles was marvellous! He believed in the resurrection from the dead and in the physical resurrection of Jesus.

Has the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead ever read Gibbon? The following is perhaps relevant and it will be found in *Lift Up Your Heads* (published by the Pioneer Press).

But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, daemons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral and physical government of the world.

In short, as Matthew Arnold said in *Literature and Dogma* (1883), "Miracles do not happen". For nine years I sat under a minister (Rev. Bernard Snell) who was once

Chairman of the Congregational Union. He never once mentioned any of them.

These miracle-mongers never face the practical difficulty presented by a resurrectionist. If it had become known in Palestine that Jesus was restoring life to the dead, he would have been badgered and bribed by every recently bereaved person. The whole force of the Palestinian police would have been required to control the queue!

If the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead can accept the resurrection stories, it is to be assumed he can swallow all the miracles. The tribute money in the mouth of a fish; Jesus stilling the storm and walking on the sea; the Devil setting Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple. Who

was it who said "I believe as much as I can, but the Lord will forgive me if I have not the digestion of an ostrich?" Mr. Weatherhead can vie with the ostrich!

Then, without any justification in the text chosen, there was dragged in the absurd story of Judas betraying with a kiss. Of course the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead has never seen the late J. M. Robertson's *Jesus and Judas* (1927).

Why should the authorities have either invited or accepted the leadership of Judas in the matter? Jesus, by his own alleged declaration in all three synoptics, taught openly in the Temple; then he openly left the Temple and went (Luke 21,37) with his followers every evening to the Mount of Olives. What possible difficulty could the authorities find in having him traced? A child could have done the tracking.

## No Limit!

Some reader might now well ask "Is there any limit to the claims of credulity made by the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead?" The answer is in the negative. Having brought in the treachery of Judas—quite irrelevant to the door-knocking text—we were told that if he had wished it twelve legions of angels would have rescued Jesus from his foes! It was intimated that a legion was six thousand, so that meant a cohort of seventy-two thousand. Jesus declined. We were given his reasons; I have forgotten them. One would have liked what legal gentlemen call "further and better particulars" of these angel allies. How would they have come? By aerial route—on the wing? What weapons would they have brought? Bows and arrows? It is regrettable that this force—presumably eternal—could not descend on Belgium in 1914 or Poland in 1939.

Matthew Arnold, once discussing a third party with a friend, said I should not like to say he was not a gentleman, but if you said he was not I should understand what you meant. I should not like to say that the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead was credulous, but if one of his hearers had said that I should have understood what he meant. For more than twelve years I was a sermon-taster, and for much of the time at an orthodox mission hall, but I never heard the likes of this City Temple discourse.

Has the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead no fans? Of course he has. I had to listen to a relay in the lower hall because the City Temple was full. Descending the Holborn Viaduct steps, a man said what a fine sermon it was. On

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## The City Temple— under the Weatherhead

By WILLIAM KENT



my demurring he hurried away. Charles II once explained the success of a popular preacher with his audience by saying that his nonsense suited their nonsense. I am, however, willing to believe that there were some in that City Temple audience who would have agreed with Robert Burns that of all nonsense religious nonsense is the most nonsensical.

If, fifty years ago, you had asked a young nonconformist to name six great preachers, he would have rattled off some of the names I have given. Today who would name one?

## Who Knows What?

By H. CUTNER

THE DIFFICULTY OF REPLYING TO Mr. Patrick Corsaro (THE FREETHINKER, October 21st), is that I should have to go over so much old ground—ground I have traversed dozens of times during the past 40 years. In addition, I wrote a book—*Jesus—God, Man or Myth*, published by the Truth Seeker Co. of New York—dealing at least with some of the points raised by Mr. Corsaro. Perhaps I could persuade him to read it, and get in touch with me again.

Nothing is surely more unprofitable than to pit one professor against another in a religious controversy. I am fully aware that if I say Professor Brown (for example) puts one case, it is quite possible to bring Professor Green to put precisely the opposite view. That is why I find farcical the way in which I am told that Messrs. Albright, Dodd, Harnack and many other—perhaps hundreds—can easily wipe out the comparatively few Mythicists we have. In this problem, Christian writers mean very little; their *arguments* everything.

Mr. Corsaro tells us that while Professor W. B. Smith taught many subjects he was only an "amateur theologian". I confess that this leaves me quite cold. I don't know what an "amateur" theologian really is—except that if he's an ignoramus on theology he has no right calling himself a theologian. What was Spinoza? By *trade*, he was a lens polisher. Was he therefore an "amateur" philosopher? What was Herbert Spencer? Also an "amateur". And Darwin? Is it not a fact that the great Evolutionist did *not* grace any chair at any University?

Was John M. Robertson an "amateur"? The late Harold Laski—something of a judge in these matters—considered Robertson one of the greatest scholars of his generation. If Mr. Corsaro knows of a greater contemporary scholar, will he give us his name and tell us why?

Of course the theologians mentioned in his letter oppose Robertson, Drews and Smith. But merely to tell us that they are "competent in their fields to deal with these matters" is to give us nothing but an opinion. Everybody has a right to have an opinion and stick to it; but unless it is backed up by reason and evidence, what is an opinion worth?

Professor C. B. Dodd is—as far as I have read him—almost a Fundamentalist. He certainly believes in Jesus the Messiah—a Messiah is sent by God—and therefore, Dodd believes in God. And as his Jesus spoke to the Devil, or a number of Devils, he believes in Devils as well. So does Fr. Copleston as a good Roman Catholic. Both believe in the Virgin Birth with its famous Star of Bethlehem and its chorus of Angels singing at the birth of the infant Jesus.

Goodspeed as a translator of the New Testament is also an out-and-out-believer; but where Harnack actually stands, I have never been certain. As Mr. Corsaro tells us Harnack "successfully disputed Strauss's *Life of Jesus*", I would dearly like to know where? Does Mr. Corsaro mean

That one might be the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, but it does not follow that the young man would have heard him. He might simply have named him because of the prestige of the City Temple pulpit. The day of the great preacher is done. There has been the ebbing in the sea of faith so plangently portrayed by Matthew Arnold in his fine poem *Dover Beach*.

The Rev. Leslie Weatherhead publishes volumes of his sermons. I hope he will have the good sense to destroy this one and forget it in his retirement.

that he *proved* that Strauss was *utterly wrong* in reducing practically all the stories in the Gospels to myths? Did Harnack believe without question not only in the Virgin Birth but in the Resurrection and Ascension?

To be told that Professor W. B. Smith "has never been taken seriously by other theologians" means literally nothing. Who among theologians accepted the unanswerable case against the Bible made by Thomas Paine in the *Age of Reason*? Was he also an "amateur" theologian? Who among them accepted the devastating criticism of the Pentateuch made by Ingersoll in his *Mistakes of Moses*? Did they *reply* to him? Could they?

*The Birth of the Gospel* was Professor W. B. Smith's posthumous work. It is as far advanced in its theme and its handling of the Myth Problem for most people as the work of Aquinas would be for a tambourine-shaking Salvation Army teenager. It requires a long course of reading not only in theology, in religious symbolism, but in Gnosticism. To say that Professor Smith could be easily answered by the theologians named "because he was not qualified to debate" is just silly. The theologians who were not "amateurs" *ran away* from any debate with him. He would have annihilated their "theological" pretensions.

I am a very humble follower of the three great Mythicists, but if Mr. Corsaro would be good enough to give me the titles of any book written by "fully qualified theological scholars" who have dealt with the Myth Problem, I would do my best to prove that whatever else they were competent about, it was *not* on the work of Robertson, Drews and Smith.

### "MEN ONLY"

THE NOVEMBER ISSUE of *Men Only* contained an excellent article by John Graham, "Does it matter if you don't believe in God?" in which he "set out to discover what handicaps, if any, an atheist or agnostic has to suffer in Britain today", and found quite a number in connection with teaching, child adoption, nursing, politics, broadcasting and the law. Mr. Graham sought and reported the views of the Ethical Union, National Secular Society and Rationalist Press Association, and summarised his findings thus: "if someone told you that one person in every five was being forced to keep his mouth shut about his beliefs, and perhaps would only get a better job by lying—by abandoning his principles—you might be reluctant to believe it. You might change your opinion, however, if you did not believe in God". Mr. Graham's article was followed by a short review by Mr. Fenton Bresler, of laws affecting unbelievers. Blasphemy, it pointed out "has been a crime ever since the time of the Tudors", but for "the spreading of atheistic views to become blasphemy, there must be such abuse or ridicule as was likely to exasperate the feelings of others and lead to a breach of the peace".



# The Aztecs of Mexico

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN 1844, the American historian, W. H. Prescott, published his celebrated book, *The Conquest of Mexico* (1519-21), to be followed soon after by its equally celebrated sequel, *The Conquest of Peru*. Prescott was not only an eminent historian but was equally a master of vivid narrative and descriptive prose, and his two books on the Spanish Conquest of the Americas are not only still classics of American literature, but still, no doubt, represent the two most valuable books in existence upon their dramatic theme: the conquest of an isolated continent (as America was) and of a primitive bronze age culture, by a mere handful of European adventurers inspired, apparently, about equally by the lust for gold and by religious fanaticism. Certainly the 16th century Spanish Conquest was simultaneously one of the most dramatic and also economically important events in modern European history. Not only did it call into being a New World to redress the balance of the Old (as George Canning was later to phrase it) but, as the economic historian Alexander Del Mar demonstrated in his *History of the Precious Metals*, it was the vast loot in gold and silver in the Continent accidentally discovered by Columbus (when *en route* supposedly for Asia) that saved a European economy from reverting compulsorily from a monetary to a barter economy. Rather ironically, America, which the Spaniards discovered by accident, had an abundance of gold and silver, whereas Asia which they were actually seeking, has very little. (Incidentally, the then current rage for alchemy—the transmutation of baser metals into gold—represents an intriguing by-product of its contemporary starvation of the European economy by the current shortage of the precious metal).

Whilst, however, Prescott wrote classical accounts of the conquests of Mexico and Peru, it is now recognised that his basic interpretation of these events was not only defective in some details but was fundamentally inadequate. The Liberal historians of the 19th century, of whom he was one of the most eminent, regarded Spain with abhorrence as the modern stronghold of religious intolerance and of political absolutism. As such, they painted its American adventures in the most unflattering colours, and tended by way of contrast to paint their aboriginal victims in shining colours as the simple dupes and noble victims of an outrageous aggressor. Nowadays we possess contemporary Indian evidence on the Conquest, and the whole idyll of the innocent "noble savage" arbitrarily looted and murdered by white monsters has to be at least substantially modified.

When seen in a dry light, the Spanish Conquest of Mexico and Peru represented a fight to the finish between two imperialist powers, both equally militaristic and aggressive and, in the case of Mexico at least, equally ruthless in its secular polity and equally fanatical and cruel in its religious beliefs. The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition were duplicated by the hideous annual sacrifices to the Mexican war god and his celestial (or rather infernal) colleagues. As a 20th century historian of the Spanish Conquest has aptly observed, the spectacular encounter between Cortez and Pizarro on the one hand, and the Indian potentates, Montezuma and the Inca, Atahualpa, on the other, represented in reality, a clash between Red and White *conquistadores*. If the Whites eventually won, this was not only because they were technically far superior (thanks to iron, horses and firearms), but also because European civilisation, even in its Spanish form, was far more flexible and capable of progress than

was the purely static, Bronze Age culture of the pre-Columbian New World. Our authority concisely summarises his special theme, the Conquest of Mexico, thus:

Aztec culture achieved with Stone Age tools, a civilisation patterned to balance the life of man against the dimly-perceived forces of the Universe. Its downfall was inevitable when confronted with that inexorable world of steel, objective reasoning and a religion adjusted to meet such totally different concepts as the demands of the powerful and the needs of the weak.

The Aztec polity was, to judge from the desperate resistance that it offered to the white invaders, the most militarily powerful of the Indian races of America, as, in most respects (e.g. its elaborate pictorial script) its culture and social polity were also the most advanced. In his Pelican, *The Aztecs of Mexico*, the late Professor George Vaillant, gave a fascinating, heavily documented account of the Aztec culture, as well as an informative précis of both its Mexican precursors and of the final Spanish Conquest. His account will probably remain for a long time to come, the standard scientific authority on the Aztec Empire and civilisation of Mexico. Whilst in no way comparable in elegance of style or dramatic sweep to his great predecessor, Professor Vaillant had at his disposal many aids denied to Prescott, both in field-archaeology and in Aztec, as well as Spanish literary sources. Perhaps more important still, Professor Vaillant is an historical Rationalist. He knows how to present in balanced perspective the spectacular events over which his always lucid narrative passes; so as to do justice (or pass condemnation) equally on both the Red Crusaders for Huitzilopochtli (the Aztec God of War), and the White Crusaders for the Catholic Trinity. The result is a "must" for every serious student of human history or comparative religion.

The Aztec Empire and culture was of quite recent origin when the Spaniards arrived. The foundation of Tenochtitlan the capital is dated here around 1325. The Aztecs came originally from the north and their later culture seems to have been derivative from the perhaps more cultured earlier Central American races such as the Toltecs and Mayas, whose evolution Professor Vaillant briefly relates. (According to the eminent Italian historian, Professor G. Abetti, the astronomic calculations of the Mayas of Yucatan were more accurate than those of any other pre-modern people including apparently, the Ancient Greeks). The Aztec was a military empire cemented by what was, in effect, a totalitarian religious cult in which (as might have been expected), the cult of the war god predominated. The best known rite of this ferocious religious cult was, of course, human sacrifice; the gods required human blood as their elixir of life! It would hardly be too much to say that both Aztec life and civilisation centred around this perennial ritual of recurring destruction of human life; the Aztecs fought their interminable wars mainly to acquire victims for the ever-hungry gods. At the consecration of the Temple of the War God in 1487, some 20,000 victims perished, whilst Professor Vaillant gives a detailed chronology in which each month was indicated by its appropriate sacrificial ritual, often very horrible. Cruel as the Spanish Conquistadors undoubtedly were, their ruthless liquidation of the Aztec Empire was no great loss to mankind. However, the Aztecs had their more harmless aspects, here also vividly described. Our author sums up Aztec culture in these words:

(Concluded on next page)



## This Believing World

We shudder to think of the harm done to all the good people who follow every detail of the married life of Princess Margaret and her husband with such pious fidelity, on learning that they actually bought some iced lollies on a Sunday. And what is more the royal pair must have eaten them. No wonder the Lord's Day Observance Society is literally staggered and dumbfounded at such unheard of Blasphemy. In its magazine *Joy and Light*, Mr. "Misery" Legerton almost shrieks—"Where is the example? In which direction are the children being led?" Thank God, two reverend gentlemen, the Rev. S. Archer of Dover and the Rev. G. Rubie of Hampstead, wholeheartedly support Mr. Legerton—as indeed they should. How can they do otherwise if Christianity is exactly what they preach it is—a religion of utter "misery"?

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But the Lord's Day Observance Society is often more concerned with wider issues—in this case, with the way in which people are going to celebrate Christmas, which this year falls on a Sunday. It's bad enough to celebrate the birth of "our Lord" with tucking in immense amounts of turkey, pudding, fruit, sweets, and alcoholic drinks, but to do this on a Sunday, "God's Own Holy Day" as it is called in *Joy and Light*, is almost enough to make the heavens fall, and God Almighty himself splutter with anger. Mr. Legerton and his "misery" followers consider Sunday takes precedence over Christmas—but why? After all Sunday is not the *Sabbath* day.

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How marvellously true Christianity helps everybody to a better life! Although they were all taught it at school, and knew how Jesus was their Saviour, nine pious young thugs waylaid a boy of sixteen, and threw him into a canal as he was going home from a church club. Eight of these Christian boys had criminal records, and the poor boy they tried to murder only narrowly escaped being drowned. When discovered, they begged, instead of going to Borstal, to be "allowed another way out".

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This "other way out" was illustrated in "The People" which published a photograph of them kneeling in front of a church altar "in a prayer of penitence". The vicar begged them to "try God" and, as trying God meant none of the rules and regulations prescribed by Borstal, they enthusiastically consented. Which just shows how wonderful is religion!

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After insisting that the Ten Commandments were God's own teachings revealed to Moses on Mt. Sinai, not merely for Jews but for all the world, and taking at least 1800 years to enforce them as part and parcel of Christianity, the Church now finds the Rev. G. Wilkins, the Rector of Ascot, throwing them overboard with contempt. One of his reasons is that they are "Jewish" and not Christian, and three of them "do not apply today".

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But what can we say of Mr. Wilkins's knowledge of the Bible? He said (according to the *Sunday Graphic*) that "the Christian law is to love your God and love your neighbour" both of which are in fact particularly Jewish. The "love thy neighbour as thyself" text comes from Leviticus 19.18, but it has nearly always been claimed by Christians as coming only from Jesus. It could be shown without any difficulty that most of the "unique" teachings of Jesus, but particularly all worth following, are as old as the hills.

Chelmsford Cathedral is to have a statue of Peter in Wellington boots with a Yale key in his hand, and this is causing a rumpus. Of course, the "Key" of Peter is popularly supposed to be the one he opens the Gates of Heaven with—though all Christians are singularly indisposed to enter that celestial Paradise if they can manage to stay outside. In any case, the truth is that the story of Peter is a Christian adaptation of the story of Janus who, like Peter, is always depicted carrying both a key and a staff. In Rome, Janus had the status of a God, and there is little doubt that St. Peter's Church in Rome was built on the site of an old Janus temple.

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A youth in Melbourne whose hobby was stealing cars was savagely sentenced the other day. He is compelled to go to church twice every month at least for five years. Would not prison be infinitely more welcome?

### MARCUS AURELIUS

Mr. C. H. Norman puts the question whether, had the reflections of Marcus Aurelius been those not of an emperor but of a private citizen, they would have survived. Probably not. Eminence of birth gives a man's work a much better chance of posthumous endurance if it possesses real merit. But the point I think Mr. Norman misses is that human character gets its severest test when a man finds himself with almost unlimited power over the lives and destinies of others. Marcus emerges from this test so creditably that we know him to have been a person of very fine quality. True, the *Meditations* doesn't contain original thinking. Its value doesn't lie in this, but in the embodiment of the aspirations and life philosophy of a man who prized simple virtue and quiet courage above all else, and whose natural kindness softened the harsher tenets of his Stoic creed. Mr. Norman impugns the character of Marcus's wife, Faustina. Perhaps she was all that Swinburne in his poem, *Faustine*, said of her—

You have the face that suits a woman  
For her soul's screen—  
The sort of beauty that's called human  
In hell, Faustine . . .

But I am persuaded from a study of what evidence now remains that she has been calumniated. I considered this in an article I called "The Empress Faustina", which I contributed to the *South Place Monthly Record* a few years ago. But in any case, Faustina's conduct has no real bearing on Marcus's character. Good men have had shameless wives, and good women shameless husbands. Marcus certainly had a worthless, good-for-nothing son. Virtue is not necessarily infectious—especially in the intimacy of family relations!

I suppose that Mr. Norman knows that in challenging the beneficence of the Roman rulers, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius, he runs head against most historians of Rome, ancient and modern, including the redoubtable Edward Gibbon? I have paid my tribute to Hadrian elsewhere. He was a statesman of abundant vision, much admired by the late Joseph McCabe, and history has seen few men of his calibre. His was a reign of well-nigh universal peace, which continued unbroken throughout the twenty and more years of Antoninus's emperorship. That Antoninus was a solidly good man we know most vividly from Marcus's magnificent tribute to him in Book I of the *Meditations*. Though Antoninus, unlike his nephew, never recorded his innermost thoughts and feelings about life, we have good reason to be thankful that Marcus did write down his reflections. Coming to us almost intact, I believe them to be one of the most noteworthy fragments of antiquity.

G. I. BENNETT.

### THE AZTECS OF MEXICO

(Concluded from page 347)

There was little to harass the individual intelligently or economically. Existence was subject to divine favour and a man lived much as did his fellows. Freedom of thought, individual liberty, personal fortunes, were non-existent, but people lived according to a code that had worked well and continuously for centuries. An Aztec would have been horrified at the naked isolation of the individual's life in our Western world.

This important Pelican book is profusely illustrated with interesting and often horrifying pictures and half-tone plates.



# THE FREETHINKER

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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. (Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria statue.)

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. TRIBE and J. P. MURACCIOLE.

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.

### INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). Tuesday, November 1st, 7.15 p.m.: R. H. PEAR, B.Sc., "Selecting and Electing an American President".

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street), Sunday, October 30th, 3 p.m.: D. H. TRIBE, "The United Nations and the Tower of Babel".

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 30th, 6.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Christian Counter-Revolution of the 4th Century".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, Edgware Road), Sunday, October 30th, 7.15 p.m.: ADRIAN PIOTT, "Some Sins of the Vatican".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, October 28th, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, October 30th, 2.30 p.m.: M. WALLACE (USA), "Civil Rights and the Presidential Election in the USA".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, October 30th, 11 a.m.: R. CLEMENTS, C.B.E., "Aneurin Bevin—Humanist Statesman".

## Notes and News

THE NEW PREMISES of the National Secular Society/Pioneer Press are beginning to take shape, though some work remains to be done. It has been suggested that a few Freethinkers in the London area might be able to help with this. If there are a carpenter and an electrician who would be willing to give of their time and skill to help us, we should be very pleased to hear from them. It should be emphasised though that most of the work does require craftsmen.

IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, it will be remembered, the Rationalist Association of South Africa decided to publish in English and Afrikaans, Bertrand Russell's essay *Why I Am Not A Christian*, because the South African Minister of the Interior had placed an import ban on the volume of Russell's works containing this essay, and named after it. Lord Russell and his publishers kindly gave their permission. The Association now reports (*The Rationalist*,

October, 1960), that the edition of 3,000 has been sold out at a profit of just over fifty pounds. The Association gained a number of new members as a result of the publicity received, and thanks are expressed to those who contributed to the success of the venture: "friends who guaranteed expenses, members who bought and sold copies, and those progressive booksellers who co-operated". "We do not know whether the Minister deserves our thanks or not!" says the Association.

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WE HAVE NOT SEEN Dr. John Highet's new book on *The Scottish Churches* and their state 400 years after the Reformation, but much of it was summarised by the author in *The Scotsman* (30/9/60). Despite many evangelistic campaigns, Dr. Highet's survey found that "for Scotland as a whole the effect on attendance of the activities described has not been very striking", and "This appears to apply rather more to the Graham Crusade than to campaigns of the 'visitation' type". Ministers were asked "if any of these enterprises—missions their own congregations had been engaged in, wider campaigns, the All-Scotland Crusade, or other Tell Scotland activities—had made any difference to the size of their membership". "In most cases", said Dr. Highet, "the majority of congregations report little increase from this source or none at all".

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MORE PAROCHIAL, but telling the same story, was a report in the *Leicester Evening Mail* (6/10/60). The Rev. L. Jones, Rector of Markfield, said that the presence of an assistant curate in two parishes during the last two-and-half years, "although it has resulted in increased parish visiting, has not resulted in much improvement of either church attendance or collections".

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THE DAY AFTER, though, the *Evening Mail* carried truly sensational news from a Mr. Joseph Watkin. "Several years ago", he wrote, "I had the uncanny experience of being outside my physical body and observing myself sleeping in bed". Mr. Watkin *knows* this is true because a religious medallion that he had placed underneath his pillow, disappeared that night, and he is "certain that it awaits me in another dimension". He could have gone on, he told us—presumably to join the medallion—but the thought of his "loved ones left behind" brought him back. Mind you, Mr. Watkin doesn't profess to know the answer to this (as he calls it) "eternal riddle" but he does know "from experience" that this "physical body" (in inverted commas) is "not the be and end all of everything".

★

A SPANISH FREETHINKER and his wife, who have spent the greater part of their lives fighting clericalism and Franco, and have suffered terribly for it (he has been imprisoned many times, including six times in four years), have managed to get to England and have been granted political asylum. They now seek work, preferably of the caretaking kind with accommodation included. In addition, he is prepared to do translations from English into Spanish (he reads and writes English well, but speaks it less well); his wife is a good dressmaker. Any offers or suggestions would be welcome and should be sent to the General Secretary of the National Secular Society.

★

WE HAVE RECEIVED a strong protest from Mr. Geoffrey Ashe in connection with H. Cutner's article "What is the Logos?" (August 5th). It appears that the quotation from Mr. Ashe was taken from a private letter to Mr. Cutner and was reproduced without Mr. Ashe's permission. We join with Mr. Cutner in expressing our regret at this.



# Murder no Crime

By EVA EBURY

FORTUNATE INDEED was the day that I found Theodore Griesinger's *The Jesuits* on the library shelves. It has given me many hours of undiluted pleasure. The translator, A. J. Scott, M.D., must have adhered so closely to the literal text that nothing of the delicious humour and German idiom has been lost. No! Much has been lost. Book 3, "The Morality of the Jesuits, or the Vow of Chastity", has suffered a hard blow, for under chapter 1, "The Old Adam under the Mask of Holiness", appear these words: "This book has been somewhat modified to render it presentable to English readers. One chapter has been omitted in extenso; even with these alterations there is much which would have been better omitted, were it not that it has not been deemed right to sacrifice entirely historical accuracy at the shrine of morality and prosperity".

Griesinger, born in Wurtemberg in 1809, became a vicar for 3 years, then devoted himself to literature. He founded a democratic newspaper in 1845, which led to his arrest for high treason. He was acquitted and emigrated to America. The *Geschichte der Neusten Deutschen Literatur*, says of him, "Griesinger belonged to the German Democrats, who were not pleased with life in America, because it was tinged with truly Republican opinions".

This history ends, alas, in 1872. How many have occupied the Papal chair since then, whose saintly qualities his witty pen might have portrayed? Pius X, who, with Jesuitical fervour, drove all forms of Modernism from the Roman Church. Benedict XV, who, during the First World War, was given open permission by the Italian government to communicate with enemy countries. Pius XI, upon whose election, Mussolini said, as he stood in the applauding throng in the Square of St. Peter's, "Look at this multitude of every nation, how is it that politicians who govern the nations, do not realise the immense value of this international force, this universal spiritual power?" Of that election, Cardinal Gasparri said, "It took 14 rotations like the Stations of the Cross to set the Pope firmly upon Calvary". But it was Europe which was set upon Calvary, for the "universal spiritual power" became the handmaid of the Fascist dictators. Then Pacelli, our late revered "Pope of Peace", to honest jolly John, who advocates the careful dating of one's moments of carnal concupiscence to outwit the very god of very gods?

But the book ends in 1872. The Jesuits were regaining ascendancy; the Infallibility of the Pope had been proclaimed; the European powers had welcomed the return of the Jesuits, as only they were fit to deal with the frightful phantom of Liberalism. Bismarck, alone, for the government of Germany, had countered the enemy; cut its claws and dealt a blow to the presumption of the Jesuitical Ultra Montane party. The last chapter is entitled "The Development of Catholicism into Jesuitism", and Griesinger says:

In the Church it has reached as far as this, that the Jesuitical tendency has become sole and unconditional mistress, that only those make use of the name of Catholic, who think, believe and act, as the Jesuits wish them to think, believe and act; that Jesuitism and Catholicism signify one and the same thing, in short, that these words are synonymous.

Book VI deals with "The Benevolence of the Jesuits, or the Permission to Murder and Assassinate". It records the assassination or attempted assassination at some period, of many of the crowned heads of Europe. Though I hold that a peasant's blood may stain the sawdust a deeper

hue than ever may a crowned King's, and that Cromwell did well to arraign Charles before the bar of justice, or the French Convention, Louis Capet; it was the meting out of justice by the people over the divinely appointed ruler, not the head that rolled in the dust, that marked a step in Progress. The judgment of Europe banished Napoleon to a lonely life, not death, and Napoleon did not receive a martyr's crown. Not so the Jesuits. The Church of the Holy Ignatius in Rome has the saints of assassination emblazoned from its windows, Jael, Judith, Samson, David. The figure of the Holy Ignatius himself occupies the centre, in a halo of glory, launching pillars of fire on all the four quarters of the globe, and for his motto, "I came to send fire throughout the earth, what, therefore, could I wish otherwise than that the world should burst into flames?"

The Parliament of Paris was so horrified at the teachings contained in the "Defence of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith", that it caused it to be burnt, but the sons of Loyola declared it to be a God-fearing book. It was, in verity! It echoed the faith of the Christian in the god who applauded deceit and assassination, from the nail in the head of Siseria to the treachery of Jacob to his sister's suitor. Cardinal Bellarmine—later translated among the saints by the Pope at the demand of the Jesuits—declared:

It is not the affair of ecclesiastics, or even of monks, to kill kings through artifice, and even sovereign pontiffs are not accustomed to crush princes in this manner. But, when they have warned the same in sacrament, absolved subjects, when it becomes necessary, from their oath of allegiance, and lastly deprived monarchs of their royal authority and dignity, it belongs to other than ecclesiastics to proceed to execution.

The Jesuit teaching was murder, pure and simple, by any means, dagger, poison, gunpowder, and not for the sake of the soul of the heretic, as is the time-honoured Catholic doctrine, but for the prestige alone of the Society of Jesus. Any Catholic might have accounted himself blessed to have rid the world of the heretical Elizabeth I, and James I of England, or William of Orange. And it was the Society of Jesus that was behind the many plots. But surely, only a Jesuit could consider it the will of God to assassinate the Catholic rulers of Europe to enhance the power of their Order? This last they hoped to attain through the House of Hapsburg, and the formation of a Catholic Universal monarchy but faced with the power of France during the 17th Century, they transferred their hopes of world dominion to Louis XIV. The Hapsburgs must be weakened and perish. So simple! Leopold I, weak ruler on the Imperial throne of Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bohemia, and faithful son of the Jesuits, was already menaced on either side, by Louis of France and the Ottoman Turks; an internal revolt alone was needed to topple the precarious throne. Leopold had solemnly accorded religious toleration to the Protestants, who represented the majority of the Hungarian people: if this were withdrawn, the Hungarians would, without doubt, rebel. Leopold must be persuaded. The Black Crows surrounded him, but Leopold held to his sworn vow. So simple again: he must die. The wicks of his bedroom candle were saturated with arsenic; a gradual death was prepared. Joseph Borro, a doctor, however, already under a charge of heresy, diagnosed the monarch's malady. It was impossible for one so bigoted as Leopold to receive openly a man accused of heresy, even if he were the most skilful surgeon in the world, but he was admitted



## World Union of Freethinkers

Re the Geneva Resolution in THE FREETHINKER of September 16th, last paragraph, last sentence: "On the contrary, Science must be the means of constructing a World based in Social Justice, Liberty and Peace".

In the interests of logic and clarity would it not be better for us to define both to ourselves and others just what we mean by "Social Justice, Liberty and Peace"? Does not Social Justice imply Political Justice, or a socio-political doctrine? To my mind it must if only to ensure Liberty which is after all a legalised definition of an abstract "Human Right". I would go further and define Liberty as that part of Freedom (Human Freedom) which has been given some sort of legal recognition by the existing State. Consequently must not we first of all decide what kind of political state we want to live in before starting to fight for it, else we may go the way of so many South and Central American Revolutionaries who knew how to fight and die for so many abstract theories, yet quite forgot to define their terms so that in victory they were quite lost (e.g. Zapata), ending up like so many dictators.

What exactly are we fighting and striving for, realities or hazy abstract ideals, and just what has Science got to with it all, and why particularly Science and not the Humanities or Social Sciences, it isn't a new religion or is it? No let's be more concrete and more intellectually honest and less of the abstract "Theology".

One further quarrel, the article stated "Growth in knowledge remains the sole guarantee of genuine and lasting intellectual emancipation among the people as a whole". Now to my mind growth of knowledge implies two different things. Firstly, the acquiring of new knowledge (new facts), secondly, the alteration and amendment of existing knowledge. With the increase in amount of new facts will not there be an excessive amount of specialisation and a movement away from "the people as a whole". Further will not the Co-ordinator of knowledge be "King", as only he "sees all". Scientists have been slaves before even voluntarily, witness both Soviet Science and the "Manhattan Project"! Your comments brethren. PETER NEVILLE.

As by office I may be regarded as responsible for the Geneva Resolution, I have been asked to reply to Mr. Neville's letter.

By Science is meant both the Scientific Method and the tested information obtained by its means; it is not limited to the Physical Sciences as Mr. Neville would think. (At last year's Brussels' Congress a Historian and a Sociologist were ranked as scientists.) It is not worshipped in any way, I can assure Mr. Neville.

Social Justice includes political and juridical equality; and, in my opinion, implies Liberty in the sense of the maximum individual freedom compatible with equal freedom for others without distinction, and also Peace, since War must signify inequalities.

The Free Thinker endeavours to *free thought*, a very positive aim, which will keep the militant active for many a long year to come, and which is supremely urgent today. Pre-conception and emotional prejudice, from which few are completely detached, render the application of the scientific method (rationalism) to political problems confused. The Free Thinker should do his best to dispel such confusions from his own mind and not to yield to a desire for cut-and-dried detail.

As to the vast growth of scientific knowledge, I would refer Mr. Neville to Professor Henri Laugier's paper given at the Brussels Congress last year in which he considers this very problem. What is meant in the resolution is rather an understanding of how present scientific knowledge has been obtained, an insight into intellectual method and not a memorisation of detail. I should have preferred on later consideration a somewhat different wording which would have made this clearer.

Perhaps Mr. Neville may find time to attend the week-end conference next September 8th, 9th and 10th at Beatrice Webb House, near Dorking, which will be opened by Lady Wootton and will include Professor Lucia de Brouckere and Dr. Swinton among the participants. C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

(President, World Union of Freethinkers).

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NEXT WEEK

CATHOLIC INTELLECTUALS AT OXFORD

By F. A. RIDLEY

through the back door of the Palace, exposed the trick and traced the source of the poison. The monarch's recovery was a bitter blow to the Jesuits and, fearing loss of power, they incriminated one only of their flock and testified their abhorrence of such a deed of darkness. Thus the Jesuits again took charge of the King's soul; he broke faith with the Hungarian Protestants, and rebellion and massacre was the order of the day. Leopold I was finally assisted into the hereafter by means of poison.

Every Jesuit church in France celebrated the assassination of the staunch Catholic monarch, Henry III, by Jacques Clement, Clement was acclaimed a holy martyr for a good cause, the "eternal honour of France", and the crime was pronounced "a charming and distinguished deed, from which the rest of the rulers might derive a wholesome lesson". Henry of Navarre accepted Catholicism to win the crown of France; three youths were found to attempt his murder. Barrière, the first, was forestalled, he confessed his intentions to a Dominican. The knife of Chatel, the second would-be assassin missed. Ravaiillac the last and the successful, confessed to a Jesuit before the deed. The Father, when questioned by the authorities, said that he was unable to recollect that Ravaiillac had confided anything to him, as he had been endowed by God with the attribute of forgetting at once Confessional secrets entrusted to him.

How can one crowd into so short a space the record of the Jesuitical treachery, deceit, chicanery and assassinations that befools even the black record of orthodox Catholicism? The book itself must be read to appreciate the loathesome thing that had been spawned by the Counter-Reformation.

How can one describe the humour of Griesinger's verbal sketches? How the famous Father Xavier dressed himself as a Bonze, to face the embattled host of 3,000 Chinese Bonzes at Bungo, in religious controversy before the Emperor. But, alas, neither spoke the other's language and "each party ascribed the victory to itself, as each had reason for so doing, as neither of them in anyway understood each other".

Griesinger attempts to portray every facet of the Society of Jesus through the 400 years of its growth, adhering mainly to Catholic records, with painstaking care for exactitude. One understands with the help of his vivid pen, the fears of the Papacy that gave it birth; the revulsion caused by its abuse of power that brought its eclipse in the 18th century; and alas, later, the terror of advancing Liberalism that gave it life again. He portrays the technique of Jesuitism to pervert the minds of the wealthy and powerful, and by ingratiation, to lure their sons into the Jesuit colleges, to imbue them with their infamous teaching. And, for the masses, the poor and uneducated—well, perhaps, the Masque of Death! Sublime in its simplicity; a procession, an open coffin with an effigy of a corpse, followed by cherubic boys chanting, behind whom appear a crowd of hideous devils, throwing stink-bombs and blackening the air with smoke, clouding the cherubs and the coffin. And then, a row of Black Monks, lowered heads, benign, aspersing incense—the air is cleared, the devils vanish, the dead purified!

I expect the book is long out of print, but it is in the Willesden library, and therefore can be obtained by request from any library.

**FREEDOM BOOKSHOP** has now moved to 17a Maxwell Road, Fulham, London, S.W.6 (near Chelsea Football Ground), where a variety of secondhand books can be found. Or send for a free copy of our weekly paper *Freedom*, and our No. 11 list of secondhand books. Books sought for, and frequently found. Hours—10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



## CORRESPONDENCE

### ANIMAL WELFARE

I liked the article "Progress in Animal Welfare", and am pleased that progress is being made in spite of public indifference and sheer hypocrisy. The public want pale veal: result cruelty to calves; bullfighting is banned in Britain, so large numbers of visitors go to Spain to witness it. Sheep give birth to lambs in slaughter houses and about half a dozen protest about such a abomination and nothing is done about the matter. Yes it will be a long and bitter fight to get rights for animals, but it will be worth it in the end.

L. STARLEY.

### SENATOR KENNEDY

The whole of the quotation used by Colin McCall of Senator Kennedy is based on conscience. The Pope would agree with Kennedy's present attitude, but the greater his faith the greater would it affect his conscience. The whole statement is not worth the paper it is printed on. How can you expect the "Haves" to stick to a principle when their interests as a ruling class are at stake?

G. RICHARDSON.

### EXODUS

Would not the cause of Secularism be better served by stressing the propaganda angle of the Exodus story as an improbable tale of legend and miracle designed to impress the ignorant, and to give power into the hands of the self-appointed priesthood of a non-existent god? Apart from this there is increasing archaeological evidence (*Archaeology in Palestine*, Albright and others), that such propaganda may have been built up round the nucleus of a historical migration. I cannot agree with P. G. Roy that it never happened, we simply do not know enough about that period to be so dogmatic, and to equate it with the "Snow White" type of fairy story is just nonsense. Comparison with some of the advertising copy of today would be more apt.

## Christmas Cards

In response to many requests, we are offering two kinds of Christmas cards for sale, one of which is illustrated below. The size is 5" x 4" when folded. There is a simple greeting on the inside page. The price together with envelopes and post paid to your address is 5/- per dozen. A second design, "The Devil", price 6/- per dozen, will be illustrated next week.

Please order from *The Freethinker* office as soon as possible as supplies are limited.



# Have Faith!

Undoubtedly some sort of migration did take place, and it is probable that in the disturbed condition of Egypt after the death of Rameses II and while his successor Menepthah was involved in the Libyan war, Khabiru tribes in the Delta joined with those semi-nomads of the Atuma district and seized the opportunity to break free from Egyptian rule. Archaeological evidence points to the destruction of Canaanite cities at roughly that period by infiltrating tribes from Egyptian territory, and whoever directed them knew his business. Space does not permit one to go into extensive details, but I have made a long and careful study of the age in question from an atheistical point of view.

Surely it would be wiser to attack the insidious propaganda built up by the organisers of the venture, rather than deny its existence about which we know so little. When, and if, Petra is thoroughly excavated much light may be thrown upon this vexed topic, the real tragedy of which was the establishment of a powerful priesthood in the old Amon tradition of ritual that has functioned under one name and another until today.

ELIZABETH COLLINS.

### RELIGION IN THE SERVICES

May I, through the medium of your enlightened columns, bring to the notice of readers my own experience whilst serving (not without some slight distinction) for six years in the R.N. in the last war. My Service Certificate records my religion as "None". I did experience the usual difficulties but fortunately, owing to a large number of magnetic mines around our coast in the early days, I obtained promotion before trivialities such as religious church parades and spit and polish were fashionable in the Patrol Service.

Under the existing set up, I would say it is impossible to obtain promotion without religion. I resigned from the C.W. class mainly on this account although I was recommended for a Commission and returned from abroad. Perhaps it may also interest readers to know that I served also without the benefit of Vaccination or Inoculations and I spent six weeks in the U.S. also West Indies, Amazon, West Coast of Africa, Alexandria and Tubruk, not to mention others.

If you find any of this of interest I would be most happy if you care to publish same and record my name as evidence of its authority.

Wishing you all success in the greatest cause "Freethought".  
ADRIAN J. HELLIER.

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