

The Freethinker

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IN THIS ARTICLE I do not pretend to be original since on these topics that is impossible; everything has been said about them except one thing, a proper semantic appreciation of the words. Few people realise to what a prodigious extent they are ruled by words to which they are conditioned in the Pavlovian sense by a rigidly fixed reflex reaction, usually of a type which reduces them to automata, performing certain acts and thinking certain things to the total exclusion of any rational estimate of the import of the words.

Some time ago, I wrote an article in this journal on "Materialism"; I had quite a fan-mail, which unanimously thanked me for giving a rational and, apparently, an acceptable definition of the word in its three possible connotations. I hope to do the same for the present three. And I am further moved to do this after reading the letters of Mrs. Ebury and her unfortunate victim, the Rev. Fr. Paris in THE FREETHINKER of September 30th. The Father's childish muddle greatly lowered the scholastic level of our journal, but it is valuable in showing how badly we need some semantic clarity in our terms. We want to know specifically, for example, how you "explain" a "mystery" and still leave it a mystery. This slovenly rubbish, however, is passed off by Roman Catholic priests and laity with a great air of ponderous authority, and Roman Catholic spinsters of both sexes react to the meaningless "theology" like Pavlovian dogs. These smug dupes, in speaking of Atheists and Atheism, usually refer to the "godless", using the word as a term of abuse, though statistics of crime and delinquency show that Atheists and Rationalists are better behaved, and are better and generally more intellectual citizens than religionists. These latter affect to despise the godless, but recently the Press reported the establishment by the Vatican of a department of Atheism, which is supposed to reconvert us all, God help us! So we are at last beginning to make a dent in the armour of arrogance of Holy Mother and to count seriously. Old Jack 23 realises that Bertie Russell and myself (I am sure Rome has a dossier on me) have some intellectual and scholastic influence. And I have been reliably informed that about 1,000 priests a year leave the billowy bosom of Holy Mother Church in USA ending as Atheists, just as the French Professor Alfaric did. That is serious too; it counts; it fans a cold breeze into the wizened sacerdotal hearts.

Six Tests

Now I am an Atheist for the simple and sufficient reason that I cannot believe in something that does not exist. To the charge of god-hating, I always reply that it is literally nonsense to suggest hating something non-existent. There are six simple tests:

1. Theists have had many thousands of years to prove Theism, but are farther off than ever; relatively Atheism is increasing. In Russia and China alone there are nearly 1,000 million Atheists; in the former before 1917 there

were 100 million religionists, now I doubt if there are 100,000.

2. Theists talk about a creator, thus involving the causation principle, but dishonestly repudiate it in the next breath when asked who caused or created the creator. Self-creation is nonsense.

3. They adopt the childish device of Revelation. Why was the god so capricious in his revelation? A human would be thought contemptibly irrational in such an attitude. Monotheism seems to have been confined to the Eastern end of the Mediterranean while prehistoric and pre-Christian belief was Polytheistic. Both cannot surely be true. I believe both are false. In many

parts of the world, God seems to have forgotten to present a revelation of himself. Why the oversight?

4. Why is the Christian god so clumsy and cruel by human standards? Why is he dependent on the criminal acts of partisans for survival? Why does he expect grovelling worship in fancy dress? Omnipotent gods wouldn't behave like that, surely?

5. A god is not necessary to Ethics. The reverse is true. Atheists and Rationalists are much superior morally and intellectually to religionists, especially Catholics. Evolved human ethics are superior to those of the Christian god, just as human statute and common law, improving all the time with experience, is superior to static Canon law, regarded by religionists as "God's law".

6. Historically it seems certain that gods were a figment of the human imagination; the extraordinary number and variety of types and functions of polytheist gods suggest that. But as Zeus (whom I was sorry to see go), Osiris, Tammuz, Mars, etc., have died, so the Christian god will die and is actually dying.

An Atheist then simply says there is no evidence for the Christian or any other god: Atheism is logical and rational; Religion is neither, and is unworthy of belief.

Religion has been an unspeakable curse to mankind. Why? the word religion inherent in any true definition, means a belief in the existence of a super-natural or extra-natural power who (or which) created the Universe and still runs and regulates it and can be influenced by methods peculiar to itself: prayer, ritual and sacrifice. Any definition which excludes supernaturalism makes religion something which can be brought within the scope of other activities and is then not entitled to exist as a specific semantic entity. To me the phrase "To do good is my Religion" is nonsense. One can do good without belief in a supernatural agency. The huge variety of super-natural personalities, the gods, automatically led to strife which continued with the variety of forms of "worship", that is, prayer, ritual and sacrifice under monotheism. There was probably no period of human history as savage as that from the end of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. (The regime of the Catholic-inspired Hitler lasted only for about 15 years with equal savagery.) The

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Atheism, Faith and Religion

—Dr. J. V. DUHIG—

maniacal religious intolerance and murder of that Christian time arose from the fact that religionists are aware of the flimsy basis of what they call their "faith", and nobody is more touchy about a belief than the man who fanatically believes and cannot produce evidence for what he believes. And, as I pointed out in my articles on the Cost of Catholic Criminality, the savage revenges of the sects, with the loss of millions of human lives, have persisted into our own day to prove the wickedness and waste of religion. What is so terrible about Roman Catholicism is the inherently black villainy which corrupts every thought and act of this inhuman system.

Prayer is of two types, petitionary and grovelling flattery, an indirect approach to special favour. The idea of the latter seems silly, as an omnipotent power surely does not need all that slush; while petitionary prayer wants the omnipotent power to alter a plan preconceived from "all eternity", a preposterous idea. And what the god does about a Presbyterian asking for the extermination of Catholics, and the latter asking for the same about the former, presents such a theological deadlock as Aquinas Tommy never conceived. In any case, what he might think does not matter; the situation is rubbish.

Sacrifice used to consist of slaying animals and cooking them, as the burning flesh seemed to be pleasant in the nose of the god, and the same thing applied when Christians could and did cook heretics like myself. Some people had the idea of killing the god himself and eating him, symbolised to this day in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is just a ritual theophagy, a disgusting idea. The cannibalism seems to be necessary to the godliness of the faithful but I do not believe that a man who goes in for even daily theophagy is any better morally than a person like myself. The facts lead to an opposite conclusion. As a class, Catholics are the most criminal on earth.

Now you cannot be a "good" Catholic—the main Christian religion—unless you have "Faith". This religious faith is different from the faith which simply means confidence as, for example, "I have faith in my doctor" a common phrase the meaning of which is evident. Religious faith, however, means an effort of the will, in defiance of reason, to believe something for the truth of which there is no evidence, since if there were evidence there would be no need for faith. Religious faith enables people, usually gullible and uncritical, to believe the most preposterous rubbish, which brings huge revenues to the priests. A person who can believe that a man who mutters a bit of dog Latin over a piece of bread can thus change it into the body of a dead god and multiply the one body into limitless bodies, will believe anything, and these gullible morons are those who swell the huge ranks of Catholic criminality.

Religion is a cruel swindle which murders minds as it murdered bodies under the Inquisition and under Stepinac, and as pagan religion fed the bodies of living children into the furnaces of Moloch exactly as St. Joan of Arc died. It has wasted lives and treasure, wrung from the earth by the toil of men in silly prayer and useless ritual in fancy dress and on priceless vessels of gold encrusted with fabulous jewels, all to appease the wrath of an "angry" (non-existent) god and to exploit diseased minds as a source of wealth.

All the great Atheists of history have been humane, beneficent scholars. To all decent men they have handed down the task of wiping from the earth and from men's minds the corrupt falsehood of religion, and to that I wish to add my humble contribution of providing perhaps some enlightenment of how to think and thus to sharpen our struggle for the ultimate victory of Atheism.

Happy Christmas Chaps (and Virgins)

By ALAN O. SNOOK

THE SEASON OF PEACE, goodwill and what-have-you approaches—God help us. I have already counted 1,789 Father Christmases. In fact, Santa appears to be hovering in the doorway of every shop in the neighbourhood. It would be interesting to know how many rationalists possess sufficient strength of mind not to send Christmas cards, give presents, celebrate (God knows what), and generally play the fool. The dam' fool. The prevailing truth by which the majority live in this year of grace 1960 is: "I'm all right, Jack!" The D. H. Lawrence version of this watered-down phrase is much more accurate!

Some may ask: why get one's few remaining hairs off over a trifle like Christmas? Why not go along with the crowd? Be matey. Cheer up. I am willing to lay odds of 100-1 that most readers of this irreverent fire-eating journal do, in fact, adorn themselves with paper chapeaux, booze themselves to a standstill, stuff their bellies with the products of Brazil and other un-Christian countries, and generally abuse their bodies in celebrating—I repeat, God knows what—at Christmas.

Harking back to Christmas cards: I have, over the years, gradually reduced the number I send from 500 to 2. When two aged relatives—of whom I have minor expectations—have shuffled off this mortal coil, in the words of the immortal William, then my out-going Christmas mail will be reduced to nil. I am living in hopes that when that long-wished-for and happy day arrives, it will have the effect of drying up the flood of cocky robins, seemingly pregnant black cats, haloced babes, doubtful virgins, pseudo Lawrences of Arabia approaching the manger astride impossible camels, unlikely asses, or on humble Shanks's ponies—not to mention those astronomical wonders, Stars of Bethlehem.

But what of the devotees of St. Cecilia? How to escape them? Take that vulgar and moronic melody "Holy Night", for instance. From my comprehensive records, dating back to 1922, I find that the Left Hand of Holy Church—the BBC—has broadcast Holy Night on an average 769,471 times every Nowel—on every known instrument, from the harp, sackbut, psaltery and glockenspiel to the bagpipes and Bach trumpet. And the chaps who looked after the local squire's sheep—as recorded in Holy Writ—come a close second, with 769,201 performances. I have made a secret resolve, a solemn vow, to assassinate the next shepherd I encounter watching his flocks by night. As for those harpies, those crashing bores, the Herald Angels, my only hope here is that Comrade Nikita will eventually succeed in exploding a rocket among them. The resulting shower of feathers will, doubtless, be impounded by the Pope, and sold to the faithful at inflated prices.

As for that fellow Wenceslas Rex, the sooner the sans-culotterie take him for a ride in the tumbrils the better. In fact, I herewith offer a reward of 5s. (Five Shillings) for the person of his majesty, dead or alive.

Finally, I should like it to be known that I am in the process of forming the S(S)SCS, annual subscription 1/6d. (One shilling and sixpence)—The Society (Secret) for the Slaughter of Carol Singers, open to all races and creeds.

A few months ago I quoted a verse of Hardy's in another rationalist journal. This particular verse will bear repeating: it sums up the situation as this writer can never hope to do.

Peace upon earth! was said. We sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it;
After two thousand years of mass,
We've got as far as poison gas.

Jesus Christ v. Joseph Smith

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN HIS BRILLIANT, though unfortunately little-known book, *Pseudo-Philosophy*, H. M. Cecil (a pseudonym I believe, for one of the most eminent musical critics of our time), made some apt comments on the use of reason by religious bodies. As he pointed out very pertinently, while Christian orthodoxy frequently takes the line that heavenly mysteries such as the Trinity, or the Incarnation are outside the sphere of reason, when it comes to defending them against the attacks of rival religionists who dispute their authenticity, the Churches positively fall over each other in order to display the reasons for the dogmas in question. Indeed nowadays, most theological systems at least, profess a rationalist basis i.e. the dogmas of faith must be proved by recourse to human reason which is held to be adequate for this purpose.

The above fact is clearly illustrated by the attitude taken up by the more orthodox Churches in relation to rival religious cults, whether ancient or modern. I came across a very apt example of this recently whilst reading that vast amalgam of learning and superstition, Vaccindard's (French and Catholic) *Theological Encyclopedia*. The article on the Mormons (or Latter Day Saints, to give them their self-chosen title) might have been written by a member of the French Freethought organisation; it viciously debunked Joseph Smith *et al* as fraudulent impostors, and ridiculed their scriptures, *The Book of Mormon* as an obvious literary forgery, whilst it mercilessly jeered at Smith's "revelations", the angel Moroni, the golden plates and magic spectacles, and the whole bizarre background to the appearance of this weird American religious cult. The most rationalist methods were employed throughout, nor were wit and sarcasm spared at the expense of this "Latter Day" American rival. Most of the article would not have been out of place in THE FREETHINKER.

Nor is English and Protestant Christianity lacking in this respect. Mr. C. H. Hammersley of Leicester, recently drew my attention to a book by an Anglican clergyman, the Rev. James K. Swinburne, B.A., Rector of Rockland, St. Mary and Hellington, Norfolk, who in 1911, published a series of essays collectively entitled, *Beneath the Cloak of England's Respectability*. Under the cover of this somewhat unwieldy title, are included a number of separate studies the first of which bears the alarming title of *The Mormon Monster*. The entire study which follows is written in a frankly partisan spirit, with the avowed object of warning the British people, and—as Mr. Swinburne goes out of his way again and again to emphasise—particularly the feminine section, against the wiles of Mormonism and against the blandishments of the Latter Day Saints. In particular of Mormon missionaries working on the English mission, two of whom, to add insult to injury had, so to speak, settled on the reverend gentleman's own doorstep and were busily at work undermining the orthodox faith of his Norfolk parishioners with deadly danger to their immortal souls and unmentionable consequences to the morals of the young women of the parish who were the Mormons' most desired prey.

For, of all the sins, crimes and enormities so vigorously denounced by our clerical author, the plurality of wives both enjoined and practised by Smith and his disciples (with sound warrant from the Old Testament) is that which excites his liveliest wrath. Germany, he declares, has done its Christian duty in expelling the Mormon mission-

aries as ravishers of innocence and seducers of youth! Then Mr. Swinburne and his clerical colleagues would no longer have to tremble for the faith and the morals of their flock against the incursion of these wolves from Utah into their English folds. Our author however, does not content himself with mere denunciations of the "Mormon Monster", though his vocabulary of denunciation is actually quite fluent. He, also, like a good theologian, produces reasons for rejecting the new American cult as an imposture entirely repugnant alike to sound reason and to true Christianity.

It is not really necessary to recapitulate what he says upon this theme for, with the exception of some rather peculiar Biblical exegesis, presumably put in to remind his readers of his professional status, his arguments are of a strictly rationalistic nature and, as such, are already familiar to our readers. Indeed, though perhaps for obvious reasons he never quotes it, Mr. Swinburne could probably have found most of them in the contemporary columns of THE FREETHINKER—1911 vintage. Throughout this section of his pamphlet, our Anglican vicar argues like a dyed-in-the-wool sceptic. The forgery of its scriptures, the obviously bogus nature of its revelations, the dubious morals of its founder, the whole sordid story of the foundation of America's most freakish religion, is narrated here in a manner to which (again apart from its peculiar Biblical exegesis), no freethinking critic could possibly take exception. Our author yet again illustrates the contention that religious cults are always ready to resort to reason and to rational argument where rival religions are concerned. Actually, it is really rather comical that a Christian cleric should write in this scornful and sceptical way about his Mormon contemporary. For not only is the general proposition true that all religions, are at bottom, irrational (including under this heading both European and American Christianity as Mormonism regards itself) but in actuality one could draw quite a remarkable historical parallel between the creed founded by Jesus Christ in the First century and by Joseph Smith in the Nineteenth. Both were founded in frontier districts of contemporary empires; the Roman and American Empires respectively. Both drew their earliest disciples from a poor and illiterate personnel: both were founded by wandering preachers, semi-literate, and with no knowledge of contemporary culture, whilst both owed their sacred scriptures to literate converts: Paul (or his impersonators) in the case of Christianity; Sidney Rigdon, author or editor of *The Book of Mormon*, in the case of the Latter Day Saints. Both cults eventually emigrated from their place of origin: Christianity to Europe; Mormonism to Utah and ultimately at least as far as Mr. Swinburne's Norfolk parish. Both creeds, further, were persecuted and denounced as subverters of their contemporary morality: in the case of Christianity, by the Roman Pagans; and in the case of the Mormons by the orthodox Christians. To crown this really rather remarkable parallel, Joseph Smith died by violence at the hands of orthodox Christians, as Christ is alleged to have done at the instigation of orthodox jews.

Neither Christianity nor Mormonism (both of which probably started as revivalist sects on the fringe of their contemporary Jewish and Christian orthodoxies) was in the least respectable when it started, and neither received

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Obviously the "Ideal Christmas Gift" must be a "life" of Jesus, so those very religious publishers, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, have just reissued one by Greville Cook entitled *The Light of the World*. As it must be one of the many hundreds issued every year, we would not have noticed it but for the fact that the Rev. O. Johnson, President of the World Baptist Alliance, has given it a soul-stirring "blurb" for an advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph*.

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Mr. Johnson says the book is "decidedly the most imaginative book I have read about the life of Jesus". We always thought that the Four Gospels could beat anything and everything in the way of "imagination", or at least in "imagining" things, but we are mistaken. The prize must now go to Mr. Cooke.

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In the meantime, our own Archbishop of Canterbury has had a long talk with the Pope, and both appear to have been very pleased that it did not end in a dog fight, but finished without settling anything whatever quite amiably. The only way it could possibly end in "unity" is for Dr. Fisher to consent to "union" with the Pope—meaning of course the complete disappearance of the Church of England.

★

On TV the other Sunday, it was a treat to see how the Archbishop of York and the R.C. Archbishop of Liverpool (we often wonder whether it was the Pope or our Prime Minister who made him an Archbishop?) behaved so courteously to each other. But it must have been very difficult, for Dr. Heenan told Dr. Ramsey as bluntly as possible that he was *not* "a successor to St. Paul"—that is, there was no Apostolic succession either in his individual case, or in the Church of England.

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All poor Dr. Ramsey could say in answer was that the Church of England was the ancient Catholic Church of this country. The truth is that there is no valid answer to the Roman claim that its Church is the one set up by Jesus Christ himself—if the story of Christian origins as given out by Rome is true. All "Churches" which break away are "heretical" and this includes the Church of England.

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The shopkeepers in Baguley, Manchester, are very, very annoyed with Fr. J. Lyons who has decided to run "a vast cut-price Christmas Club" through his Roman Catholic Church, St. Peter's", according to *The People* (27/11/60). He has 5,000 parishioners, and they could save quite a lot through his club. This means that the shopkeepers have to cut their own Christmas orders and of course their own turnover and profits. As Fr. Lyons is selling everything he can at cut prices, it is estimated that he will make a profit of at least £1,000. In the art of making money, who or what can beat the wise, age-old Christian Church.

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But when it comes to other people or Churches making "money" priests call the commodity "filthy lucre". For example, Cardinal Godfrey, in spite of the fact that a priest praised *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as great literature recently, claims that children are "done to death by the purveyors of evil books and pictures for the sake of filthy lucre", no doubt referring to the recent notorious case. We wonder how many "children" have really been done to death through books? He also called books he didn't like

"filthy reading". We would love to learn how he would describe some of the things in those very famous *Manuels des Confesseurs* by Father Debreyne and Mge. Bouvier? Isn't *Lady Chatterley* in the nursery stage compared with them?

Marcus and Montezuma

Like anyone who writes numerous articles, often on controversial themes, I come in for periodic criticisms both in regard to matters of fact and opinion. Normally I only refer to alleged errors of fact in my replies, since differences of opinion are as inevitable as they are desirable. Naturally one has to acknowledge some errors, since if even the Pope is not *always* infallible, it is quite clear that no writer in THE FREETHINKER is. Hence, during the past few weeks, I find myself confronted with criticisms relating to historical characters as dissimilar as Marcus Aurelius and Montezuma (or his Aztec subjects).

Since that erudite admirer of the Antonine Emperor, Mr. G. I. Bennett, does not dispute the quasi-religious attitude taken up by Stoics like Cleanthes and Seneca (to which I had referred in a previous article), we seem to be left with merely a certain divergence in our respective opinions about the historic personality of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (161-180). And, as students of classical historians and as Freethinkers, both Mr. Bennett and myself are obviously entitled to our respective opinions. I can, of course, give him authorities for all statements of fact made in my aforesaid article (e.g. Professor Bury on Seneca's responsibility for the British rising of Boadicea, etc.). Personally, I consider that certain Victorian traits in the character of Marcus, led him to be over-praised by such Victorian writers as Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, who consistently referred to him in superlatives. As however, they used the same kind of language (and often the identical superlatives) about Jesus Christ, it appears possible to doubt their critical acumen.

However, as Mr. Bennett will probably retort that I myself am incapacitated by *post*-Victorian counter-prejudices, perhaps we had better let sleeping dogs and defunct emperors, lie until the Greek Kalends.

As for my friend, Mr. Varney (with whom I have crossed swords before in these columns), I can only assure him that his view of the Aztecs is quite outmoded. Montezuma and his subjects certainly suffered much at the hands of the Spaniards; but both their political and religious records were every whit as ferocious as was that of their conquerors. It was White Imperialism versus Red. If Mr. Varney will read, or reread, Professor Vailland's book, or Jean Descoyle's fine book on the Spanish Conquest of the Americas, *The Conquerors*, published by Allen and Unwin, he will find ample proof of the above statement, including (in Vailland's book), a detailed chronological account of the Aztec ritual sacrifices, which makes nonsense of his statement that human sacrifices were unknown among the Aztecs of Mexico. One must not too hastily conclude that because Spaniards and Christians were ruthless (as they certainly were) their aboriginal Pagan victims had blameless records, an obvious non sequitur.

F. A. RIDLEY.

JESUS CHRIST v. JOSEPH SMITH

(Concluded from page 403)

much attention at the start from its educated contemporaries. But one will not find all this in Mr. Swinburne's diatribe against the Mormon poachers into the Lord's (English) vineyard. Neither will one find what follows. For, while both Christianity and Mormonism started amid a haze of dubious miracles, it can hardly be denied that the major Mormon miracle is better attested than is any Christian one. For, on September 22nd, 1827, three American citizens of adult age, signed their names to a joint declaration in which they stated that they saw the angel Moroni deliver the golden plates to Joseph Smith by the banks of the Sasquhannah river, near the hill of Amorah in the State of New York; their names, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. They saw the angel and recorded their testimony. Is any evidence as good available for any early Christian miracle? It is not; and until it is, and *pace* Mr. Swinburne, the sceptic is surely entitled to say to both Mormonism and orthodox Christianity, "A plague on both your houses". What is sauce for the Mormon goose, is surely sauce for the Christian gander.

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TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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

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INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street), Sunday, December 18th, 6.45 p.m.: A. R. WILLIAMS, "More about the Christmas Myth".

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Tuesday, December 20th, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Education or Indoctrination?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 18th, 6.30 p.m.: Film—"Does It Matter What You Think?"

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, Edgware Road), Sunday, December 18th, 7.15 p.m.: H. CUTNER, "The Myth of Christmas".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Educational Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, December 18th, 2.30 p.m.: DR. J. C. DANIELS, B.Sc., "Educational Segregation".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, December 18th, 11 a.m.: DR. HELEN ROSENAU, "The Christ Child in the Creative Arts" (illustrated slides).

Sussex Branch NSS (Blackie's Restaurant, Church Road, Hove), Sunday, December 18th, 3.30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Notes and News

IN THE NOVEMBER-DECEMBER issue of *The Age of Reason* (organ of The Freethinkers of America), editor Joseph Lewis prints correspondence between himself and the Director of the Port of New York Authority regarding three chapels (Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic) built at Idlewild New York Airport. "I consider the arrangement to permit chapels to be erected upon public property at the New York International Airport as one of the most brazen and flagrant violations of the use of public property, by a constituted legal authority, that I have come across in a long, long time", wrote Mr. Lewis. "If people want to attend church before boarding a plane they should do so before coming to the airport". He considers the rental of \$650 for one half acre per annum to be "utterly ridiculous, and his attorney is considering what legal action can be taken in the matter."

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LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY Secretary, Mr. C. H. Hammersley, has recently been involved in another con-

troversy in the Leicester Evening Mail, this time on the subject of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which he thinks "of less actual danger to our society than books which glorify violence or war" (22/11/60). One of his critics—rather typically we should say—hadn't read the book. Another declared that "neither Lawrence nor Mr. Hammersley can alter" the great truth that "the wages of sin is death" (28/11/60).

★

TALKING OF BOOKS, Oldbourne, publishers of Fleet Street, advertised *Our Lord's Life* ("His Story in Words and Pictures") in *The Guardian* (2/12/60) immediately above *Puss in Books* and *Aladdin*. Quite unnecessarily, we think, they inserted a metal rule under the first item and above the sub-heading, "Favourite Fairy Tales" which included the other two books.

★

WRITING IN THE Birmingham *Sports Argus* (3/12/60), former Irish international centre-forward, Dave Walsh, told how religious hatred interfered with his footballing career. Religion was certainly behind the threat he received after being picked to represent Ireland against Wales, in Belfast, in March 1949. "Play against Wales and you'll get more than a broken leg", he was warned, as were two other Roman Catholics who did in fact turn out for Ireland (now restricted to Northern Ireland) as well as Eire. None of these was hurt, but Belfast Celtic centre-forward, Jimmy Jones, had had a leg broken when the crowd stormed the pitch during a match with Linfield (the Irish equivalent of Celtic v. Rangers in Glasgow) and the threat referred to this incident. Another time, Mr. Walsh was "labelled a 'traitor' by several top Eire officials", but his own view was that "I was a professional footballer and that politics and religion just didn't come into the matter", so he played for Ireland as long as he was picked.

★

"THE CARDS are on the table. No one need be deceived. The battle is not between Washington and Moscow; it is really between Rome and Moscow." The quotation is from a pastoral letter read last month in Santiago Cathedral, Cuba, by Archbishop Pérez Serantes (76). But the issue didn't seem quite as clear as that. The Archbishop might have the support of the Jesuits, but, according to *Time* (28/11/60), "a score of liberal-minded Franciscan fathers, mostly Basque refugees from Franco's Spain", were with Fidel Castro. And "Ardently pro-Castro Franciscan Father Ignacio Biain, editor of the important Catholic fortnightly *La Quincena*, was sent on a more or less permanent vacation", as is the Catholic practice with priests who are "deceived". Is it too much to hope that the battle will be won by neither Washington, Rome nor Moscow, but by Cuba?

★

WE WERE SORRY to learn of the death last month of the Rev. Fred Hankinson, veteran Unitarian minister and a strong and active supporter of the Secular Education League for many years.

THESE TEENAGERS!

Entering his eighteenth year on Friday, Pope John XXIII referred again during the birthday audience to his efforts to learn English.

—The Universe.

—NEXT WEEK—

A CHILD IS BORN!

By H. CUTNER

The Scandal of Sicily—3

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

IN MOST ROMAN CATHOLIC COUNTRIES there is a very low standard of morals of every description. In Sicily many women — married or single — are so pressed by poverty that they are driven to sell their bodies to ward off starvation. An English visitor to Palermo recently passed by a cinema, at the box-office of which there was an argument in progress: an Italian girl of about 15 was excitedly protesting to the booking clerk, and she was waving a piece of paper in his face. The Englishman asked the guide to interpret what the argument was about. The guide explained that the film that was being shown was "for adults only"; and that the girl was being refused admittance because of her youth. On this the English visitor remarked that this rule was in force in Britain and that the girl, who was obviously only 15, was behaving very stupidly. He enquired why she was brandishing the paper to the box-office and then he got the crux of the dispute. The paper was the poor thing's licence to practise prostitution! She felt aggrieved—in view of her profession—that she was not allowed to see a saucy film.

Owing to the appalling housing conditions, (previously described), there is a very high death rate, especially among children. This is philosophically accepted by the simple islanders as being the normal state of affairs. In Palermo infantile mortality is 89 per 1000 births: in Britain it is only 21.

It is especially shocking that the terrible conditions of Sicily should exist only 200 miles from the Vatican where Pope John XXIII conducts his luxurious court. Many of our newspapers (even the highly respected *Guardian*) are flooded with Roman Catholic propaganda which often takes the form of a picture of the well-nourished pontiff under which appear the words "Pope John XXIII is universally admired etc. etc."

From Rome, the Church organises missionary work in many parts of the world (Britain is considered one of these "mission fields!") but these activities seem extremely hypocritical so long as the Sicilian cesspool continues on the doorstep of the Vatican.

Who is to blame for the Scandal of Sicily? To some extent the guilty party is the Christian Democratic government, which is always supported at elections by the clergy, who tell the simple electors that a vote for this party "is a vote for God". The other chief culprits are the Roman Catholic landowners and, of course, the clergy.

Earlier this year a reporter of the *News Chronicle* questioned the daughter of a wealthy landowner about the backwardness of the Sicilian peasants. The lady merely shrugged her shoulders and said "Why talk about this poverty and disease? Let it sleep". (Once again, the deplorable attitude, "I'm all right, Jack!")

The clergy are always powerful in a priest-ridden island. The Cardinal-Archbishop of Palermo has built 15 new churches in the city since the war ended—in spite of the serious slum situation existing. The clergy are some of the few local residents who have been out of the island (for their studies at Rome), so they are fully aware of the better conditions existing in the outer world. However, the hypocritical cold comfort which they hand out from their pulpits to the suffering Sicilians is to tell them "God loves the poor: you are very poor indeed—so God loves you very much indeed". In brief, the Christian Democratic Government and the Romanist aristocracy and clergy have definitely failed the people who have sunk into the lowest depths of ignorance and degradation.

Can anything be done? The United Nations is only able to intervene and help a country if its government definitely makes a request for assistance. The Italian cabinet ministers are by no means desirous of drawing public attention to this skeleton in their cupboard, so UNO is ruled out.

There does exist, however, one ray of hope, in the activities of Danilo Dolci of Trieste who, since 1953, has been conducting a crusade for improving conditions in Sicily. This noble man is the son of a railway worker, and he qualified as an architect and engineer. But, when on a pleasure trip to Sicily in 1952, he was so shocked by the situation that he abandoned his promising career, and he has settled down in Sicily with a few voluntary helpers, trying to remedy the social evils. He and his assistants (from various European countries) have already made considerable advances in starting schools, combatting unemployment and giving the miserable people the comforting thought that there do exist a few persons with practical sympathy for them, and who are ready to assist in their social regeneration. Agricultural improvements are an important field for Dolci's reforms: all over the world, farmers are noted for their conservatism, and the Sicilian farmers have an unusually large dose of this deficiency, aggravated by the ignorance prevailing locally. Steeped in incredible superstition and apathy the peasants still believe in the power of the "evil eye". The visiting panel asked 100 villagers why soil erosion occurred—and 30 of them replied that it was due to "a magic spell"! They are so ignorant that they burn large quantities of manure rather than use it as a fertiliser.

As may be expected, the "Holy Church" looks with extreme disapproval on the efforts of any reformer, especially if he happens to be a layman—and a "lapsed Catholic" is doubly unpopular! This local struggle is yet another example of the eternal contest between Progress and Stagnation. But the priests are now really alarmed to find that Dolci's workmanlike methods are proving more effective than their own pious inanities. The methods of improving the water supply provide an amusing concrete example. For centuries there has been a drought problem and, although there are plenty of rivers, little has been done to store or utilise their waters. It has been the custom for the priests (attired in their gaudiest robes) pompously to lead open air processions and to utter prayers to heaven for rain—with the simple peasants dutifully intoning Latin responses, without having the slightest idea what they mean. These prayers have not always "delivered the goods". In the cases where rain has followed the holy men have received suitable approval and prestige from the admiring peasants. On the other hand, in the many cases where the rain has failed to materialise, the clergy have always had a ready answer—"It is not God's will that rain should be sent". This shallow excuse has been accepted for centuries by the peasants, with their traditional resignation. But their dim wits are now gradually waking up to the fact that the motor pumps which Dolci (the qualified engineer) has set up by the rivers, never fail to function! Once again, the scientist is overcoming the priest—and the Cardinal-Archbishop of Palermo is becoming seriously alarmed. He has issued as many as five pastoral letters this year warning the Sicilians about the dangers of Communism and Secularism.

Although Dolci is not a Communist, the Church tries to infer that he is that way inclined, following the pattern used by so many who have a weak case. Mosley, Hitler.

Mussolini, Petain, Franco, Chiang-Kai-Shek, Syngman Rhee and Verwoerd have all harped upon the theme that they were "bastions against Bolshevism"—in a plausible attempt to cover up their own sinister designs.

The Archbishop of Palermo (who must know very well that he is batting on a sticky wicket) has joined up with this terrible coterie. Only a few months ago, the *News Chronicle* reporter was received in audience by the well-nourished Cardinal, who tried to dismiss Dolci as a charlatan. "Dolci just makes a noise", he said. "He is the tool of the Communists". His Eminence then handed the reporter a copy of the Church's dossier on the reformer, containing such supposed offences as:—"He openly shows himself friendly to Protestants and Trade Unionists"; "He has organised games in which children between 2 and 12, of both sexes, play together"; "He has joined the Italian branch of the Society of Friendship with Russia". Few civilised people would consider these actions wicked, but, from the point of view of a guilt-ridden Cardinal, they are heinous.

The Vatican is fond of proclaiming its jealous malevolence against the Communists, so it is interesting to know how the "atheist Russians" have behaved towards Dolci. For some years they took note of his noble actions, and in 1958 they awarded him a Lenin Peace Prize for his praiseworthy social efforts. Dolci turned over the considerable sum received to his rescue funds: yet another illustration of the more charitable behaviour which "heathens" display in comparison to professional churchmen.

The callous lack of charity shown by the Church, even towards its own flock as demonstrated in Sicily, is typical, and is the root cause of the failure of Roman Catholicism. A significant condemnation was related on November 4th by Mr. F. A. Ridley. He told of a business man just returned from the Far East, who remarked, "The Western World cannot afford Roman Catholicism". The vital truth ought to be trumpeted all over the world—not just in the West. For every person desirous of enjoying a healthy life of culture, in harmony and world-brotherhood is also unable to afford Catholicism. The miserable plight of five-million Sicilians is only one comparatively minor, but concrete example of the heavy price which has to be paid for Popery. Comfortable Cardinals who direct Vatican policy from Rome may be able to say "We're all right, Jack", but we ask: "Are the Sicilians all right, John XXIII?"

"Inherit The Wind"

By COLIN McCALL

A CUTTING from the Canadian *Weekend Magazine* (not to be confused with its English counterpart) Vol. 10, no. 45, informed me that John T. Scopes, the accused in the famous "Monkey Trial" returned to Dayton, Tennessee (the scene of his "crime") recently, and was given a hero's welcome. He was, in fact, presented with a key to the city, thirty-five years after being convicted and fined \$100 for defying a newly-passed state law against the teaching of evolution, and his return coincided with the premiere of *Inherit the Wind*, the film based upon the incident. As most readers will have had the chance to see the film or read the paperback version of the play (Four Square Books, London, 1960, 2s. 6d.) it may be useful to reconsider it.

The authors of the original stage play, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, have of course adapted and dramatised the actual events. "*Inherit the Wind* is not history," they say, and "does not pretend to be journalism". "It is theatre." They altered the time from July 1925 to "not too long ago"; the names of the leading counsels from

Bryan and Darrow to Brady and Drummond; introduced other characters; took only a "handful of phrases" from the transcript of the trial; and killed Brady/Bryan immediately the trial was over instead of five days later. Then the scriptwriters did a screen adaptation, retaining—according to *Time* (17/10/60)—"almost nothing of the play but its flashy, trashy script".

But *Time* is not, I suggest, a very good guide in a matter like this. It is possible that Spencer Tracy is not so good as Paul Muni, who played Drummond/Darrow on the stage; there may be other acting deficiencies, and the direction, too, may be inferior to that on Broadway (all of which *Time* alleges). These are questions I can't judge. But *Time* alleges, in addition, that:

The script wildly and unjustly caricatures the fundamentalists as vicious and narrow-minded hypocrites, just as wildly and unwisely idealises their opponents, as personified in Darrow. Actually, the fundamentalist position, even when carried to the extreme that Bryan struck when he denied that man is a mammal, is scarcely more absurd and profitless than the shallow scientism that the picture offers as a substitute for religious faith and experience.

which rather shows up the magazine's prejudices. In fact, as I remember the film, "fanatics" rather than "hypocrites" would be more appropriate, while it was their religion that was "vicious". And Brady is even a sympathetic character, particularly when he defends the parson's daughter against her father.

Newsweek magazine (17/10/60), by contrast with its rival (and I think justly), sees *Inherit the Wind* as "that rare combination—a thoughtful, honest movie that is a grand show besides". It rightly praises the impressive opening to the strains of "Give me that old time religion", and the climax as Brady cracks under atheist Drummond's "relentless examination of whether Genesis is a work to be taken literally". Moreover, it draws attention to the "cryptic scene suggesting that Darrow-Tracy is not really an atheist after all"; and calls it a bit of "back-peddalling".

Newsweek asked Producer-Director Stanley Kramer what was the purpose of those suggestions that Clarence Darrow might not have been an atheist after all, and it reports:

After a pause, Kramer said, frowning: "I know what you mean. 'Cleaning up Tracy for the family trade.' I don't know. Maybe that's because I read Darrow's speech at the end of the Leopold and Loeb trial and it seemed to me it wasn't made by somebody who believed in nothing."

This reads very strange, for the play ends similarly, viz.:

He [Drummond] weighs the volume [Darwin] in his hand: this one book has been the centre of the whirlwind. Then Drummond notices the Bible, on the Judge's bench. He picks up the Bible in his other hand; he looks from one volume to the other, balancing them thoughtfully, as if his hands were scales. He half-smiles. Then Drummond slaps the two books together and jams them in his briefcase, side by side. Slowly, he climbs to the street level and crosses the empty square. The curtain falls.

This episode apart, I found little to complain of in this film, and much to commend. Certainly I can't agree with *Time* that it was "a sluggish, confused manipulation of ideas and players". And I can't see many others agreeing that it was sluggish, either. It is just about the last adjective that can be applied to *Inherit the Wind*. I could understand fundamentalists being shaken by the terrible exposure of their psychological make-up, especially through the character of the Rev. Jeremiah Brown, who disowns his daughter and calls down a curse upon her because she defends the schoolteacher and I hope the

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superb scene where he tries his "spiritual" blackmail upon her went home where it is needed. As for the delightful contrast between the singing, shouting, slogan-carrying mob (Don't Monkey with Us!" "Down with Darwin!" "Godliness Not Gorillas!" etc.) and the aloof, contemplative chimpanzee on the fairground; who could smother laughter then? Not I, at any rate.

No. And thirty-five years afterwards it is as well that we can laugh at the absurdities of the "Monkey Trial"—even in Dayton, Tennessee.

CORRESPONDENCE

VICTOR GOLLANCZ "FACE TO FACE"

On Sunday, November 27th, in BBC TV's "Face to Face", Victor Gollancz admitted that—although he had no religious bonds nor was a professing Jew—he still retained certain religious idiosyncrasies from his orthodox upbringing. If such an intelligent and educated man cannot entirely rid himself of superstitious traditions, it goes to show how virulent this poison, once instilled into the human mind, can be.

He also reiterated the inconsistent idea—so dear to Jews in general—that he had always felt proud of Jesus being a Jew. This notion is incompatible with the basic idea of the Trinity in which all participants must be equally divine; therefore Jesus could never have been a mortal, let alone a member of the Jewish community, but was from the beginning god or the "word become flesh" (logos).

Even educated people are unable to think logically when they talk of religion.

P. G. ROY.

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, and it is printed in red and green. The greeting inside reads "Here's Wishing You a Helluva Good Time". The price together with envelopes and post paid to your address is 6/- per dozen. A second design, price 5/- per dozen, was illustrated last week.

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



Warmest Greetings

RABBI ADDRESSES SLOUGH HUMANISTS

Slough Humanist Group's last meeting (November 14th) was well reported in two local papers, and by both accounts was lively and stimulating. The speaker was the Rabbi of Slough, the Rev. Martin Miloslawer, and his subject was "The Jewish Way of Life". The *Slough Observer* (18/11/60) quoted Mr. Miloslawer as saying afterwards he didn't know most of the Humanist Group were Atheists and that they asked him "a lot of impertinent questions—they were very rude", but the Chairman and Secretary of the Group (Mr. J. Porteous and Mr. Jim Radford) later wrote to the paper refuting these allegations. The Rabbi "assures us", they said, "that your reporter has completely misunderstood his remarks and that the impression of Humanist discourtesy that your report gives is quite inaccurate".

If not rude, at least one question was unanswerable, however, as Mr. Miloslawer himself admitted. "Why", asked Councillor Alfred Goodson, "did God allow the Jews to be so badly treated, as they were at the hands of Hitler?" "We do not know why" said the Rabbi. "But God is always right". Mrs. J. Neidrum wanted to know if it was true that Jewish boys had a prayer thanking God that they were not born women. "The idea is a misapprehension", was the reply. "The prayer means only that he who makes it expresses thanks for being born to fulfil God's special commandments to the Jewish male, on which the woman is exempted". It did not mean that a Jewish woman did not have equal rights. The Jewish woman was the "priestess" in the house; she kindled candles and was responsible for keeping the family to the Jewish dietary laws.

Mr. Miloslawer thought that neither Elizabeth Taylor nor Sammy Davis junior, had been converted to the orthodox Jewish religion. "I think they became so-called Jews when they joined a section called Liberal Jews", he said.

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