

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXII—No. 1

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY (founded in 1958) takes its name from an American Baptist missionary who was killed in China in 1945, and who is considered by the founder of the society to have been the first victim of World War Three. Missionary John Birch had abandoned his religious work and had become an informer for the American forces who were then fighting on the Chinese mainland for the corrupt Chiang Kai Shek. Having been caught "red handed", he was shot for political offences against the new Chinese Republic. The founder of this astonishing society is a 61 year old retired sweet manufacturer named Robert Welch. He was a Baptist, and wrote a book expressing his beliefs, but it had to be withdrawn owing to its extremely fanatical opinions.

Back to the Middle Ages

In the words of the founder, "The society is under authoritarian control at all levels". This violently extreme organisation originally worked furtively and secretly, but it has now come out into the open and has "cells" in 35 states. The names of the members are not published, but it is believed that there are about 100,000 of them, particularly in the southern states where its narrow views on the segregation question make the society popular with illiberal extremists. The annual subscription is 24 dollars; life membership is 1000 dollars, and any member can be expelled without refund of subscription. With its totalitarian trends, the John Birch Society resembles Nazism, Mosleyism and Communism—and makes a strong appeal to American die-hards who do not desire any compromise over Berlin or any recognition of the Peking government. Naturally such narrow people as the "Birchites" oppose NATO and the United Nations Organisation; and (even though one half of mankind does not get enough to eat), the Society is so selfish and heartless that it opposes American foreign aid to "less happier lands". Hatred of Communism is a main feature of its programme; and, as it does not desire any compromise or international agreements, the arrogant attitude of this retrograde Society is not conducive to world harmony. Social reforms for the benefit of the American "poor" are also opposed. In fact, in the words of Martin Larson, the able contributor to the *American Rationalist*, "The John Birch Society wishes to establish The Middle Ages as a universal way of life for all Mankind".

McCarthy Lines

The Society follows the same lines as were employed by the late Senator Joseph McCarthy, who managed to make himself a terrible nuisance and a world figure for a few brief years, i.e. from 1950 to 1954, when the falsity of his views became evident. Like "Hating Joe", the John Birch Society loathes everybody who is not extremely Right Wing. Like him, it attacks enemies by lies and smear-statements; and it capitalises upon the fear of Communism, a gambit which far too often appeals to many

Americans who cannot see the world position with any degree of impartial understanding.

These dupes do not realise that, in supporting the John Birch Society they risk the emergence of something worse than Communism, i.e. a debasing theocracy similar to that existing in Franco Spain today, with the clergy in control. Luckily, the John Birch Society is far less subtle than was the late Senator McCarthy who (when addressing a public meeting) used to brandish a piece of paper and dramatically exclaim "I have here a list of Communist agents in the Government!" So great is the immaturity of many Americans that for several years the senator managed to "get

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The John Birch Society

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

away" with this baseless accusation. Mr. Welch, however, makes the vital mistake of definitely *specifying* "The Communist agents in the Government", as seen by his society. In 1958 the poor obsessed man gave out the following incredible statement:—

"In my opinion, the Communists have got one of their members into the Presidency. There is one possible word to describe the purposes of this man Eisenhower. The word is Treason. My firm belief is that Dwight Eisenhower is a dedicated and conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy. I have an accumulation of detailed evidence which is so extensive that it puts the idea beyond all reasonable doubt."

Mr. Welch Accuses

As well as making unpleasant insinuations against ex-President Truman, Mr. Dean Acheson and Mrs. F. D. Roosevelt, Mr. Welch has made the following ridiculous remarks:—

"Allen Dulles is—after Eisenhower—the most protected and untouchable supporter of Communism in Washington." (A. Dulles is the head of the American Intelligence department!)

"Milton Eisenhower is, in reality, Dwight's superior and boss inside the Communist party." (M. Eisenhower is the ex-president's brother!)

"The late John Foster Dulles was a Communist agent."

"The largest single body of Communists in the USA is among our Protestant clergy."

"The United States Supreme Court is one of the most important agencies for the Communist plan for world conquest."

"Democracy is a weapon of demagogues; and is a perennial fraud." (This is a significant parallel to the statement made in the 1930's by the pro-Nazi "radio priest", Fr. Coughlin, who said "How we Catholics have loathed this civilisation called Democracy.")

"Britain is from 50% to 70% under Communist control." (*Time*, 10/3/61.)

A resemblance to Nazism is the enlistment of teenagers, who are the equivalent of the Hitler Youth Movement. Naturally, the youngsters are flattered and excited about being enrolled in a political society—the implications of which they do not, of course, understand; but they certainly are able to do some damage. For example, if their school-teacher or their parents, should innocently make some perfectly correct remarks which happen to be to the credit of a Communist country (such as the mentioning of the decrease in illiteracy in Yugoslavia, or the Russian successes at Olympic Games or chess), the youth members of the John Birch Society will report the fact

to the local leader. As a result, the lives of the unfortunate teacher or parents will be made miserable by incessant phone calls and continual accusations of being engaged in un-American activities. Mr. Welch has stated that half his members and two thirds of his office staff are Romanists. A reactionary body like the John Birch Society naturally makes a strong appeal to wealthy reactionary papists who (comfortably placed themselves) do not desire improvements for less fortunate persons (such as negroes and the millions of underfed illiterates in Asia, Africa and South America). As "good Catholics", they can use their membership to advance the political designs of their Holy Father by obstructing East-West harmony and decrying Co-existence which Cardinal Spellman of New York has publicly denounced. (*Daily Mail*, 12/10/57.)

The American Roman Catholic magazine *Commonweal* (23/6/61) rather lamely stated:—

Whether we Catholics like it or not, it is widely believed that the anti-Communist views of the John Birch Society somehow represent the official Catholic approach to the subject. During a recent visit to the USA, Mr. Kingsley Martin met a simple farmer in Arkansas who said to him "I don't know much about the John Birch Society; but it's against Communism, isn't it? Maybe I ought to join". (*New Statesman*, 17/11/61.) The farmer is a typical case of a potential member to the Birchites. The Communist Party in the USA is very small indeed, but it is a useful lever with which to frighten simple people. Mr. Welch merely has to mention "the godless Communists", and thousands of gullible, but sincere Americans will flock to his standard. However, non-Americans need not register any superiority over the naive rustic from Arkansas, because millions of people have fallen for this same old silly device in recent years. In order to attract support for their ignoble plans, Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Chiang Kai Shek, Mosley, Syngman Rhee and Verwoerd have all proclaimed that they were "bastions against Bolshevism".

To use fear to play upon the feelings of simple people is discreditable. It is a characteristic of the Roman Catholic Church which for centuries, has terrified and intimidated millions with the fear of imaginary places like Hell and Purgatory. In a similar manner, the John Birch Society harps upon the alleged horrors of Communism—though it is to be doubted if any of the Birchites have even visited a Communist country and seen the system in operation. They merely believe the exaggerated stories spread by Fr. Coughlin and Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, etc. (who also have probably never been to see a Communist country). Thus the Blind lead the Blind!

Why is it that so many Americans support crank organizations like the John Birch Society? One reason is that many Americans are easily duped by plausible "false prophets"; recent examples having been— Fr. Coughlin (the pro-Hitler "radio priest"), the pro-Nazi Colonel Lindbergh, Senator McCarthy, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen the TV star (whom Pius XII described as "My right arm in America").

In retrospect, the advice purveyed by these persons has proved to be ridiculous—and they have all retired from the American scene. But their places have been taken by a fresh supply of irresponsible neo-Fascist substitutes. These neo-Fascist societies do considerable damage in poisoning American opinion by criticising every effort that is made by the reasonable statesmen at Washington who are prepared to compromise with the East. They are bitterly accused of being "Com-symp" (i.e. "Communist sympathisers", a term of abuse which has been coined by the Birchites). Similarly, any social reforms are seen

by the Birchites as being efforts to introduce Socialism and Communism.

President Kennedy has several times drawn attention to the John Birch Society:—

"I am not sure whether the John Birch Society is wrestling properly with the real problems created by the Communist advance in the world. All those who are apprehensive of this advance should face the problem; and should not bother themselves about the loyalty of Mr. Eisenhower, Mr. Truman, Mrs. Roosevelt, myself—or anyone else."

(As the *Daily Telegraph* of April 25th, 1961 aptly remarked, "This was perhaps as near as the president could go, on a formal occasion, to describing the John Birch Society as a set of humbugs"!)

Last November, the President spoke soberly to a Los Angeles audience, referring to "those on the fringe of our Society who have sought to find a simple solution, an appealing slogan or a convenient scapegoat". He went on to say:—

"These discordant voices look suspiciously at their neighbours and their leaders; they find Treason in our Churches and in our highest court. They equate the Democratic Party with the Welfare State; the Welfare State with Socialism—and Socialism with Communism."

Attorney-General Robert Kennedy lashed out at the Birchites at Dallas where he described them as being:—

"a tremendous danger to the United States. I have no sympathy with those who (in the name of fighting Communism) sow the seeds of suspicion and mistrust by making irresponsible charges against their neighbours, courageous teachers, public officials, Congress, the Supreme Court and even the Presidency itself."—(*Time*, 24/11/61.)

Mr. Hoover, the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has also declared that the John Birch Society is more of a hindrance than help against Communism. Nevertheless, the extremist lunatic fringe societies continue to flourish in the USA. The American magazine *Newsweek*, December 4th, 1961, carried some pathetic pictures of a campaign by the National Indignation Council, showing demonstrators supporting General Edwin A. Walker (now in retirement for his pro-Birch Society activities). Placards carried by seemingly sensible citizens had such slogans as: "Veto Tito"; "For God and Country"; "Muzzles for dogs—but not for generals"; "Stop Red Trade; Stop Red Aid".

The members of these amazing societies are all indoctrinated by hatreds of various kinds, and their inanities are beyond comprehension by intelligent Europeans. (One member of the John Birch Society has founded yet another society whose members are actually drilling with shot-guns to prepare themselves to repel the invasion which they genuinely expect from the Russians!)

Even a mature nation like Britain has a minority of Colonel Blimps, and we smilingly listen to our harmless imbeciles as they ventilate their odd opinions. Unluckily, the American type of our Colonel Blimp is a much more dangerous specimen. In fact, he is General Blimp—and he is often a vigorous high-handed martinet. "Dressed in a little brief authority", he is able to do a lot of damage—especially if he is living in remote places far away from the control of statesmen in Washington. For example, in Korea, "General Blimp" MacArthur became so bumptious that he arrogantly flouted the official policy of his government—and he had to be sacked for disobedience. "General Blimp" Walker in Germany had the effrontery to tell his troops that Mr. Truman, Mr. Acheson and Mrs. Roosevelt were definitely "pink", and that much of the American press, radio and TV was "pro-communist". In Turkey, just before the abortive Summit Conference in Paris in 1960, another unnamed "General Blimp" got busy. Two days before this con-

(Concluded on page 4)

The Unitarian Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls

By F. A. RIDLEY

RECENTLY I AGAIN turned my attention to the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which connection I read two books by American scholars, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* by A. Powell Davies, and *The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed* by Dr. Charles F. Potter, dated 1956 and 1958 respectively.

The late Dr. Powell Davies's, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, is incontestably the more valuable, for its author, of British origin and latterly a Unitarian minister in Washington, DC, not only gave his readers much interesting technical information about the Scrolls themselves, but added a brilliant and penetrating critique of traditional Christian (orthodox) theology in the light shed by the new discoveries. Contrarily, Dr. Potter's book is invalidated initially by its misleading title, for actually its author "reveals" precisely nothing about the lost years of Jesus. Indeed, he does not even make any serious attempt to prove that there was a Jesus at all. All that he actually does, is to indulge in repetitive speculations on the contemporary relations of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of their presumed authors, the Essenes, with his hypothetical Jesus. Of course Jesus may have studied in the Essene Library at Qumran (of which the excavated Scrolls originally formed part). But equally, he might not have done so.

Personally, I have never been able to understand what precisely all the theological furore about the famous Scrolls was, or is, about. Certainly they are of great archaeological interest, particularly for Biblical scholars, since their quotations from the Jewish Bible—Isaiah and Habbakuk—are several centuries older than any previous citation from the Old Testament (the Jewish Bible) and as such they probably do disprove what one might term that "lunatic fringe" of Biblical criticism, which denies that any part of the Old Testament was written prior to the return of the Jews from their Babylonian exile (c500 BC): an extreme and improbable view already unlikely on previously known grounds. That Israel had a history, and therefore presumably a literature, prior to the Babylonian exile was already known from the then contemporary inscriptions of the Assyrian Kings; evidence with which no Jewish literary forger could possibly have tampered.

But when we approach the hotly-disputed problem of the origins of Christianity, it is not at all clear how the information revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls affects the problem at all. Of course, if a document written by or about Jesus of Nazareth were to be unearthed, that might be a different story. But no such sensational find has yet come to light. Meanwhile, all that the finds at Qumran so far indicate, is the already well-known fact that the ideas and phrases current in the New Testament were largely at least, derived from older Jewish sources. But this no doubt important fact was already well known, not only to cultivated sceptics, but to Christian scholars as well; in particular to the readers of Canon R. H. Charles, a learned Anglican scholar who, half a century before anyone had ever heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls, devoted a whole sequence of erudite volumes towards proving the thesis that the evolution of Judaism *Between the Old and New Testaments* (the actual title of one of his books) had been such as to prepare the way for the emergence of Christianity. In which connection, whilst the Scrolls obviously reinforce Dr. Charles's thesis, they add nothing

essentially new to it. Christianity has always been "a mausoleum of dead religions" (as Grant Allen so aptly phrased it) and since this religion first emerged in Palestine, it is surely in no way surprising that the local religion, Judaism, supplied it with its earliest ideas.

When we turn from the Scrolls themselves to their probable authors, the Essenes, we must also add that here again, we discover little that is new or that can accurately be said to shed any fresh light upon any historical Jesus or upon any initially Christian movement as such. For despite Dr. Potter's ingenious supposition that Jesus spent his "lost years" in the monastic Library at Qumran (where, according to the author, he became a well-read working man—surely rather a modest role for the omniscient "Second Person" of the Trinity!) there is in reality no fresh information in any of the Scrolls that Jesus ever studied at Qumran, or even that he ever spoke to an Essene in his life. In point of fact, it appears to be rather unlikely that he ever did since, as all our then contemporary authorities agree, the Essenes were recluses who kept very much to themselves. Nor for that matter, do the Scrolls provide any fresh proof at all, even for the existence of any individual Jewish preacher known as Jesus. This controversial question still remains exactly where, and what, it was prior to the Dead Sea excavations.

What these do perhaps shed some new light upon, is the state of Judaism at the time, in particular relation with the (as we may term them) border line sects upon the then fringe of Judaism. For prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), after which Judaism became more narrow and traditionally orthodox, several such sects are known, or surmised, to have existed: the Essenes were one, and Josephus (himself an ex-Essene) mentions others. It is possible, though not certain, that amongst such sects was a Baptist sect founded by John the Baptist (who is mentioned by Josephus) and that the initial Christian movement may have been an off-shoot of this, since even the much-edited New Testament stresses an original relationship between John and Jesus. But we must repeat, all this was known, or guessed, before the famous Scrolls were ever heard of.

What appears to be the most important result to have emerged from the much publicised discoveries by the Dead Sea, is the impetus that it has given to a Modernist, or more precisely a Unitarian interpretation of Christian origins: a point of view forcibly and repeatedly stressed by both American authors. The Dead Sea Scrolls are, in fact, becoming a kind of Unitarian New Testament. Jesus and his earliest followers, urge Drs. Davies and Potter, were Jewish Monotheists, and their religious background and literature were Monotheistic and Unitarian in character; the later Christ of the Creeds, with his miraculous birth and metaphysical attributes, represents merely a later Pagan accretion that has obliterated the genuinely Jewish and Unitarian character and belief of the Jesus of history, who was a Jewish Messiah and not a Pagan virgin-born god. Whatever their actual historical importance, the *theological* importance of the Scrolls appears to be considerable. Are we upon the eve of a Unitarian revival amongst the Protestant Churches? And if so, will it mark a genuine religious revival? Or alternatively, will it merely prove to be a further stage in the progressive disintegration and ultimate dissolution of the Christian religion?

This Believing World

As is usual, the parson and the priest were prominent on radio and TV at Christmas, and we were inundated with carols, services, and the Word of God. The story of the Babe of Bethlehem, complete with a manger, reverent animals and Angels was again in evidence and everybody now must be absolutely certain that every word of Holy Writ and the Gospels especially is literally true.

★

If however there are still waverers, the "Daily Sketch" is here to mow them down with a barrage of words. Shrieking at its readers (December 19th), was a huge headline, "Fact or Fable?" and a gentleman called Neville Randall was there to prove that "the Bible is proved right". To do this, he went to "the work of astronomers, historians and scientists" who, he unctuously told us, would provide the proof. At the time of writing this, we are sorry to say that no scientist or historian or astronomer has provided us with any proof whatever that there are, or were, any Angels or Devils in existence. But one never knows.

★

One of the "Quotes" of the year 1961 provided by *The Observer* the other Sunday came from the Champion Heavyweight Boxer of the World—on this subject, probably as good an authority as any bishop. He said, "I used to think Jesus was a white man. All the pictures I have even seen showed him a white man. But I can no longer accept that. He either is a Jesus of no colour or a Jesus with a skin that is all colours". Enigmatic, subtle, or true? In any case—good for you, Mr. Patterson!

★

We are so used to portraits of Jesus looking like a medieval bearded Saxon which have been painted throughout the ages that it should cause no surprise when modernist portrait versions of "our Lord" appear to cause gasps of horror from all thoroughgoing believers. The latest example is "a six-foot-high impressionist painting" (*Daily Mail*, 16/12/61), reverently put up in Roundhill Secondary School which has "disgusted" the head prefect who calls it "offensive and in deplorable taste". It appears also that some lambs in the picture "looked as if they had saddles on", and "this was meant to represent the Virgin Mary". Anyway, this wonderful specimen of modern art has been removed. So all should be well if a lifelike representation of a "crib" with Jesus as a baby in Mary's arms surrounded by a few happy if pious animals looking approvingly on is substituted instead.

★

Mr. Anthony Greenwood's interview with the Roman Catholic Archbishop Heenan on ITV's religious programme (Sunday, December 19th), was remarkable for two things—the "sweet reasonableness" of Dr. Heenan and the almost reverent admiration for any religion, even of the Roman brand, shown by Mr. Greenwood. It was of course about "unity" and the better understanding all the many sects, which heretofore divided Christianity, now had or would have. Of course, "unity" was more and more possible, thank God, but—and the but was inevitable—the power and the glory was with one Church only—this was of course the Roman Church. And we are sure this was even recognised by Mr. Greenwood.

★

That noted archaeologist, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, had a page in the *TV Times* (17/12/61) describing a "Journey to Jordan". And surprisingly enough, Sir Mortimer, we find, is a believer in the destruction of Jericho by Joshua—

a purely imaginary story for which no evidence has ever been produced in spite of the most intense search by archaeologists.

★

Yet, while believing the fantastic nonsense about Jericho, he is quite sceptical about "Calvary", the site of which (or wherever the Crucifixion is supposed to have taken place) was "without the wall". Nobody knows where "without the wall" is. Sir Mortimer thinks future archaeologists may solve this and other problems as well as some of those forced on to Christians by the Dead Sea Scrolls. This may be so—but what if archaeologists find out that the story of the Crucifixion, like the story of the Resurrection, is just myth?

The Queen's Speech

WITH THE spontaneity and originality for which it is noted, the Queen's Christmas broadcast (recorded in "the blue drawing room" at Buckingham Palace on December 15th) began: "Every year at this time the whole Christian world celebrates the birth of the founder of our faith". And "it is just in times like these, times of tensions and anxieties, that the simple story and message of Christmas is most relevant". "The story is of a poor man and his wife who took refuge at night in a stable, where a child was born and laid in the manger. Nothing very spectacular, and yet . . .". The nearest the speech came to touching the present world situation was: "Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing." The words of this old carol mean even more today than when they were first written". In fact the Queen's scriptwriter seemed intrigued with the angels and he brought them in again (not too happily, we thought, for this nuclear age) at the end. "To both young and old," said the Queen, "I send my very best wishes and as the carol says, may we all hear the angels sing in the coming year."

One thing the speech did acknowledge was "the varied peoples who profess different faiths and who make up our Commonwealth family". "To them," said the Queen, "their Christian brethren send a message of hope and encouragement this Christmas". Thank you brethren.

THE JOHN BIRCH SOCIETY

(Concluded from page 2)

ference (which meant so much for mankind), he authorised an American U2 plane to fly over Russia on a spy venture. We do not know his name but, to the detriment of mankind, he wrecked the Summit conference.

We live in a "push-button age", and we mortals are liable to suffer from the results of the loosing-off of a megaton bomb. One single irresponsible American "General Blimp" (if he "follows form" and imitates MacArthur and Walker in their disregard of their statesmen in Washington) can—in a moment of testiness or irritation—do enormous damage. He may be in a position to authorise the release of a megaton bomb.

It is not a pleasant thought. Extremists from such societies as the John Birch Society are the dragon-teeth harvest of the hate campaigns which have been organised against "The East" and which have been fanned by prejudiced persons who know little about the subject. Among the foremost poisoners of American minds have been Fr. Coughlin, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen and Senator McCarthy. These devout sons of the Vatican have done their level best to foster the narrow Roman Catholic policies. Few people will envy them their consciences. Nor would one like to be in their shoes on Judgment Day—not that I myself believe such a day will ever dawn!

THE FREETHINKER

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

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25).

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1
 Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
 London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE.
 (Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
 Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunches, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue.
 Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
 North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
 Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, January 9th, 7.30 p.m.: DR. HUGH SCHONFIELD, "H. G. Wells and World Citizenship".
 Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 7th, 6.30 p.m.: FILM, "Lourdes", followed by discussion.
 Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 7th, 7.15 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, O.B.E., J.P., "Menaces to Liberty in the Modern State".
 Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, January 7th, 2.30 p.m.: PAT SLOAN, "From the Age of Suspicion to the Age of Reason".
 South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 7th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "Is Progress Inevitable?"

Notes and News

BEST WISHES FOR 1962. And we are sure our readers in many different countries will not mind us concentrating very specially upon a fine elderly couple in the centre of England. For Mr. and Mrs. Joe Hall of Tarry Road, Salfley, Birmingham, are 89 and 88 years old respectively, and on January 3rd they will have been married for 70 years. We congratulate them and wish them a very happy anniversary of their youthful marriage.

THIS WEEK we welcome back to our columns, Dr. J. V. Duhig of Brisbane, who has lately been generously devoting most of his spare time to the Australian and New Zealand Rationalist movements. Dr. Duhig suffered a slight cerebral thrombosis in October, but is now fully recovered and—as readers will note—writing as vigorously as ever.

WITH THAT sublime unconscious irony of which only Christians are capable, the Vatican weekend magazine *Osservatore Della Domenica* declared that modern men are "increasingly turning Christmas into a pagan feast"

(*Sunday Times*, 24/12/61). They are worshipping "refrigerators, cars, washing-machines, gold watches, vodka and truffle-stuffed turkeys". Earlier, the Vatican daily newspaper *Osservatore Romano* had condemned the "gross commercialism" of Christmas and had described the seasonal shopping rush as anti-Christian and an insult to the poor.

WE HAVE OFTEN remarked that Dr. Albert Schweitzer was a very unorthodox Christian. Now we learn that the Lutheran Church of which he was technically a member has ceased to regard him as a Christian (*Daily Sketch*, 6/12/61). Dr. Schweitzer has accepted an offer of membership from the Unitarians of Boston, USA, whom the Lutheran Church regards as "outside Christianity". With good cause, too, we should say, since they don't accept the divinity of Christ and don't believe in heaven or hell, as the Lutherans do. Yet the *Sketch* tells us that Schweitzer himself claims he hasn't renounced his Lutheran beliefs.

MAIGRET ADDICTS WHO, like ourselves, think that actor Rupert Davies admirably portrays the famous Simenon character and brings out his essential humanism, would be interested in "The Honest Truth" column in the *Scottish Sunday Post* (17/12/61). Asked what philosophy he tried to live by, Mr. Davies replied: "To do a good job, and not to hurt anyone in the process". He added that he didn't go to church because "what the Church has to say seems to me to bear little relation to living a religion". And, on the question of prayer, he said: "I can't recall offhand an example of any prayer of mine providing positive results. But when I spent 14 hours in the dinghy, my pilot prayed continuously. For my part I borrowed his shoes and baled furiously with them. I always felt I'd done more towards our ultimate survival than he. But I may be wrong".

THE LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY syllabus for the second half of the winter season again provides interesting variety. It begins with a film on Lourdes and a discussion about it on Sunday, January 7th, and continues until the week before Easter. For the 81st Anniversary meeting on March 4th, the speaker will be the National Secular Society President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, while NSS Vice-Presidents, Mr. T. M. Mosley and Mr. L. Ebury, will speak on April 1st and 12th respectively.

THE NEWLY-FORMED Ilford Humanist Group will be holding a social evening on Tuesday, January 9th at 7.45 p.m. in the Thompson Rooms, High Road, Ilford, and National Secular Society members are invited to attend. NSS member Mr. R. J. Condon is Press Officer of the new group, and he tells us that Roman Catholic influence is strong in Ilford. But the *Ilford Recorder* is very fair in its reports of meetings and in printing letters. Mr. Condon has had five published out of his last seven. Further information about the group may be obtained from him at 66 Stainforth Road, Ilford, Essex.

WE RECENTLY received a letter asking: "Can we do anything about Catholic Action?" "Yes we can," it answered, "with your help and my help we will help the whole of mankind: the only counter-measure is Christ again!" The letter became more pitiful as it proceeded, and was signed by General W——, "the last General of Morality, Christ the Second, the King of Peace and the Darling of God".

Brecht in Brief

By COLIN MCCALL

TWELVE MONTHS AFTER their publication of the first volume of his plays in English, Methuens have now given us Bertolt Brecht's *Tales from the Calendar* (15s.), a collection of short stories, poems and anecdotes compiled by the author himself on his return to Germany from exile in 1947 and translated by Yvonne Kapp and Michael Hamburger. The German title, *Kalendergeschichten*, it is noted, recalls "the 'peasant calendars' of an earlier age, when collections of satirical tales, fables, aphorisms and little descriptions of historical or everyday episodes were a traditional form of public instruction and entertainment in rural areas". Brecht chose it because it coincided with his own conception of art. His stories and his poems, like his plays, were intended to stimulate, not to transport: he aimed at the intellect rather than the emotions. He aimed, and he hit; yet such is his skill that he moved us too: moved us as only a great artist can, while we still retain our faculties.

He could be bitter, justifiably bitter, as in the short poem, "My Brother was a Pilot", which ends:

The space that my brother conquered
Lies in the Guadarrama massif;
Its length is six feet, two inches,
Its depth four feet and a half.

The "two inches" is superb. "Questions of a Studious Working Man" has a similar theme, but two lines will show that it is more sensitively treated.

Philip of Spain wept when his armada
Had sunk. Was he the only one to weep?

The effect, it will be seen, is equally scathing. Brecht was always posing questions—or prompting us to pose them.

So many accounts
So many questions

as he puts it at the end of the same poem. Not always so obviously, but ever questioning, Brecht deals again with war in the story, "Socrates Wounded". The question here concerns bravery. Socrates flees when the Persians attack, but he gets a thorn in his foot and it forced to stand and fight. He fights so well that he is hailed as a hero. But is he brave enough to confess that he was a coward; that it was a thorn that forced him to fight? Not only questions, but often awkward questions.

Brecht was also always seeking new angles, new approaches. By this means he illuminates the small and the great. The small become great: sometimes the great become small; sometimes they become greater. The grandmother in "The Unseemly Old Lady" is small. But when she dies:

What you see is a tiny little face, very wrinkled, and a thin-lipped, wide mouth. Much that is small, but no smallness. She had savoured to the full the long years of servitude and the short years of freedom and consumed the bread of life to the last crumb.

Francis Bacon is great, but in what way? Brecht approaches him through a boy apprentice and gives us a lesson in empiricism:

There were also some words that it was better not to use since, strictly speaking, they meant nothing: words like "good", "bad", "beautiful", and so on.

The boy soon realised that there was no sense in calling a beetle "ugly". Even "quick" was not good enough; you had to state how quickly it moved compared with other creatures of its size and what this enabled it to do. You had to put it on an inclined surface and on a flat one and make noises so that it ran away; or set out little scraps of prey towards which it could advance. You had only to busy yourself with it long enough and it "quickly" lost its ugliness.

With Bacon "a new era had dawned for the world". This is how the boy understood it, and this is how Brecht regards it.

Mankind was enlarging its knowledge almost daily. And all knowledge was for the advancement of wellbeing and of human happiness. Science was the leading force. Science investigated the universe, everything that existed on earth—plants, animals, soil, water, air—so that greater use could be extracted from it. The important thing was not what you believed, but what you knew. People believed far too much and knew far too little.

So, when the philosopher died and three shots were fired.

They were fired in honour of Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, former Lord High Chancellor of England, who filled not a few of his contemporaries with loathing, but also many of them with enthusiasm for the practical sciences.

Greatness again, in "The Heretic's Coat. Giordano Bruno, says Brecht, "the man from Nola, whom the tribunals of the Roman Inquisition sent to the stake to be burnt for heresy in the year 1600, is generally held to be a great man, not only by virtue of his bold and, as was subsequently proved, correct hypotheses concerning the movements of the stars but also by virtue of his spirited bearing in face of the Inquisition, to which he said: 'You pronounce sentence upon me with greater fear, it may be, than I hear it.' When one reads his writings and also takes a glance at reports of his demeanour in public, there is indeed every reason to call him a great man". And yet, Brecht tells a story "which may even heighten our respect for him", a story of his unpaid-for coat. But, "You must first know how he fell into the hands of the Inquisition".

Mocenigo, a patrician of Venice, invited Bruno to stay with him "to instruct him in natural philosophy and mnemonics", but "instead of the tuition in black magic for which he had hoped, he received only that in natural philosophy". Disgruntled, he denounced Bruno in a letter to the Inquisition, "saying that this wicked and ungrateful man had spoken ill of Christ in his hearing, had said that the monks were asses and stupidified the people and, besides, asserted that, contrary to what stood in the Bible, there was not only one sun but untold numbers, and so on and so on".

The authorities did, in fact, arrive in the middle of the night between Sunday and Monday and took the man of learning to the prison of the Inquisition.

This occurred on Monday, the 25th of May, 1592, at three o'clock in the morning, and from that day until he went to the stake on the 17th of February, 1600, *il Nolano* never came out of prison again.

Throughout the eight terrible years of the trial, Bruno "fought unremittingly for his life; but the fight he waged against his extradition to Rome during the first year in Venice was perhaps the most desperate". The story of the coat belongs to that period, and it is perhaps the best story in this fascinating collection. Ostensibly a trifling affair for all but the old woman who wants payment for the garment ("If need be, she would go to the Holy Father himself in Rome to get her thirty-two *scudi*") it incidentally impinges on the terrific background ("Her arrival was inopportune. The prisoner was awaiting the visit of the Procurator . . .") and Bruno does indeed emerge as a great figure.

And from these varied but characteristic works, the outstanding dramatist of our time emerges as, not perhaps a great poet or storyteller, but as a provocative and important one. *Tales from the Calendar* proves yet again Bertolt Brecht's significance in modern literature.

Dumas père on Pius IX

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG

I HAVE JUST FINISHED reading a remarkable book, *Le Pape devant les Evangiles, l'Histoire et la Raison humaine* by Alexandre Dumas, père. It has an interesting history. Dumas was an eye-witness of the final events of Garibaldi's successful war on the Papacy and its satellite, the Kingdom of Naples, for Italian national unity and independence under King Victor Emmanuel in 1860. His own contribution was a series of newspaper articles in favour of Garibaldi and Italian freedom, as well as this book which was first published in Naples in 1861. It had never been published in France, and when an attempt was made to publish it in Italy in 1921, Mussolini and the Pope combined to stop it and confiscated the MS. The present editor of the book M. A. Craig-Bell discovered another copy and this book is the result.

It deserves wide reading: it is a most absorbing volume written with immense gusto in a firm but dignified spirit of controversy. Dumas has a case to make and he duly makes it, and throughout there breathes the spirit of liberty, democracy and justice so lacking from the European political systems of the time, especially the Papal States and the two Sicilies. Like all that was written by the world's greatest story-teller, the book has to be read at one great gasp, and the only way to describe its charm and interest is by the French word *entraînant*, a stirring, spell-binding thing that literally carries you along and away. Simply summed up, it is a critical history of the last days of the temporal power of the Papacy under the despot Pius IX and his sinister and evil *alter ego*, Cardinal Antonelli.

Dumas, though a devout Catholic, was a still more devoted liberal in the sense of the word at the time, a vocal democrat in the widest meaning of the term, an advocate of free parliamentary elections under a constitutional government. The word in European Catholic clerical circles today still carries the sinister implications it had in those days; it simply stood for anything opposed to total clerical domination. Dumas hated with all the fervour of a warm nature what he saw of the ghastly tyranny and oppression of the Papal power in the unfortunate states under the rule of Pius IX. The abominable massacres in Italy following the liberal revolts of 1848-50, sickened him, and he decided to do all in his power to end the temporal power which he regarded as canonically and juridically illegal. He had met Garibaldi and became his firm friend, and promised him that he would serve him to the full when needed.

When the great patriot and soldier sailed to Sicily, preparatory to the successful attack on Naples, he called Dumas to his side, and the latter spent the period of the war in that city busily publishing newspaper articles for the cause of Italian freedom. Before this Napoleon III had replaced Pius on his throne after his flight to Gaëta, but as the Italian democratic nationalist movement gathered force the Emperor decided the discreet thing was to refrain from any further interference in Italian affairs, and he issued a statement to that effect through his Minister Guéronnière. Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, in a long pamphlet, replied to the Minister and pleaded strongly, eloquently but dogmatically and fallaciously for continued French help to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Dumas's book starts with these two documents and its main bulk is concerned with his own reply to Dupanloup.

He shows that the temporal power was contrary to the Gospels, and that the history of the Papacy reveals such appalling political and moral corruption that it was unfit to govern, and he ends with a sketch of the facts of Italy's struggle for freedom from the Papacy and its satellites in the face of bitter opposition from the Vatican and Catholic mercenaries from all over the world. In this section his replies to Dupanloup's ill-informed criticisms of Garibaldi are superb. The few pages about Garibaldi's red shirt, to which the Bishop had made offensive reference, are delicious and scalding. He ends by saying, "This shirt, my Lord, is red as robes of Cardinals and the mantles of Kings, but its scarlet has never been soiled as was that of John XII and Alexander VI by debauchery, and as was that of Charles IX and Louis XIV by massacre". And nowhere is it possible to read such a studied and devastating exposure of the corruption of the Papacy and the almost criminal conduct of Pius IX. Dumas remarks, "Garibaldi has said 'The Pope is anti-Christ'. In truth, was Garibaldi not right?"

As a kind of addendum, Dumas writes a terrible indictment of the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Antonelli. This sly, unscrupulous scoundrel had a moral ascendancy over Pope Pius, himself no angel, who would do nothing without the Cardinal's approval. This man, like so many Roman cardinals before and since, was *persona* very very *grata* with the ladies, and his apartments were decorated with a view to securing their favourable notice, though Dumas nowhere so much as hints of any moral corruption on his part. Most of the exposé is devoted to the gigantic swindle worked by Antonelli and his banker brother over the grossly iniquitous sale of the priceless *objets d'art* of the Campana collection. Nobody can ever again convince me of the purity of Catholic morals when, right on the steps of the Papal throne, such appalling criminal dishonesty can happen.

To all those who can read French I strongly recommend this book and I hope soon to see an English translation. And to those interested in the history of the Papacy, I would like to recommend as supplementary reading the section "*L'Eglise*", sub-section, "*Comment se faisaient autrefois les Papes*" in Prosper Alfaric's *A l'Ecole de la Raison*. This is a study, fairly detailed, on the first millenium of the Papacy, a story of the chicanery, public and private assassination, political, moral and social corruption on which Our Holy Mother, the Roman Apostolic Catholic Church is founded.

RELIGION

Religion:

Men live for religion,
fight for religion,
die for religion.

They live for nothing,
fight for nothing,
die for nothing.

If only they could see,
Purpose is not,
God is not.

But they stumble on.
Seeking comfort
where there is none.

Blinded.
Blinded by religion.

—HAMISH KIRK.

University Humanist Federation

THE AUTUMN 1961 *Bulletin of the University Humanist Federation* (13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8), differs from previous ones in being produced by one of the University groups (London), in containing a number of articles as well as a report of activities, and in bearing a price—sixpence. Two dozen duplicated pages give good value for money. Paul Crellin writes on "The Freedom from Hunger Campaign", Dr. H. R. Allan on "Humanism Outlined", Bob Finch (the Editor) on "The Challenge before Humanism", Ian Guy on "Sex and Society", Judy Cox on "The Rights of Women" and G. Turner on "Religious Experience and Conviction".

We particularly like the conclusion of the last article in the *Bulletin*. "I hope," says Mr. Turner, "that in the short space available I have at least indicated that mechanistic explanations can be given to explain religious experience and conviction in terms which I at least find simpler. I have only indicated a mechanism, however, and you may at will postulate a God as the 'reason' for your experience or conviction, in much the same way that you can give reasons for earthquake, fire and flood. There is no logical necessity to prevent you. However, if you do I would ask you to refrain from calling your postulation factually or scientifically founded as these are most unusual uses of these words".

OVERHEARD

AT A BUS-STOP NEAR A METHODIST CHURCH

"Yes, dear, it's the Minister's class every Wednesday afternoon. Very nice he is, too. But he did a funny thing today—he asked those who would like to go to heaven just now to put up their hands. And not one of us put our hands up."

ON A SEA-FRONT SEAT DURING THE "SEASON"

"I've a son and a daughter, both happily married. Son weren't going to be happy, according t' priest. Tha sees, lad, he married a Roman Catholic and my lad wouldn't promise to let any kiddies they had become Catholics. Priest were never off doorstep, threatening 'em that marriage would never prosper. In the end, they both got so fed up that daughter-in-law left Catholics. Time 's proved t' priest was wrong. My lad's got a damn good job, they've got two of the grandest bairns, and they're as happy as any married couple i' Sheffield."

W.H.D.

CORRESPONDENCE

SPINOZA AND THE JEWS

Mr. Ridley's letter (December 22nd, 1961), leaves me more mystified than ever. He clearly said that the Jews would have burnt Spinoza at the stake if it had been possible and, when asked for his authority, he says that he had made "a technical error". It now appears that because the Jews stoned James the Just in the first century, they would have stoned Spinoza in the seventeenth century! In any case, James the Just is not mentioned in Josephus as Mr. Ridley says, and if he is by "other Jewish historians", may I please have their names? The passage in Josephus which deals with the stoning of James calls him the "brother of Jesus who was called Christ", and perhaps Mr. Ridley would tell us if he believes this, and if James's father was also the Holy Ghost? Is Mr. Ridley not aware that this passage is one of the interpolations in Josephus by Christians? Nobody knows who this particular James was. J. RENTON.

FROM NIGERIA

Please keep the flag flying. We who are very far away enjoy your unceasing criticism of religion. O. ILO (Nigeria).

NO CROSS

There is a fine £100,000 crematorium in Belfast, which I visited recently. When I inquired why there was no cross, I was assured that this is regarded as a Roman Catholic emblem. R.J.B.

THE REASON

"Do you agree with reports that there is less cruelty to children in the atheistic Soviet Union than in most Christian countries?" I asked a Roman Catholic woman acquaintance. "I do indeed," she replied, "but this is only a result of our fervent and constant prayers for Russia and its conversion." W. A. STEINHARDT.

IMMIGRANTS BILL

Might I have the courtesy of your columns once again to support Mr. P. G. Roy's letter (THE FREETHINKER, 15/12/61)? I think it scandalous that the entry of West Indians, who are 90% Protestant, should be restricted, while foreign Roman Catholics from Eire can come here as they please. Yet the Eireans produce many more criminals and problem families than the coloured people, and are besides anti-British. The Immigration Bill has been passed, but surely we can still do something to prevent Britain's entry into the Common Market, which would mean still more Roman Catholics entering our land, and probably more crime in consequence. FRANCIS SOATER.

[Mr. Soater's position would seem to be closer to that of the National Secular Society Executive (THE FREETHINKER, 1/12/61). —ED.]

PAPERBACKS

Common Sense and The Crisis by Thomas Paine (double vol.) 8s. **Miss Lonelyhearts and A Cool Million** by Nathanael West (double vol.) 2s. 6d.

Memoirs of a Nun by Diderot, 3s. 6d.

My Childhood by Maxim Gorky, 3s. 6d.

Children of the Sun by Morris West (illustrated) 2s. 6d.

Man and His Gods by Professor Homer W. Smith (500 pages), 12s.

One Woman's Fight by Vashti McCollum. Revised Edition, with a Postlude by Paul Blanshard, a Preface by George Axtelle and the complete text of the Supreme Court Decision on religious instruction in US public schools (the "McCollum Case"), 13s. 6d.

Has Man a Future? by Bertrand Russell. 2s. 6d.

And a large selection of other paperbacks.
Available from the PIONEER PRESS, Postage 8d.

F. A. RIDLEY'S

POPE JOHN AND THE COLD WAR

Will the Vatican's "crusade" against Communism bring nuclear war? Published by Frank Maitland. 5s. 4d. post paid, from the PIONEER PRESS.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP. By H. Cutner. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. By Chapman Cohen. Series 1, 2, 3, 4. Cloth bound.

Price 7/6 each series; postage 7d. each.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (11th Edition). By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 5/-; postage 8d.

AGE OF REASON. Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen.

Paper cover 3/6. Cloth 5/-; postage 7d.

THE THINKER'S HANDBOOK By Hector Hawton. Price 5/-; postage 7d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE. 18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one Volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker.

Price 5/6; postage 8d

THE WORLD MENACE OF CATHOLIC ACTION. By Alexander Stewart. Price 1/-; postage 4d.

FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW.

By Robert S. W. Pollard. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition). By Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 7d.

MEN WITHOUT GODS. By Hector Hawton. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE. By Ernst Haeckel. Price 3/6; postage 8d.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD. By Grant Allen. Price 3/6; postage 8d.

THE CULTURE OF THE ABDOMEN. By F. A. Hornibrook. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

THE LIFE OF JESUS. By Ernest Renan. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION. By Lord Raglan. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT. By Chapman Cohen

Paper cover 3/-; postage 4d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL. By Chapman Cohen. Price 7/6; postage 8d.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF FREETHOUGHT

A 7-inch Gramophone Record by Chapman Cohen, 18s. 6d. including postage and packing.