

The Freethinker

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ASK ANY CHRISTIAN about the Child who was reported to have been born not quite 2000 years ago—no one knows when or where—and he will tell you that this child's distinguishing feature was that he was *unique*. No other child born in our age-long world was the only begotten Son of God Almighty but Jesus. No other Child was born of a Virgin Mother; no other Child ever performed Miracles, or was greeted at his birth by Angels, or became a Saviour. Jesus, in fact, was not merely the greatest of all children, but his advent changed the course of History; and the highly civilised West has accepted the quite authenticated and unique date by which all dates are now measured. To put these points in one word again, Jesus Christ was *unique*.

Most people are content that he should be considered so—for, after all what does it matter? Mention some of the other "unique" children who can be found in the history of religions, and they will admit—even with pride—that they are all unknown. Jesus is the *only* one who has survived, because he was the only genuine, historical character in the lot. And in any case, it makes for easier thinking. It is easier to understand the origin of Christianity by accepting that there was a Jesus—even if he was not unique—than bothering one's head reading about the other children who in their day were also considered not merely historical, but unique.

Who Was Nimrod?

There is in the earliest part of the Bible an account of "a mighty hunter" called Nimrod about whom very little is known. The reason why this is so is simply that almost everything in that Holy Book is either legendary or mythical. Whatever Christians may say, it should never be forgotten that nearly every name in the Bible was *made up*; that is, they were not given by the happy parents to their new born babes, but by the writers or editors (or both) of the books in the Bible. The names almost always mean something or other, and at least some of them can be traced to places, or feats of arms, or explain some hidden mystery or doctrine.

The actual derivation of the name Nimrod is lost, but more than one writer identifies the man with Ninus, the husband of the celebrated Semiramis, the famous Queen of Babylon who is considered to be the famous (or infamous) "Woman" of Revelation—the Lady with a golden cup in her hand, and on her forehead, the words "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth". The date given for Semiramis is about 1965 B.C.; for Nimrod, 2348 B.C.—but of course ancient chronology is a hopeless muddle judged by modern standards. The point to remember is, however, that this queen was recognised as the great "Mother" of the gods and worshipped as Rhea. Her son (or brother or husband) was Ninus, and the Mother and Son were certainly wor-

shipped in Babylon. In his *Two Babylons*, the Rev. A. Hislop gives dozens of authorities and a wealth of detail to proving that the worship of Semiramis and Ninus "spread to the ends of the earth". Naturally, the names and the actual details of this worship could not remain exactly the same in other countries and in other ages. But Hislop insists that,

In Egypt, the Mother and Child were worshipped under the names of Isis and Osiris. In India, even to this day, as Isis and Iswara; in Asia, as Cybele and Deoius; in Pagan Rome, as Fortuna and Jupiter-puer, or Jupiter the boy; in Greece, the great Mother with the babe at her breast, or as Irene, the goddess of Peace, with the boy Plutus in her arms; and even in Tibet, in China, in Japan, the Jesuit missionaries were

astonished to find the counterpart of Madonna and her child as devoutly worshipped as in Papal Rome itself; Shing Moo, the Holy Mother in China, and a *Glory* around her, exactly as if a Roman Catholic artist had been employed to set her up.

Thus the "uniqueness" of Jesus can be shown quite easily to be a myth. For many centuries before the date given for his birth, the worship of Mother and Child was a commonplace. In Ninevah, records show how the title of "Mother of the gods" was used, and from that to "Mother of God" used so fervently by Roman Catholics, is a mere step.

Hislop considers that just as the Babylonian Ninus can be identified with Nimrod of the Bible, so the Son of Semiramis is really the Tammuz, referred to in Ezek. 8, 14. And who was Tammuz? He was Bacchus, "the Lamented One". And to show how hopelessly these legends and myths are intertwined, we are told that Bacchus was really Ninus the *husband* of Semiramis, though the word Ninus actually means "the Son".

Husband, Father, and Son

We get the same idea in Egypt where, though Osiris is in fact the husband of Isis, he is also her Son; while one of his titles is "Husband of the Mother". To put it another way—it can be shown that Osiris, the Husband of Isis, is also her Son Horus. Rhea and Cybele are the same, both Mothers of God (or of the gods) while the Goddess Diana, or Venus, or Astarte, or Isis, represents exactly the same idea—the Mother of God. So when we come to Mary who is also the Mother of God, we should not be surprised. The idea of such a Mother was (as I have said) current all over the East for hundreds of years.

We can even prove that Nimrod, the Mighty Hunter, is known to us as Sagittarius, one of the signs of the Zodiac, the Centaur with a bow and arrow.

The only originality in the various stories are the many names given to the same people in the same kind of legend or myth. And the more one goes into the stories, the more one marvels at the way they all appear to have been accepted by the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

A Child is Born!

By H. CUTNER

Babylonians, the Israelites and finally by the Western peoples, as "Gospel" truth. We have here in 1960 eminent scientists and writers and artists who speak in the most reverent tones about "Our Lady", and who thoroughly believe not only in the Virgin Birth of "Our Lord", but in such heavenly miracles as the "Assumption" of Mary!

Are these people really much different from the credulous ancients who were certain that Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, and Plato were all also born of "virgins"? Their "fathers" were Gods!

Nor must we forget that "miracles" happened at the birth of most of the Gods of classical times. Our modern divines, followed by all our national and local journals, will talk or write in hushed tones, and with all due reverence, about "the Star of Bethlehem"—but they will certainly *not* refer to the fact that the birth of Krishna, the Hindu Deity, was also heralded by his *star*. When Jesus was born, the Angels sang in the heavens; equally so, "the nymphs and spirits of heaven" sang at the birth of Krishna. Buddha was born because of the descent of the "Holy Ghost" on to his mother, the Virgin Maya; and the "Incarnation" of Jesus happened in exactly the same

way. The birth of Krishna was accompanied, like that of Jesus, by "celestial joys"—and the catalogue of similarities could be extended to nearly fifty major events. As a famous French missionary, the Abbé Huc, who has left us a remarkable travel book, says,

In the eyes of the Buddhists, Buddha is sometimes a man and sometimes a god . . . a divine incarnation, a man-god . . . the idea of redemption by a divine incarnation is so general and popular among Buddhists . . . that if we asked a Mongol or Tibetan "Who is Buddha?" he would immediately reply "The Saviour of Men".

Chinese Gods are equally virgin born and saviours. So are many of the Greek and Roman ones, and I am sorry that space forbids me to go more fully into those gods we find in the New World, for they also had miraculous "births".

And what can we learn from all this if we put the supernatural behind us, and concentrate on the reason for the deification of the Mother and Child?

Did not the two present us with the most beautiful picture the world—the purely secular world—can give us?

The picture of the Mother nursing her child who is and always has been the greatest of all miracles?

Mr. Snook and I

By G. I. BENNETT

MR. ALAN O. SNOOK'S contribution, "Odium Theologicum", is most interesting. I agree and disagree with it in about equal measure.

First, as to my agreement. I am with Mr. Snook in thinking that there is not much point in arguing with Christians—the backsliders who couldn't care less, and the rest who, in his words, "stick to their tenets like barnacles and are impervious to reason". A few churchmen, a few Christians, are, as he says, notable exceptions. What they say usually deserves a hearing; it provokes thought and, perhaps, one's qualified agreement. But the general run of parsons are not worth consideration. Their reasoning is puerile, and they contribute nothing of value to our social or political thinking, our intellectual and cultural heritage. Like Mr. Snook, I find them insipid and ineffably wearying. I avoid them as much as possible and, if I have unhappily got into their company, I leave them as quickly as politeness will allow.

The fires of atheist proselytism are dead in me. For ten years—from about my seventeenth to my twenty-seventh year—I would take all comers in private discussion and correspondence, and in newspaper controversy. Thereafter I lost interest, taking the clerically-minded (and others) up then only if social, ethical, humanitarian, or world-peace issues were involved. The Billy Grahams of the world leave me supremely unmoved. Their thinking and mine are at no point contiguous, and I do not consider they are worthy of even passing notice. In all this I am with Mr. Snook.

On a very wet day recently I was in that majestic old country town of York with a British Council party of overseas students and scholars, and a Russian lady with us was telling me in course of general conversation that (like most educated Russians born in the post-Revolution period) she had never believed in God and could not imagine what it felt like to believe. Well, I perhaps have the advantage there in being able to recall the experience of belief in my boyhood days, although I told my friend that for nigh twenty years I have lived as completely bereft of theistic faith as she has. As I did in a former article relate, I found my intellectual and moral liberation in rationalist literature. This had a profound effect upon

the whole of my thinking and outlook, and I had to engage in re-fashioning my ideas about many things. Tradition I have never since valued for its own sake but only if I am persuaded it contains something intrinsically good.

Mr. Snook's closing lines are idyllic but they manifest, I submit, *too much* renunciation. Many of the wild haunts of nature are beautiful indeed, and a balm to the soul that craves rest and refreshment. Yet are we to go to them, not for the peace and delight inherent in them, but merely to escape contact with men? I cannot think that is what Mr. Snook is saying—and at least I hope not! All of humanity, I would suggest, is not worthless, although elements of it may disgust and outrage us. Men are not all insupportably dull or incorrigibly stupid, nor are they all rogues and rascals without principle and honour. If they were, then indeed the world would be better destroyed, and all my spirited opposition to the manufacture of weapons for nuclear suicide would be a waste of moral energy and a fundamental mistake. But I think differently.

And what is this about women? *What have they done to Mr. Snook* that he dislikes them so? I find it a little sad that he should see them as an added reason for a retreat to the fastnesses of the hills or the lonely seashore. We all have our moments of cynicism and gloomy negativism when we feel, "Well, what's the use?" But these moods do not, and I think ought not, to last. I need not remind Mr. Snook that, if there is grace and beauty and self-forgetting devotion in nature, there is cruelty, ugliness, and appalling indifference, besides. Not all is on the credit side. But if in fact it were, a man in the world of nature without fellow-man is, I feel, rather like man without woman—incomplete. Even that singular person, Thoreau, who tried two experiments in living by himself surrounded by wild life, and normally out of human contact, did not pretend to see it as the ideal for all one's earthly days, and planned to return to civilisation again.

Tend your garden by all means, Mr. Snook. Enjoy your communion with nature and your nearness to nature's creatures, and retreat for a time from the highways of human life and movement. But don't abandon yourself to perpetual isolation. Not all the creeds and credulities and crimes of men are worth that deprivation!

White Blackbirds

By F. A. RIDLEY

IN A RECENT ISSUE of *Freedom*, which valiantly keeps the flag of Anarchism flying amidst the most organised age in human annals, there appeared a letter from an American reader which should be of interest to Free-thinkers. For its writer, Mrs. Carol Penny Gorgen of Wisconsin, ventured—like a good Anarchist—to disagree with an editorial note that had appeared early on in the columns of our contemporary. In direct opposition to the Editorial Board of *Freedom*, she claimed her indisputable right to be an Anarchist of the true vintage whilst simultaneously remaining a *bona fide* member of the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, our American Catholic-cum-Anarchist argues ingeniously, if scarcely convincingly, in favour of the complete congruity of such a combination; one which, at least at first sight, might appear to be as fundamentally incompatible as the hypothetical existence of white blackbirds. For, by definition, Anarchism represents the precise negation of any and every species of authoritarian rule; whilst Rome represents the most totalitarian form of dictatorship in the world. And not only in this world, but the only one which possesses concentration camps on both sides of the grave! How do Catholic-Anarchists propose effectively to overcome so sharp and complete an antithesis?

Let us permit our correspondent to put her own case in her own language:

As a Catholic Anarchist [she writes] I have found nothing incompatible between Catholicism and Anarchy. The Church can only direct me in the matter of Faith and Morals, and this in no way interferes with my ideas concerning government. Proudhon's anarchist philosopher's ideal of a social organisation based in common ownership and free agreements is essentially very little different from the religious community, and of all the various types of communities that have been tried, the Catholic religious community is one of the very few which has endured.

Mrs. Gorgen then proceeds to argue on the familiar lines that Materialism is not enough—for Anarchists, apparently, as well as for more conventional people—and ends by citing the contemporary example of the American Group of Catholic Anarchists.

In America, she adds, "the first Anarchists who came out against income taxes, civil defence and other governmental evils in a positive, non-violent and constructive manner were the small group of Catholic-Anarchists at the *The Catholic Worker* in New York". "Ammon Hennacy and Dorothy Day led the first protest against civil defence in New York City in 1955." Mrs. Gorgen then concludes with an emphatic statement that Catholic Anarchism actually is a viable creed since the evidence points to the fact that "it is being lived, and that it works".

The above, which sounds quite plausible as written, is evidently the work of a person who is both intelligent and sincere. The first attribute is self-evident from her letter, whilst the second is surely obvious if only because "there is no money in Anarchism" (on either side of the Iron Curtain) and its effective, profession can hardly add to the writer's status either in American society or in the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Cardinal Spellman, Bishop Fulton Sheen and other eminent pillars of reaction, none of whom are likely to be pleased at having Anarchists and Pacifists as fellow-travellers. However, while I acknowledge the sincerity of Mrs. Gorgen and of her colleagues on *The Catholic Worker*, I find it quite impossible to think much of, still less to accept, their certainly peculiar logic. Not only is it difficult to contemplate

any viable possibility of continued "co-existence" between Rome and Anarchy; our correspondent has got her facts all wrong when she advances the claim that "the Church can *only* [my italics] direct me in the matter of faith and morals".

I must remind Mrs. Gorgen that, far from being matters of no concern to the Vatican, such questions as the ownership of private property (denied by both Anarchists and Communists), the origin and nature of the State (regarded by Anarchists as the incarnation of evil), and the question of peace and war, all come under the heading of morals in the vernacular of Catholic theology and as such, fall automatically within the jurisdiction of the Vatican as expressly laid down by the Infallibility Decree of July 18th, 1870, at the Council in that year. Since when, successive Popes have declared private property, the State, and even the institution of war, to be of Divine origin.* How then, can an Anarchist, to whom all these institutions represent the quintessence of reaction, remain a *bona fide* Roman Catholic? Echo would appear to answer "How?"

In view of the complete incompatibility between these dogmas of the Catholic Church and the basic tenets of Anarchism, it might appear surprising that our Anarchist-Catholics in the USA are apparently able to remain in the One True Church, which has so often infallibly condemned everything for which they stand. Does Cardinal Spellman read the correspondence column of *Freedom*? We rather incline to doubt it. However, the Catholic hierarchy in the USA presumably know about the subversive activities of Mr. Hennacy and of *The Catholic Worker* in New York, which appear to have been quite notorious. Then why do they continue to tolerate them? Is Anarcho-Catholicism too important or, perhaps, not important enough for the Church to take official notice of? One can be reasonably certain that if Mrs. Gorgen tried to combine Communism with the Holy Roman Church, action—and probably drastic action—would be taken against her and her colleagues. But Anarchism in 1960 is hardly more than a name; it signifies no real danger to the Church; the epidemic of Anarchist assassination in the 90s (of which an American President was one of the victims), has long since subsided; whilst in Spain, the only European land with a former mass-Anarchist movement, it was drowned in blood by General Franco and his Fascist backers with, one may relevantly add, the active collaboration and approval of the Catholic Church (*The Catholic Worker* please note).

At present, accordingly, Anarchism represents no danger to the Church or to Big Business and the Vatican is probably still the biggest business organisation in the capitalist world. Consequently, as an eminently realistic institution, Rome evidently prefers to let sleeping dogs lie. No doubt if at some future date Anarchism were again to hit the headlines it would be a different story. Then bell, book and candle would set about Mr. Hennacy

*The authoritative teaching of the Church on these subjects is set out in a number of Papal Bulls, Encyclical Letters, etc., probably the best-known of which are the famous Social Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI, *De Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*—1891 and 1931. As regards war, only the institution is said to be of Divine origin; a Catholic can object to any individual war except one declared to be a "Crusade" by the Church, e.g., the Medieval Crusades against infidels and heretics and, probably any future war against Atheistic Communism.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

According to a Roman Catholic church in the South London area—its name is not given in the *Kentish Mercury* which reports it—a “group of practitioners in witchcraft—are operating in the Blackheath-Charlton district”. They are all Satanists who gather together as a coven to desecrate churches and graveyards, and get teenagers to take part in “wild sex orgies”. Anybody who has investigated the history of witchcraft knows the bestial way the Catholic Church treated everybody suspected of “sorcery”, not because there really was any truth in it, but because it was during the Middle Ages and later, a formidable competitor to Christianity.

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Any hooligan can “desecrate” graves or monuments—sacred or secular—but whoever saw a witch astride a broomstick flying in the air, or a witch able to cause a storm, or a death, through cursing? Oh yes, pretended Catholic and, for that matter Protestant witnesses, could always be found who saw these things, but they always were Christian liars as many Christians are even these days.

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A gentleman described in the “Sunday Mail” as “company director Charles Findlay” claims that he can see and talk with “restless spirits”, and that by “removing them” he can cure people of “an illness”. He feels that “his faith” in his power “could sweep the world”. But he is *not* “a healer” for—shades of all the healers past and present we have had!—“any well meaning fool might be able to put out his hands and heal”. But either the restless spirits cause the illness or they do not. What does actually happen when a fool of a healer really cures a sick person and who does not believe in restless spirits?

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Mr. Findlay, following “Christ”, calls the spirits “devils” and, by kicking them out, Jesus was able to cure so many sick people which naturally is exactly what Mr. Findlay does. How does he do it? That, he says, is his secret. But if his faith in devils as the cause of sickness persists, and the way to a cure is “secret”, how can it “sweep the world?” We of course give it up.

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Then there is the “medium” game which is perhaps a little more profitable than faith in devils. Two of them are “exposed” in *The People* (4/12/60) by Mr. Ken Gardner who went to interview them in Hull where they enjoy a flourishing business. He left one of them, “filled with nausea”, and the other, “in disgust”; though he thinks both “are convinced they have some supernatural powers”. Alas, even this conviction has not saved them, for they are not recognised by the Spiritualists’ National Union. In other words, they are phoney.

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A witness of (or is it for?) Jehovah was bound over the other day for pestering a girl to marry him. The wedding, he declared, was ordered by Jehovah himself, and we simply cannot understand any court refusing to consider an express command by God Almighty himself—especially when it is one of the Lord’s elect who so passionately wants to obey the Divine command. And the court calls itself Christian!

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On top of all this is a Holy Water business-man who is suing a Franciscan monk because Holy Water (for which there is a great demand) is becoming rather scarce. “There has been”, we are sadly told, “a sharp drop in prices that Jordan water has been fetching in Jordan”. It appears that the Vatican does not approve of money being made

out of Holy Water, and so the business-man has lost a lot of trade, and that is really too much. But why sell only Jordan water? What about barrels full from the Ganges? This should appeal all the more, first, because Holy Yogis use it, and second because thousands of Hindu saints constantly bathe in it. For drinking purposes it . . .!

French Literary Prize Scandal

WRITING IN THE *New Statesman* (10/12/60), French Correspondent K. S. Karol reported the scandal of the Goncourt Prize, which has been awarded annually since its foundation by the Goncourt Brothers, 57 years ago, with the intention of encouraging new authors.

This year, the jury, nine members of the French Academy, awarded the prize to a Rumanian Roman Catholic writer, Vintila Hora, for his novel, *Dieu Est Né En Exil* which, wrote Mr. Karol, “had the unimpeachable imprimatur of M. Daniel-Rops, member of the Académie Française and author of *The Life of the Infant Jesus*” and “told the edifying tale of how the exiled Ovid became a Christian before he died”. The award was not unanimously acclaimed, and “a number of Latin scholars asked, rather plaintively, how Ovid could have been converted to Christianity since he died in AD 17”, but the bombshell came when André Wurmser, Literary Editor of *l’Humanité* devoted an entire page of that paper to photostats of M. Hora’s *juvenilia*.

They no longer left any doubt, says Mr. Karol, that “Hora was a Nazi propagandist, employing an arsenal of invective against such *youpins* as Einstein and Heine, and roundly damning the ‘corrupt democracies’ of Britain and France”. “French collaborationist writers were shot at the Liberation for less than that”, but Hora took refuge in Argentina and Spain. Now, “here he was, with France’s biggest literary prize”.

Not surprisingly, there was panic among the award committee, but they were rescued when Hora renounced the prize.

But why, asks Mr. Karol, “did Hora fail to give any hint of his past before accepting the prize? He has since said that he regarded his early writings as merely the errors of youth (‘Even the saints of the Church committed sins as young men’) but it is odd that he made no reference whatsoever to them in the innumerable press-interviews he accorded before the *l’Humanité* story broke: on the contrary, he even claimed to be a Nazi victim”.

Odd, indeed!

WHITE BLACKBIRDS

(Concluded from page 411)

and *The Catholic Worker*. For Catholicism and Anarchism appear to mix about as well as the proverbial oil and water. We do not here often agree with the Vatican, nor presumably does the Vatican often agree with us. But perhaps Pope John (as well as the Editorial Board of *Freedom*), would agree with us in styling our American Anarchist-Catholics as White Blackbirds.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, December 23rd, 7 p.m.

Merry Christmas Cards

GLASGOW FREETHINKERS were surprised—and amused, several told us—when they opened their copy of the *Evening Times* for Friday, December 9th. On page 5, alongside a heading 'SICK' CARDS, appeared a reproduction of the "Have Faith!" card advertised every other week on our own back page.

Writing in the *Evening Times*, Vincent Donnelly deplored our cards and others. The trouble with "cruel, 'sick', and 'semi-sick' humour", he said, is that "it can infect anyone and everything". "Even Christmas," he added.

About our cards in particular he wrote:

Christmas comes but once a year—but that, apparently, is once too often for the members of the National Secular Society. These merry gentlemen can't let the festive season pass without indulging in a seasonable snigger. Take a look at the Christmas card on the right ["Have Faith!"].

You will probably agree that it's distasteful—maybe you consider it downright disgusting. But the top brass in the Secular Society don't think so. It's one of their two official Christmas cards.

The Secular Society is composed of atheists, agnostics, and non-believers—none of whom attach any religious significance to Christmas.

This is the first year they have issued greetings-cards. The card we didn't reproduce has a drawing of the devil on the front. Inside is the inscription: "Have a helluva good time".

There are, of course, a few errors in the above (it isn't by any means the first time we have issued greetings cards; the inscription is wrongly quoted) but—if Mr. Donnelly will forgive us—what the hell! we're amused too. And, base materialists that we are, we hope he helps to increase our sales. At any rate, a copy of his denunciation has gone straight into our shop window.

NSS "TOP BRASS".

Notes and News

ADRIAN PIGOTT's series of three articles on "The Scandal of Sicily" ended appropriately last week with a tribute to Danilo Dolci, one of the great heroes of our time, and the hope of the island. The second of Dolci's works to be translated into English, *The Outlaws of Partinico* (MacGibbon & Kee, 25s.) has just appeared, and in a review in *The Guardian* (9/12/60), Gavin Maxwell, author of a book on Dolci, confirms Mr. Pigott's indictment of the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. Maxwell calls Dolci "a new type of saint motivated by sublime common sense and as unlikely to be canonised by the Church as to be elected to the Sicilian Parliament . . . Assuredly he will not be

canonised; indeed an honest analysis of all his published works leaves no other conclusion than that the Church of Rome and its politics has been the root and the stem of Sicily's sufferings".

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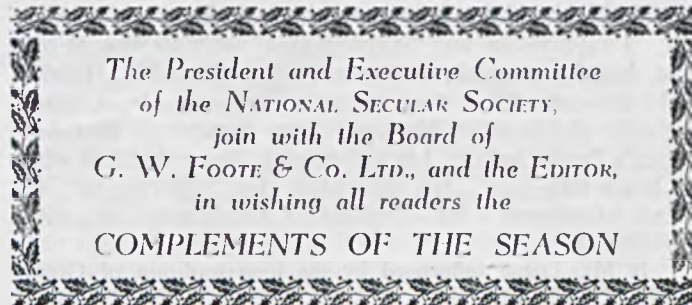
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH is always boasting—and boasting—its gains, but at times it can also be surprisingly frank about its losses. "We are, according to our own ecclesiastical adviser, losing approximately one third of the Catholic youth between the ages of 17 and 21, who are leaving the Church", said Mr. E. J. Melling (Provincial Deputy, Lancaster Province No. 7) at the annual dinner and dance of the Knights of St. Columba, Council 91, at the Savoy Hotel, Blackpool on December 6th (*Evening Gazette*, 7/12/60). The Rev. Father W. Watterson might talk about "a new spirit making itself apparent" in the Church today and declare that "The Church stirs herself to meet the challenge of a new age", but the loss of a third of its young people is surely indicative of an essential inability to meet the challenge of modern life. Mr. Melling and the Knights have been "entrusted" to find out why the young people are leaving and to try to remedy the matter. Their problem is to make irrelevance, relevant, and it is, quite simply, impossible.

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ZEN BUDDHISM, we are informed in a letter to *Time* (12/12/60) "is not a spiritual doctrine, not a religion, not even a philosophy . . . is not a faith, but faith; not hopes, but hope; not beliefs, but belief. It has no rituals, no concepts, no symbolism . . . is simply a way of life . . . knows no bounds or boundaries . . . has the curious quality of becoming all the more exasperating the more one seeks to understand it, until, at the breaking point, clarity comes. It is difficult because it is so simple". No doubt this sounds impressive to some people, but it doesn't to us. We prefer a little clarity to start with; and we share the view of Alasdair McIntyre in a recent *Guardian* book review, that it is a pity, when the East is shedding its mysticism, that so many in the West should seem anxious to take it over.

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"GIVING UP WORLDLY GOODS was easy for me—I was broke!" "I regret to say I had rather an enjoyable day." These are two of the remarks by monks in a delightful little collection of clerical cartoons by "Phelix" of the *New Statesman*, published under the title *Top Sacred* by the Merlin Press, London, at 6s. "A very serious thing happened to me on my way here tonight", says another priest from the pulpit; and, when receiving a confession, one admits: "Quite frankly marriage guidance isn't one of my strong points". *Top Sacred* is definitely for those with a sophisticated sense of humour, but surely that includes us all?



A SUGGESTION

Have you been seeking a suitable present for a friend? May we suggest a year's subscription to THE FREETHINKER?

Christians Without Knowing It!

By COLIN McCALL

HAROLD HOBSON, theatrical critic of *The Sunday Times*, is a Christian. I suppose it is natural, therefore, that he should want to find evidence of Christian influence among young English playwrights, now that—as is pretty generally agreed—the English theatre is displaying more life and originality than for many years past. But it is not an enviable task that Mr. Hobson sets himself; and the straits to which he is driven (in following Matthew 7,7?) should be clear from this quotation:

But there are many dramatists who, whilst giving no evidence in their plays of supporting any Christian doctrine, nevertheless owe the greater part of their effect in the theatre to their impregnation with Christian virtues. This is as true of John Osborne and Shelagh Delaney and Alexandre Breffort as it is of Samuel Beckett. (*The Sunday Times*, 4/12/60).

I should like to hear what Mr. Osborne, an avowed unbeliever, would say about Mr. Hobson's assessment; Miss Delaney has not, so far as I know, publicly declared her religious views, but her extraordinarily successful play, *A Taste of Honey*, revealed no such "impregnation" to me. I have seen nothing of Mr. Breffort's, so can't pass judgment. As for Mr. Beckett: well, frankly he is a puzzle. One could read anything or nothing into *Waiting for Godot* and, in fact, the critics did. (Mr. Peter Hall, its English Director, confessed "Haven't really the foggiest idea what some of it means.") I never joined in the chorus of praise or the interminable discussion about its meaning, but one suggestion worth noting is that "Godot" in some way stands for God, and it may be significant that, though awaited, he never comes. Without entering into a discussion of Mr. Beckett's other abstruse works, it can be said that, in contrast to the admitted absence of Christian doctrine, they contain a few jibes at Christianity.

I would say, then, that Mr. Hobson's claim in connection with the three writers I know, is in one case (Osborne) absurd, in another (Beckett) very doubtful, and in the third (Delaney) unsupported. I must add, though, that it is not these playwrights he is really concerned with in the article in question. They are examples cited to support an even more preposterous suggestion, namely, that Christopher Logue is a Christian. For this is clearly the implication of the following passage (which immediately precedes the one given above):

I have infuriated Mr. Logue in the past, and I suppose that if I suggested there was the faintest possibility of his being a Christian himself I should infuriate him still more. So I will not do so.

There is nothing new in a Christian telling an Atheist that the latter is a Christian without knowing it. It is one of those impertinences that Christians regularly indulge in under the impression that they are paying a compliment. Mr. Logue is, in fact, a Marxist and an Atheist, and has thought himself into those positions from Roman Catholicism. I suppose he was "impregnated" with Papism at one time, but he certainly isn't now. Nor does Mr. Hobson build his case (if it may be so called) on Mr. Logue's Catholic childhood. He does later "suspect" that Mr. Logue's "own nature, his upbringing, have rejected what his brain tells him", but only after that "upbringing" has been broadened far beyond Catholicism or even Christianity.

Is Mr. Logue influenced by the long tradition of Greece and Western civilisation, or is he alien to it, cast out by it? Does he repudiate and betray it? Or has it over him a stronger and more subtle hold than he supposes?

—Mr. Hobson asks. And it would be hard to imagine a more pointless question, or series of questions—unless one's intention is to prove everybody is a Christian. Of

course Mr. Logue has been influenced by "the long tradition of Greece and Western civilisation". So have we all. The point is that the role of Christianity in that tradition has been for the most part a harmful one. The times of greatest Christian power in Europe, the Dark Ages, were the times of least learning, least culture and most intolerance; they were anti-Hellenic. The Renaissance—the revival of learning—was largely a rediscovery of Greece, and in essence it was anti-Christian.

Mr. Hobson's attempt to identify "Christian virtues" (however he may define these) with "the long tradition of Greece and Western civilisation" is surely the biggest gaffe we have seen for a long time in his "perceptive" Sunday newspaper, as the posters have it? Even he must know that Christianity postdates Ancient Greece, whence the "long tradition" derives. (I must apologise to readers for labouring the obvious, but it is apparently necessary.)

"Who is Christopher Logue?" some provincial readers may be asking, and "what is all the fuss about anyway?" Mr. Logue is a poet and playwright, who has two plays now running in a double bill, *Trials by Logue*, at the Royal Court Theatre, London. They are *Antigone* and *Cob and Leach*, and they are very different from each other. (Incidentally a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER is playing in both.) The former is a strong drama based on the Greek tragedy, but owing something to modern adaptations, and set possibly in Hungary at the time of the uprising. It may not be completely satisfying, and for one critic (H.A.L. Craig in the *New Statesman*) it was "hardly sufferable". But it continued to "puzzle and haunt" Mr. Hobson for a good while after he had seen it. I am somewhere between these two views. I found it moving in parts (especially *Antigone's* heroic "I will not share a world with you", which also "hit" Mr. Hobson hardest) and I think the playwright is scrupulously fair to both sides. But I did get a little tired of it towards the end.

Cob and Leach provides a perfect comic contrast (Mr. Craig loved it) whose delights are impossible to describe. A couple who have been courting in the park, have been sniffed-out by a spinster and her dog, and arrested by a mounted policeman. The courtroom scene is a riot: a satire on officialdom and prudery led by a deliciously defiant—and nicely buxom—Mary Ure.

Obviously, as I have said, *Antigone* derives from the Greek tradition, and though Mr. Logue gives it a modern setting, he is presenting a problem as old as civilisation: the relative claims of the individual and the State. And, let me repeat, he presents those claims fairly. He offers no solution, but who can blame him for that?

However, it is Mr. Logue's honesty in putting *Antigone's* case against Creon, the commissar, that prompts Mr. Hobson to ask his questions. The trouble is that Mr. Hobson's Christianity causes him to ask the wrong questions. Had he asked if *Antigone* indicated doubts in Mr. Logue's Communism, the question would have been valid and interesting (I hasten to add that I don't know the answer). But to talk of "impregnation with Christian virtues" and then equate these with "the long tradition of Greece and Western civilisation" makes nonsense of the whole thing.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE HERETICAL SIXTIES

By F. A. RIDLEY

Far From the Madding Crowd

By RUSTICUS

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness,
mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over
the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent
creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now
he is gone.

Afterwards—Thomas Hardy.

ONE IS SURPRISED to find a writer of Wightman's rustic insight writing a sentence like this: "... most of the statements against 'blood sports' appeal to the emotions only, because they are based on the mistaken belief that animals have the same highly developed imaginations as human beings". Surely our old Piddletown friend has seen a horse "shie" hysterically at a trifle like a paper bag suspended in a roadside hedge. Why a powerful animal like a horse should be thrown into a panic by a piece of paper is a mystery, but surely suggests that our equine friends have highly developed imaginations? And has our rustic friend never heard the terrified squealing of pigs when they smell death in the air? Not so many years ago hundreds of villagers kept a solitary pig, and anybody who is aware of what went on in village gardens at pig-killing time will know that the pig (who had generally become a pet) knew full well what was in store for him, as he viewed the preparations for his—usually—brutal murder. His frantic squeals and herculean struggles spoke louder than words. I have known instances where village children have gathered round to witness the slaughter of a pig, eyes a-goggle and mouths agape, fascinated by the bloody spectacle. Hardy gives a graphic description of a village pig-killing in *Jude the Obscure*, as ghastly an episode as any in literature.

However, to return to field sports—more precisely, "blood sports".

In otter hunting, the chief aim of those engaging in this noble pastime is to keep their victim from getting into any large stretches of deep water, owing to the otter's swimming superiority over the pursuing hounds. Sometimes members of the hunt will stand shoulder to shoulder across a stream to seal off the otter's only escape route. They then frighten the terrified animal back towards the hunting hounds. To quote Wightman: "If he (the otter) gets into deep water he can only be killed by putting hounds onto him every time he comes up to breathe. To me there is something horrible about slowly killing this wonderful swimmer by drowning him in his own element".

Good for you, Ralph!

As for stag hunting, I can do no better than quote from a *League Against Cruel Sports Bulletin* (from 58 Maddox Street, London, W.1.).

An exhausted stag, chased by hounds for more than three hours, took to the River Exe. Hundreds of people watched it as it plodded wearily upstream and was finally cornered and killed. The Devon and Somerset Staghounds found it at Bury and chased the stag along a main road and into a railway goods yard. The stag raced along the railway lines, through a sawmill yard and into the river, which ran red with blood after the deer had been killed.

One or two more incidents in the hunting world—also quoted from the *League's Bulletin*—will suffice to show what our betters get up to when in full cry.

Mourners had just left a churchyard on March 31st and the sexton was still filling the grave when hounds cornered an exhausted deer by the boundary hedge.

Mr. Albert Smith, one of the mourners walked back to the church in West Quantoxhead, Somerset, and found that

the deer had been stabbed to death only 40 yards from the grave.

59-year-old Mr. Smith said: "It was terrible. People were dashing up in cars to get to the kill.

The League sent an officer to investigate a complaint against the North Cornwall Foxhounds, on March 8th.

The complaint was made by Mr. Alan Brinsley, who owns the 45-acre Middle Carwen Farm, Blisland, near Bodmin.

Mr. Brinsley told the league that the North Cornwall Hunt "invaded his farm with its hounds in full cry, smashing down his electric fences, stampeding his pedigree herd of Red Poll cattle, chasing his flock of lambing ewes and tearing a newly born lamb to pieces".

Having taken a look at the unspeakable in their natural state, our brief survey may be concluded by observing them on a more formal occasion, to wit, an exclusive hunt ball. At the ball I have in mind it appears that the chaps from the Shires found dancing a somewhat irksome pastime, for a pitched battle suddenly broke out among the dancers, some of whom were attired in their official garb of hunting pink. Having, apparently, left their riding-crops at home, our friends fought an entertaining battle with bread rolls, cheese, butter, and anything they could lay their hands on. No quarter was asked or given, and the Geneva Convention was totally ignored, for it was reported that non-combatant civilians, in the shape of waitresses were struck by sundry gastronomic missiles. At the conclusion of this unique affray it was decided that the advice of a London art expert would have to be obtained, to assess damage done to an oil painting by an off-course bread roll, the ball having been held in a public hall. Hunt officials have apologised and offered to pay for damage. We have been earnestly assured by the hunt secretary, that "these people would not wilfully desecrate a painting".

One is forced to the melancholy conclusion that our hunting friends—who behave like neolithic man indoors and out—should be put under house arrest until the common citizenry have been armed against them, or until the government decides to purchase Devil's Isle—now up for sale—for their permanent incarceration.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE MYTH THEORY

Unless you come to Mr. Cutner's rescue by denying me space in your paper so that I cannot refute him publicly, this is what I propose to do. (a) I am going to try to prove that his cherished myth theory at its best is a bare possibility. (b) That the historicity of Jesus at its worst is almost a certainty. Mr. Cutner, however, must be kind enough not to expect me to write a book in order to refute his, which, incidentally, I sent for from New York because none of the local libraries has it. So for the time being, let us have a cease-fire on this front and resume battle on others. Mr. Cutner is absolutely right that I have proved nothing by questioning Professor Smith's credentials. I should have known better. Sure enough, arguments mean everything. Therefore, we will concentrate on them.

Professor Marcel Goguel in Vol. 1, Chaps. 1, 2 and 6 of his *Jesus and the Origin of Christianity*, Torch book edition 1960, treats the myth theory and all its ramifications with thoroughness, and all of Mr. Cutner's champions receive adequate attention. Another gentleman whose arguments are worth examining is Karl Adam. In his *The Son of God*, chap. 3, called "The Sources for the Life of Jesus", the myth theory is thoroughly explored and again, I must return to Professor Albright, who, briefly, but very powerfully, attacks the myth theory in the chapter called "Documentary Sources" from his book *From the Stone Age to Christianity*.

Of course, as a rationalist I am prepared to admit that those arguments may not be final as long as archaeological research is carried on. But at present, to dismiss them simply because they are held by believers in the divinity of Christ is a little too much.

Mr. Cutner is only required (if he cares) to prove the fallacy of the arguments, because everything else is irrelevant.

Now to Mr. Cutner's direct questions. As far as Harnack's refutation is concerned, my opponent scores again. I cannot think of any place where Harnack himself refutes Strauss, but I do recall Harnack's assertion in his *What Is Christianity?* chap. 1, part 1 which reads, "Sixty years ago David F. Strauss thought that he had almost entirely destroyed the historical credibility of not only the Fourth but also of the first Three gospels as well. The historical criticism of two generations has succeeded in restoring that credibility in its main outlines".

Could I not take Harnack's word for it? Doesn't it ever happen that a highly reputable scholar's word is accepted because of his very reputation?

Who actually refuted Strauss successfully and in which book? Mr. Cutner asks. What of Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus?* I reply. What of Paul Tillich's *Religious Symbolism?* Haven't they done the job? If they have not, I would like to know why. This is the only way I can cure my ignorance—by asking questions—and Mr. Cutner has the moral duty to enlighten me.

I am also asked to name a scholar greater than Robertson but his contemporary. I am going to over-satisfy my friend Cutner with three men who, though a little younger than Robertson, made their names famous when he was still alive. They are Jacques Maritain, Arnold Toynbee and Arnold Lunn.

I don't think I could precisely say whether they are greater than Robertson, but their international reputation, Mr. Cutner will agree, is undisputed. But if he is wondering what is the connection between these men and the issue involved, here it is—that none of them, even though they differ on what brand of Christianity is a genuine one, none of them I must insist has ever questioned or doubted that there was a man called Jesus, founder of a religion. I might add that Arnold Lunn made a reputation for himself in a discussion he had with Professor Joad which took form in an exchange of letters, all published in a volume called *Is Christianity True?* I'm sure Mr. Cutner recalls that even though his sympathies, as well as mine, were for Professor Joad, he did not manage to acquit himself with flying colours. In fact, the erudite Lunn in Letters XXIX, XXXI and XXXIII meets all Mr. Cutner's points. This happened in 1933, and if my memory does not fail me, Mr. Lunn in the same year published a devastating book as a reply to Professor Haldane which until today has remained unchallenged.

One last point. Is Mr. Cutner certain that Smith's *Birth of the Gospel* was never refuted because, as he puts it, theologians "ran away" from any debate with him? Or maybe they thought that the book was simply repeating old and outmoded themes no longer worth examining.

My dear Cutner, I do not doubt for one moment your scholarship, your sincerity and your good logic. But do you realise you happen to be probably the only scholar living in the West who clings to the myth theory? And since I'm sure it is not fame that you seek, why don't you find the courage to doubt your own position as a good rationalist would?

I hope to read you again.

Cordially yours,

PATRICK CORSARO (San Francisco).

REPLY BY MR. CUTNER

It will be noticed at the outset that Mr. Corsaro admits that "arguments mean everything. Therefore, we will concentrate on them". He then proceeds to give us names only—Goguel, Adam, Albright, Joad, Lunn, Harnack and others, and does not give us a *single* argument from any of them.

In these columns I have in the past, over and over again, dealt with the "arguments" of fully believing Christians, as well as those of Rationalists (now Humanists), like Messrs. A. D. Howell Smith and Archibald Robertson, to say nothing of my writing a long book, *Jesus—God, Man or Myth?* in which (following a lead of my own) I did my utmost to meet as many of the principal objections to the Myth Theory I could find, including those from reverent Rationalists who still believe in a Man Jesus who went about "doing good"; and from Fundamentalist Christians like Dr. H. G. Wood and others who believe Jesus was God. If Mr. Corsaro feels that I could not deal with the objections put forward by the writers he names, would it be possible (now that he has read my book) to give me six arguments from them, and I shall do my utmost to prove that these are just as hopelessly invalid as those I have so often dealt with.

But let us be sure what it is I have to discuss. The writers he names believe in Miracles, in Angels, and in Devils. They believe that "God" came down from "Heaven" to become "incarnated" in the Son of a Virgin, and that he died to "save" everybody on earth. All this is completely unintelligible to me; and if Messrs. Goguel and Co. can have their arguments put in

a form I understand, I shall be most happy to have another try to demolish them.

On the other hand, there are many Rationalists (like Mr. Corsaro) who are quite sure that it is possible to eliminate the Miracles, Devils, Virgin Birth, etc., from the life of Jesus, and leave us a Man, solid as a rock, who certainly lived at the time of the Jesus mentioned in the miracle-mongering Gospels, who really was that Christ. I have found literally no evidence for this personage anywhere, and therefore I would be obliged if Mr. Corsaro (though I am not sure which of the two Jesuses he believes really lived—Jesus the Christ or Jesus the Man) would cull from his authorities any evidence which has so far escaped me.

I cannot, much as I would wish to, read all the "anti" Myth Theory books and articles so far written; but my own explorations in some of them show a surprising similarity. We get Josephus, Tacitus, and the Talmud, quoted unceasingly, and there never is (or only rarely) the slightest indication that these Jewish and Pagan champions of a real Jesus, God or Man, may have been, and still are, constantly unhorsed.

To come to the "refutations" of Strauss, Mr. Corsaro drags in Schweitzer and Tillich now that he has to concede that mentioning Harnack was a mistake. I am sure that if I had dealt with Schweitzer and Tillich, Mr. Corsaro would have instantly named two or more other writers. I have not read Tillich; but if Strauss has been refuted by Schweitzer, will Mr. Corsaro tell me where that famous writer says he now believes in Devils and Angels?

Mr. Corsaro's elevated opinion of Joad and Lunn is not, alas, shared by anybody who (like myself) heard their debates with the late Chapman Cohen. These two "great scholars" proved how great they were, the one by becoming a Christian, and the other by becoming a Catholic. To name them in the same breath with a scholar like John M. Robertson shows an appalling lack of proportion. And the less said of that Christian bore, Maritain, the better. Arnold Toynbee is a strong supporter of medieval Christianity, and is put out of court by that, if for no other reason.

And now my dear Mr. Corsaro, let us have fewer names and more arguments.

H. CUTNER.

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