

# The Freethinker

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VIEWS and OPINIONS

## The Jesuits and Africa

By F. A. RIDLEY

WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY has recently been accorded to the Indian "reoccupation" of Goa; the conquest, or from the point of view presumably of Mr. Nehru, the reconquest of the last relic of the colonialist era, the last surviving encroachment of foreign imperialism upon the soil of the Indian sub-continent. For as few people probably realised prior to Mr. Nehru's sensational *coup*, Portugal is by far the oldest Imperialist Power in India, and for that matter, in Africa too. For it was Portuguese seamen, Vasco Da Gama, Bartholomew Diaz *et al*, who discovered and christened the Cape of Good Hope and crossed the hitherto trackless wastes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Actually it was a Portuguese mariner, Magellan, who (though in the service of Spain) first circumnavigated the globe, thereby demonstrating its rotundity. In India the Portuguese had been established at Goa two and a half centuries (1510-1757) before Clive laid the foundations of what later became the British Empire in India, so Portugal's diminutive empire has survived both the (Muslim) Mogul Empire and the (Christian) British one!

### A Legacy of the Borgias

The fact was not, to my knowledge at least, mentioned at the time in the press, but actually the so recently defunct Portuguese Empire in India, was originally a gift from the Papacy, in fact a relic from the fabulous age of the Borgias. For it was by a Papal Bull of the famous (or infamous) Pope, Rodrigo Borgia, Alexander VI, that the newly-discovered New Worlds to both West and East, in America (discovered the previous year 1492 by Columbus flying the flags of Castille), Asia and Africa, were divided between Spain and Portugal, Spain taking the Western and Portugal the Eastern hemisphere in the original chapter, one might call it, of modern European imperialism. (By a geographical accident, part of South America, Brazil, was assigned to Portugal—with historically important results.)

### Catholicism and Colonialism

One might have thought that the various experiments in colonial imperialism practised by Catholic States since the 16th century, from the ferocious conquests of Mexico and Peru by Spain, to the apparently equally ferocious Portuguese reconquest of Angola during recent months, would have convinced the Vatican that colonialism and Christianity do not make congruous bedfellows. However, the Church of Rome is a chameleon-like institution which has never displayed any excessive reluctance to changing, where necessary, with the times. Nowadays, after aiding and abetting centuries of colonialist tyranny over the coloured races, in the course of which sword and crucifix went hand-in-hand, Rome—with that consummate *sang froid* that presumably stems from her unique possession of infallibility—has now blandly discarded her lugubrious past and come forward with cool assurance as the ally and champion of the newly-emancipated colonial

racers: a current role which, if politically opportune, certainly appears to be ethically opportunist. In which connection one can perhaps relevantly recall the comment of that cynical old Tory, Dean Inge of St. Paul's, that the enthusiasm currently displayed by his Christian Socialist clerical brethren in the Church of England for improving the hard lot of the working classes, would have been more impressive if the Church had displayed a similar interest in the working class *before* the workers got the vote and along with it, potential political and economic power. The present attitude of Rome towards the recently emancipated colonial races nowadays appears open to

very similar criticism.

### African Calling

In the current issue of that valuable domestic Jesuit periodical, *To Our Friends* (which comes to me anonymously) there features a most important article on present Jesuit world-strategy in relation to the African continent upon the morrow of its epoch-making revolution. This article is by Paul Crane, SJ; it is entitled *Claver House* and bears the interesting sub-title of *A centre of social study and training for African Catholics*, an appropriate illustration representing Fr. Crane lecturing to an exclusively Negro audience. Our Jesuit author who, like most members of his crack ecclesiastical brigade, is obviously extremely intelligent within his own appropriate terms of reference, does not waste any time beating about the bush. He starts with a categorical opening paragraph which I quote verbatim:

"Today the new developing countries of the world illustrate most powerfully a proposition that is Ignatian in content and universal in application. It is that the future depends on the influence wielded by a Christian [i.e. Catholic] lay *élite*. In any of them, secularism can be contained and eventually overcome only to the extent that Catholic strength is concentrated and effectively deployed at the power-points of their social, political and industrial life [my emphasis FAR]. The purpose of Claver House, is to train a Catholic lay *élite* capable of carrying out this task today in an Africa that is changing so rapidly. Its existence bears witness to a profound belief in the power of Grace to work a revolution through the tireless devotion of a dedicated few".

Fr. Crane then gives an undeniably impressive account of the purpose and activities of Claver House which was started by him in November 1960 and is already full to its capacity with his "projected lay *élite*" who come from all parts of the English-speaking African continent. The current scheme of study is described as follows: "Techniques are taught by courses dealing with trade union and action-group methods, credit unions and co-operatives, public speaking, book-keeping, journalism and French. To give background to these, there are further lecture courses in social economics, political theory and the development of administration in underdeveloped coun-

tries"—an intensive course for any "lay *élite*", African or other. But do we not see here in this Jesuit version of the "leader-cult", the effective prototype of Fascism? And the aim of this comprehensive curriculum, as Fr. Crane describes it "is to produce a lay *élite*. The method is to build up in the prospective leader the right kind of motive and then to furnish him with the necessary techniques. Motive is instilled and strengthened through long, intensive courses on 'The Meaning of the Christian Life' and Catholic social teaching coupled with the living at Claver House of a family life that is shared by black and white on the basis of the only true equality there is; that which is rooted in a life shared with Christ". And the results already achieved (in little over a year) by Claver

House? A journal, *Christian Order*, which has reached a circulation of 5,500 only eighteen months after the publication of its first number; plus *Essentials of Social Ethics*, "the first of a series of large pamphlets by Fr. Paul Crane which has sold its 20,000 copies before publication". Evidently the Jesuit penetration of Africa has begun in earnest!

Evidently the Vatican along with its Jesuit "Praetorian Guard", makes its own in 1962 that saying of George Canning about "calling new worlds into being to redress the balance of the old". We shall watch with much interest the future of Claver House and of the Jesuit penetration of Africa which it presumably forebodes. "Forewarned is forearmed".

## En Avant!

By A. O. SNOOK

IF THERE is one thing that rouses my ire more than the sight and sound of a Romish priest, it is the Anglican sporting parson. England was crawling with boozing, gluttonous sporting priests in the 19th century, but today that breed is practically extinct. In fact, the contemporary sporting man of God is above reproach, morally speaking. His cerebral activity, however, is of such a low order as to be well nigh incredible.

That clean-limbed dull-minded example of the sporting padre, the Rev. David Sheppard, has recently let it be known that "sometimes God heals the body; sometimes He does not." This profound statement is apparently intended to be a reasonable explanation of Divine wisdom calculated to cheer the Christian dying of cancer. His reverence then goes on: "But He always answers prayer; though not always as we expect". Our cricketing parson cites the case of a young man "one of the finest young men you could meet, spending his time serving God. He had a long and painful illness, during which hundreds prayed for him. Why was he not healed?" The answer, incredible as it may seem, is: "Sometimes God heals the body; sometimes He does not. But He always answers prayer; though not always as we expect".

Comment is superfluous.

Shepherd Sheppard, judging by his prowess with bat and ball (the English are never so happy as when pursuing balls of various dimensions) and his complacent film-star smile, has probably no experience of mind-destroying pain. Otherwise he could hardly ask: "Is being healthy the most important thing?" and reply in the same breath, "My answer to that is a *quite clear no*". (My italics.)

I suggest that even morons — about half the population — would agree, without hesitation, that good health is the most desirable thing a man can possess in this vale of tears. In spite of a Christian young man having died of a long and painful illness, "the healing of men's bodies is something which matters very much to God. And He is healing today more than ever".

This brilliant young thinker also states that modern knowledge is all the gift of God. As I understand it, penicillin was discovered more or less by accident, and many instances could be given of devoted men and women who have died, as the result of experimenting on themselves, in the search for remedies to cure the ills that flesh is heir to. Could our glib young parson explain why a loving Father hugs the secret of cancer so closely, twenty per cent of the human race finding an unspeakable death via this hideous complaint.

It is difficult to write with restraint of such shallow-

minded people as Sheppard. Their complacency in the face of untold human misery is unparalleled; their thinking is on a par with the witch doctor. In concluding his remarks Sheppard refers to the young man who died a painful death, a young man for whom hundreds prayed. "Those prayers were heard too." For sheer meaninglessness that sentence would be hard to beat. Sounding brass and tinkling cymbal! Those of us who prefer to rely on the National Health Service rather than on Sheppard's inscrutable deity must feel a sincere sympathy for Christians who depend on the Church for help and guidance.

The more one reads and listens to the men in black the more obvious it becomes that the articles, creeds, doctrines and beliefs of the Christian Church are meaningless: they are synonymous with Grimm's Fairy Tales, and not half as interesting. Given the means the freethought movement should be able to demolish this Church, this medieval monument of infantile superstition, in the not too distant future. The lunatic fringe of the Church, the Pentecostal and Four Square characters—wittily described by Dr. Soper as the "Protestant underworld"—will, perhaps, linger on, like those devoted souls who still mourn Charles the Martyr.

The ally from whom freethought can expect most help is the Church, for every time her paid propagandists open their mouths they play right into our hands. The jovial Dr. Ramsey has recently stated that he expects to meet quite a number of atheists in heaven. Dr. Fisher has sternly declared that it is unrighteous for workmen to strike for money, except, *possibly*, when starving. Billy Graham has let it be known that he will carry on saving us from the sinner's portion until God says to him, "It is enough!" Dr. Weatherhead is all for the pleasures of the bed but is against sin. For sheer effrontery these priests are almost without parallel. And yet, compared to Rome, the Protestant leaders are white as snow, mere children playing in the sun.

The Black International, based on the Vatican, is the foulest thing ever to warp the mind of *Homo sapiens*. Mild ridicule is sufficient answer to our Protestant antagonists. The ophidian wiles of the Italian Church must be met with sharper weapons. The genius of Rome exploits to the uttermost the crass ignorance and stupidity of millions. Pontifex Maximus and his minions constitute freethought's greatest enemy. The battle is not yet fully joined, but the world contains sufficient potential freethinkers to make the final outcome of the struggle a certain victory for reason over superstition.

En Avant!

# Suggestio Falsi

By MARGARET KNIGHT

IN WHAT SIR JULIAN HUXLEY has called 'the hagiology of Humanism', no name is more honoured than that of Fridtjof Nansen, explorer, humanitarian and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. As a Commissioner of the League of Nations after the First World War, Nansen, as is well known, organised a vast system of famine relief and the repatriation of prisoners, and literally worked himself to death in the service of humanity. Hundreds of thousands of people owed their lives to him.

Nansen was an atheist. He broke finally with the Church in his late twenties, and thereafter, in the words of his daughter,

The philosophy at which he arrived was simple enough . . . God does not exist, and there is no life hereafter. There can be no purpose in life other than to use one's faculties and exploit one's opportunities for the benefit of future generations . . . He was radical and uncompromising in his belief that ethics and religious dogma belonged to two distinct spheres, and in the importance of the search for truth and the necessity of accepting the consequences of that search. (Liv Nansen Hoyer, *Nansen, a Family Portrait*, pp. 55, 166.)

Nansen's State funeral, at which the King of Norway wept, was conducted without any religious ceremony

Nansen's centenary occurred last year, and it clearly set a problem for the broadcasting authorities. Nansen's memory must be duly commemorated, but it would be injudicious, not to say irresponsible, to spread knowledge of the fact that this greatest of humanitarians was a Humanist. The problem was resolutely met, and the method of meeting it provides a fascinating study in the technique of *suggestio falsi*.

The first programme on Nansen was given on October 8 in the ABC television network *Sunday Break* series. The emphasis was on his work for refugees, and this led to the introduction of 'societies that are carrying on this work today'—the Inter-Church Aid Society and the World Council of Churches. A representative of the first-named body was interviewed, and there was a discussion with a group of young people who had been working in refugee camps, in the course of which the question was put, 'Has one to have a Christian backing for work of this kind, or can it be purely humanitarian?' The reply was, 'I think it can be purely humanitarian, but I personally couldn't do it unless I were a Christian?' The question—asked and answered at a purely hypothetical level—presupposed that Nansen was a Christian; otherwise there would have been no point in asking it.

The following day the BBC Home Service broadcast two short talks on Nansen in which nothing was said or implied about his views on religion. A fortnight later, on United Nations Day, the same Service presented an hour-long feature programme on Nansen which, with the aid of selective quotations from his writings, contrived to suggest that he was a Christian. It also contained two statements which suggested that he was not, and which could be quoted in case of criticism; but these were so brief and unemphasised that probably most listeners failed to notice them.

The first part of the programme dealt with Nansen as Arctic explorer. It was based mainly on Volume I of his book *Farthest North*, which contains copious extracts from the diaries written by Nansen when his ship, the Fram, was locked in the Arctic pack-ice. These diaries reveal Nansen as a nature-mystic. The splendours of the Arctic night filled him with what Einstein has called 'cosmic emotion,' but he was quite without religious belief in the

ordinary sense. He rejected the idea of a personal God, and of a purpose underlying the universe, and he was pre-occupied with the thought of the ultimate extinction of life on the earth. The following passage is typical.

The world that shall be! Again and again this thought comes back to my mind . . . Millions of years roll on and the last trace of life has disappeared: the fruit of all our toil and sufferings has been blotted out . . . A stiffened lifeless mass of ice this earth rolls on in her path through eternity. Like a faintly glowing disc, the sun crosses the sky; the moon shines no more, and is scarcely visible. Yet still perhaps, the northern lights flicker over the desert, icy plain, and still the stars twinkle in silence, peacefully as of yore. Some have burnt out, but new ones usurp their place; and round them revolve new spheres, teeming with new life, new sufferings without any aim. Such is the infinite cycle of eternity; such are nature's everlasting rhythms. (p. 288.)

This passage, and others like it, were not, of course, quoted in the broadcast. But the following passage, in part, was (the omitted sentences are italicised):

*How marvellous are these snow-shoe runs through this silent nature! Silent, oh so silent! You can hear the vibrations of your own nerves. I seem as if I were gliding over and over these plains into infinite space. Is this not an image of what is to come? Eternity and peace are here. Nirvana must be cold and bright as such an eternal star-night. What are all our research and understanding in the midst of this infinity?* (p. 379.)

By 'an image of what is to come' Nansen clearly meant an image of the earth when all life was extinct. But, besides the omissions, the broadcast version of this passage contained some verbal changes, including the replacement of 'what is to come' by 'the world to come.' Perhaps 'the world to come' is a more literal translation of the Norwegian—I do not know. But, coupled with the phrase 'eternity and peace,' it is almost bound to give, to listeners who do not already know Nansen's views, the impression that he was talking about the Christian doctrine of the life hereafter.

Nansen's lack of belief in a personal God is attested, not only by his daughter, but by passages such as this from his diary:

We must remember Carlyle's words: 'A man shall and must be valiant, he must march forward and quit himself like a man—trusting imperturbably in the appointment and choice of the Upper Powers.' I have not, it is true, any 'Upper Powers'; it would probably be well to have them in such a case; nevertheless we are starting. (p. 443.)

However, there is one place (and to the best of my belief one only) in the 480 pages of Volume I of *Farthest North* in which the word 'God' occurs. The passage runs:

Here in the great night thou standest in all thy naked pettiness, face to face with nature; and thou sittest devoutly at the feet of eternity, intently listening; and thou knowest God, the all-ruling, the centre of the universe. (p. 373.)

In these moods of 'cosmic emotion' Nansen was more apt to employ such phrases as 'I adore the infinity of the universe' (p. 364), and the whole tone of his diaries shows that in this atypical sentence he was using the word 'God' in a vague pantheistic sense. Still, he said 'God,' and that was enough for the compilers of the programme; the passage was seized on and used as the peroration of the broadcast—prefaced by the barefaced suggestion that it provides 'Nansen's own most fitting epitaph.'

The second part of the programme dealt with Nansen as a humanitarian. When he had turned from Arctic exploration to work for famine relief and the repatriation of prisoners, and was pleading with tight-fisted governments to provide funds, Nansen sometimes appealed to

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

If anybody should have the temerity to accuse our BBC of never allowing even a whisper of heresy against Christianity, its religious director could now appeal to the discourse by John Elsom last January 6th. This time it was given on the Third Programme which in general is shunned by the average listener; and also this time, it was difficult to disentangle its thesis. Mr. Elsom called it "Charges against Christianity", and he was most careful to emphasise that he was not attacking "the Faith". All he appeared to disagree with was the attitude of mind engendered by Christianity, and what he said obviously would have no more effect on the 500 million Christians we are blessed with than on such staunch Christians as say, Dr. Heenan or Dr. Soper. After failing to find in the discourse a single valid argument worth listening to, we still cannot discover why it was ever given.

★

In his pamphlet "Dropping the Devil", G. W. Foote as far back as 1902, poked a great deal of cynical fun at the way the Free Churches after spending many years producing a New Catechism, carefully dropped that formidable enemy of mankind—the Devil. It was obvious that the Infernal Old Gentleman was too much even for such whole-hearted believers as Free Church ministers 60 years ago. But has the Devil disappeared? Not on your life. He still reigns supreme and nowhere more so than in Romanism—much to the disgust of the Rev. J. Pearce-Higgins who is the chairman of the Modern Churchmen's Union.

★

In the "Daily Express" (6/1/62), there is an interview with him in which he categorically claims, "There is no Devil". But true Christianity is not prepared yet to drop him, for in its latest revised Catechism back he has come in all his ancient glory. "I am personally sorry", sadly declares Mr. Pearce-Higgins, "to see the devil there at all, and even sorrier to see him given top place . . . There is too much devil-worship in the Churches . . . I don't think man needs the devil any longer". But how does the Rev. gentleman explain the remarkable adventures Jesus had with the Devil? Surely this was the genuine one—the Daddy of them all?

★

We can't understand what the "Daily Mail" (6/1/62) means when it calls the plays produced by Miss Patricia Joudry as "strange". They are all dictated to her by the "spirit" of Bernard Shaw direct from Summerland who translates at the same time some new plays by Chekhov into English. The fact that Shaw didn't know Russian only makes these plays all the more exciting. A seance is held once a week and a new play is in this way produced. Each bears the unmistakable stamp of the work of Shaw and Chekhov—all masterpieces of course.

★

Some of us here read a few of the wonderful works of genius produced through "automatic" writing—for example, *The Scripts of Cleophas* by Geraldine Cummins in which the gifted medium, detailing the life of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels, makes all the Jews and Jewish rabbis of ancient Palestine speak typical Authorised Version English! English wasn't even then thought of! The new works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, Paine, Dickens, and many others which have come from Summerland for some reason appear to be most unpopular. Do men of genius actually deteriorate in that popular survival holiday camp?

## SUGGESTIO FALSI

(Concluded from page 19)

'the Christian ideal of brotherhood.' In Mrs. Liv Nansen Hoyer's biography—the second main source on which the broadcast was based—one phrase of this kind is quoted, with the added comment:

Many people took these and similar statements to mean that Father had 'been converted' after seeing the misery and suffering of the world. This is to misunderstand him. His philosophy remained unaltered, and if the difference between religion and ethics is appreciated, that is understandable. (p. 260.)

A phrase about 'Christian brotherhood' was quoted in the broadcast—but without comment.

Against these disingenuous quotations must be set the fact already mentioned: towards the end of the broadcast, two phrases were used which to an attentive listener would tend to suggest that Nansen was not a Christian. First, it was mentioned that Nansen could not become Prime Minister of Norway because he had 'declared himself outside the State Church.' The phrase 'the State Church' leaves open the possibility that Nansen might have been some kind of nonconformist Christian; Mrs. Hoyer says simply 'the Church.' Then, the peroration to the broadcast, which has already been quoted, was prefaced by the sentence: 'Yet perhaps it was the young Nansen, the scientist, explorer, poet, the humanist to be who wrote years before, one Arctic night, his own most fitting epitaph.' The word 'humanist,' used for the first time in the broadcast, would be likely, in the context, to be understood by most listeners as 'humanitarian.'

We are often told that, though the BBC may sometimes be dull, its impartiality and objectivity make it a model to the world. In most fields of thought there is no doubt this is true. But, of course, religion is different.

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## LONDON LECTURES

THE MARBLE ARCH BRANCH of the National Secular Society again offers a varied and interesting syllabus of lectures for the second half of its winter season in the Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1. This week, the third week of the syllabus, Mr. J. B. Coates, Secretary of the Personalist Group will speak on "Existentialism, Humanism and Marxism", and next week it will be Mr. H. J. Blackham, Secretary of the Ethical Union, on "Human Potentialities". On February 11th, the eve of his 84th birthday, the Branch President, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook will recall his "Sixty Years of Freethought", while Lord Chorley, Major C. Draper and Mr. Hector Hawton are among the later speakers. Meetings are on Sunday evenings at 7.15 p.m. and admission is free. Copies of the syllabus may be obtained from the Branch Secretary, Mr. W. J. McIlroy, 140a Hornsey Lane, London, N.6.

## "ROUND JOHN"

CHILDREN ARE OFTEN puzzled and misled by the curiously-phrased and often archaic language of devotions. Readers can no doubt recall instances of their own misunderstanding of hymns and prayers, and we heard of a recent case the other day, derived from the carol, "Silent Night". Set to draw the scene of the nativity, a school-girl duly produced a picture containing the well-known figures, Mary, Jesus, Joseph and the ruminants, but with an additional fat man. Asked who he was by the teacher, the girl promptly answered, "Round John", of "Round John, Virgin Mother and Child".

**THE FREETHINKER**

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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 lunchtimes, 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 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: MARTIN ENNALS, (National Council for Civil Liberties), "Unfinished Business in Civil Liberties".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, January 21st, 6.30 p.m.: E. S. HILLMAN, B.Sc., "Geology the Rise of Materialism".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 21st, 7.15 p.m.: J. B. COATES, "Existentialism, Humanism and Marxism".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society, (Co-operative Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, January 21st, 2.30 p.m.: MICHAEL ENGLISH, "Labour in the 60s".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.) Sunday, January 21st, 11 a.m.: JAN-VADAKKAN V. ALEXANDER, (Kerala, India), "The Crisis of Religion in Modern India".

West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, E.11), Thursday, January 25th, 7.45 p.m.: E. S. HILLMAN, B.Sc., "Geology and the Rise of Materialism".

Young Humanists (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1.) Monday, January 22nd, 7.30 p.m.: J. P. MURACCIOLE, "The New Testament as a First Century Jewish Epic".

**Notes and News**

STATISTICS MAY SHOW "a steady increase in the number of young men offering for the ministry" of the Church of England and "a steady climb in church contributions, which have now reached over £18 millions a year" (*The Guardian*, 9/1/62), but the 1962 Year Book indicates the fundamental failure of our established Church. As *The Guardian* summarises it, "Of the 27 millions of the current population baptised into the Church of England, only nine millions proceed to confirmation and only two millions attend Easter Day Communion".

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ON DECEMBER 22ND, we referred to a US federal proposal to give 7 acres of valuable land in a Chicago suburb to the Jesuit Loyola University for the purpose of erecting a medical centre. The site was formerly part of the Veterans Administration Hospital, Hines, and we learn from the December issue of *Church and State* that the chief of the Veterans Administration, John S. Gleason, Jr., is "a devout Roman Catholic and also, by a strange

**The Freethinker Sustentation Fund**

Alexander Scott, £100; J. T. Bolton, 10s.; R.J.B., £1 2s. 6d.; W.L.S., £3; D. W. Coleman, £5 5s.; A. W. Coleman, £5 5s.; W. Perkins, 10s.; R.R., 1s.; Mr. & Mrs. G. Swan, £1; J.A. 18s.; A. E. Stringer, £3 7s. 6d. Total to date, January 12th, 1962, £120 19s. 0d. We should like to express our thanks to Mr. Scott for starting us off in the New Year with such a generous contribution.

coincidence, a member of the Advisory Committee of Loyola University".

★

ALSO FROM *Church and State* comes the news that the Roman Catholic Church in the USA is faced with the problem of a relative decline in the number of teaching nuns. "With burgeoning Roman Catholic schools and a pressing demand for new teachers, the number of nuns remains virtually static", and "By 1970 Roman Catholic leaders predict that they will have to employ two lay teachers for every nun or brother". This means a big increase in salaries. In New York at present, "Roman Catholic lay teachers receive \$2,100 to \$2,400 whereas the national average wage for public [state] school teachers is \$5,215. Nuns receive only maintenance running from \$650 to \$1,899 depending on the cost of living".

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THE MALTESE Roman Catholic paper, *The Faith* (January, 1962), pointed out that while the term "socialisation" appears "in virtually all the modern-language translations" of Pope John XXIII's encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, "it does not occur in the authentic Latin text . . .". Instead, said *The Faith*, "we find a number of phrases, such as 'increase in social relationships', 'progress in social relationship', 'increase in social life', and the like".

★

LAST YEAR THE *Evening Standard* tried to discover the extent to which British public (i.e. private) schools restrict the number of Jewish pupils they admit, and the results, "with some notable exceptions, did not show up our traditions of educational tolerance in a very favourable light". Now (2/1/62) it reports a similar investigation into girls' public schools. Sherborne School in Dorset, for example, doesn't take practising Jews: "Every girl who comes here must take part in our religious programme", said the headmistress. "We cannot accept girls who are unable to take part in our services". And Sherborne is not alone in this attitude says the *Standard*. But North London Collegiate School and South Hampstead High School as direct grant aided institutions are not allowed by State regulations to discriminate on religious grounds, and Channing School in North London is "entirely unsectarian" and accepts "a large proportion of Jewish girls".

★

ALEC ROBERTSON, the well known broadcaster has just written his autobiography, *More Than Music* (Collins, 21s.), which was reviewed in the *Daily Telegraph* (5/1/62). Mr. Robertson, we read, "was converted to Roman Catholicism and became successively a novice monk and a priest before returning to the laity—unable to submit to the disciplines required of him". And the *Telegraph* reviewer, Mr. Sean Day-Lewis, regards it as "perhaps symptomatic" of Mr. Robertson's "conflict" as well as of "his unruly sense of humour, that he was once able to answer a zealot outside Covent Garden, who asked him to 'Come to Jesus'—'I'm terribly sorry, I can't. I'm going to the Opera'."

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JACK GORDON'S article, "Science and Homo Sapiens" (*THE FREETHINKER*, 2/6/61) has been reprinted in *The Free Humanist* (Philadelphia) for December, 1961.

# The Crucifixion of Jesus—Fact or Myth?

By MARC STEPHANE

(Translated and Abridged by H. Cutner from the *Bulletin of the Cercle de Ernest Renan*)

(Concluded from page 12)

FINALLY, what is it we find in certain Christian writings, the most ancient of which are of the first century, on the question of the Crucifixion of Jesus?

In 1 Corinthians 2, 7-8, written either by Paul or his mystical disciples we read,

But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Loisy rightly insists that "the princes of this world" are "the beings who preside over the destinies of our nether world"; but, while the mythicist Couchoud claims that in this passage "the Crucifixion is that of a supernatural being executed by supernatural beings", Loisy writes, "The intervention of princes in the Crucifixion does not exclude the participation of secondary agents".

Now, the question is not whether the Pauline text *excludes* or not the participation of secondary agents who are the "political authorities". If it *mentions* them at all the text itself announces the revelation of a mystery, that is, of a religious conception and not any reference to an historical event.

But just as it corroborates Philippians, so the *Ascension of Isaiah* corroborates 1 Corinthians. It says, "The Prince of this world will put his hand on the Son of God, kill him, and hang him on the tree not knowing whom he has killed". Nothing here about "secondary political authorities".

However, if we look more closely at the text, the Prince of this world first kills the Son of God, and then hangs him on a tree. But this is obviously not the terrible Roman execution, which was not in the Jewish penal code. A Jewish criminal was stoned to death, his body afterwards hanged on a tree. Thus, the *Ascension of Isaiah* dealt with a religious legend, not with Roman political history.

This conception of the death of the Son of God is opposed to that described in the Gospels which was crucifixion according to Roman practice, ordered by a Roman magistrate. Which came first? It is evident that if the point of departure for the Christian religion had been the Roman crucifixion representing the hated Roman authority, it would not have been changed shortly after in a Christian writing as an execution according to the Jewish law.

Thus, the first phase in the Christian conception of the Crucifixion is: the Prince of this world kills the Son of God who looks like a man, and hangs him on a tree. This is the conception given in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the one given in Corinthians. We do get the word "crucify" it is true; but this is a translation of the Greek verb "stauro"; the noun is "stauros"; the Latin is "cruz", which simply means a wooden stake on which the criminal's body was hung. This will be found in the Old Testament, as in Esther for example, and in Acts and Corinthians. The expression, "King of Glory", was taken from Psalm 24. Even traces of the same idea can be seen in John where Jesus speaks to his disciples in the course of his last meal with them.

In Acts we are told that Peter said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (5, 30) and a similar expression is again repeated in

Acts 10, 39. Even in the story of "Yeshou" (supposed to be Jesus) in the Talmud, we are told he was hanged on the eve of the Passover.

When we come to Mark however, we read that the Jews delivered Jesus to the Roman authority who condemned him to be crucified. How can we reconcile these accounts? First of all, we must remember that the Gospels are not "biographies" but expositions of Christian doctrine. Before Mark, Christian writers described the death of Jesus as "crucified". But it is generally admitted that Mark was written in Rome specially for Roman pagans. They knew nothing of Jewish penal laws, so for them "crucifixion" meant the Roman penalty. And Jesus Christ was made thus to suffer the same kind of punishment. But who was the Roman magistrate who condemned him?

Guignebert claims that, according to various Christian writers, we can fix the Crucifixion for any date between 21 AD and 58 AD. The evangelists fixed it at about 30 AD so as to make it during the time of Pilate who was well known. And thus, the genius of Mark for telling a good story, and so helping the prestige of the Roman Church, is responsible for his account of the Crucifixion being accepted as literally true.

We claim that we have shown from Christian texts how Jesus, who first came as the Son of God, was progressively "humanised". And even Guignebert admits that if Christianity really originated in Palestine, its conception came from Greek Jews who synchronised Jewish ideas with the myths of Pagan Gods who died and rose again.

But we can go still further than Guignebert who explains the name of "Iesous" as a Greek name absent from the Talmud in its Hebrew form Ieshousha. It played an important part at the birth of Christianity by "Hellenists" in Acts, and in the Church of Antioch. Thus we can fairly conclude that the myth originated in the Greek Jewish communities, perhaps in Syria, without any intervention from anything in Palestine.

Let us now reply to some objections. In the many discussions between Jews and Christians in the second century, we are told that the Jews never said that Jesus never existed. But if what we have already said is true. Christians never produced the Crucifixion as an historical fact, but as a religious legend for the Jewish people. And when Mark was accepted as the basis of Christian doctrine, what could be the reply? Scientific research and its exactitude are ideas quite modern, altogether foreign to the religious preoccupations of the period. Jewish rabbis never bothered to discuss whether Jesus ever existed for their answer was that Jesus showed none of the characteristics of a Son of God or a Messiah. In his dialogue with Justin Martyr, the Jew Trypho clearly said "But you, having got an idle story by the end, do form yourself an imaginary Christ . . .".

Then we are told that the mythic case does not take into account the oral tradition. We do not deny the existence of an oral tradition. But of what does it consist, the tradition of a belief, or of a fact? We can only truly invoke it to bring together a fact which should be true, the Crucifixion of Jesus, and a writing, the Gospel of Mark, which could not have been written less than forty-five years after the events it records. In any case, oral tradition is only an explanatory hypothesis and cannot be used against the texts for it merely begs the question.

## Points from A New Book

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

ONE CAN READ Peter Vansittart's *Sources Of Unrest* (Bodley Head, 15s.) on many levels; and I imagine that most readers will be more than satisfied with whatever level they interpret, for this is an immensely rewarding novel. Let us, for instance, open the pages near the beginning of the story: "Noticeable too was the delicacy with which Charles sampled, savoured, paused, ate, combining vigorous appetite with skilful variations of taste, mixing sauce with meat, jelly with potato, potato with brown crackling skin, mushroom with peas, mushroom alone. In like manner, presumably, Jehovah had extracted the rarer fragrances of the Biblical sacrifices". Yes . . . it is a fair promise of what is to come.

The plot centres on a man who goes to stay with friends in the country, friends whom he has not seen for many years and who are living in an impasse sustained by private guilts. The host is a popular historian who denies his own domestic history in order to give his family a public face. His guest, the narrator of the challenge of human association, has been shattered by a divorce, and longs simply to sink himself in fathoms of country green; yet he is too sensitively aware of the preciousness of life to escape with the simplicity of those who cannot see that it was the poetic justice of the myth which made God get himself crucified by Man.

He finds an old flame in the neighbourhood, a widow who may or may not remember the radiant unlikelyhoods of the past: and he has to encounter the lures of an unexpectedly errant son of the historian, a lad who has an ironic zest to plough the moon. The guest, who knows that man must be his own saviour, is alternatively harassed and enchanted, wondering whether he really has the strength to make a counter-attack on educated barbarism.

The real wonder of the whole fascinating affair is, for me, that the narrator suggests how all the so-called mystical experiences and intuitions are part of everyday life if one is surviving with the ideals of secularism. The countryside, for example, is more than a background: it is part of the human story, the visible world become so richly inspirational that it feeds the senses with an intoxication gathering shape round action, the mind flooded with intimations which, in yesterday's jargon, would have been attributed to a supernatural source. But now one can see clearly how exquisite disquiet can infuse from the hedges quietly hissing in the rain, from a fading block of sky, from sunlight pushing through the silver dissolving air. One understands the axiom that man's real baptism comes from the first rejection of the supernatural.

Life, for those who live it as a unique occasion rather than as a preparation for other lives, becomes infinitely more abundant. Simultaneously, the author shows us that, as the bright as well as the dark face of mystery and superstition is projected from the unconscious, sometimes the wise things may be said by those whose existence contradicts their words. Such sensitivity to the dimensions of reality allows the author to present us with (say) a bore whom we can recognise as a bore but who can still startle us with blind glimpses of the outskirts of the vision that pictures life as a seeking for standards within the secular framework. The novel is indeed in expert hands when even the essential bores in a plot are illuminating! Many aspects of personality, then, which were formerly attributed to the upsurge of grace and immortality, are revealed as inevitable states of conscious and unconscious interplay which deserve no more, and no less, than the compassion

The preoccupations of the Evangelists were much more theological than historical—why then should this not have been the case with their predecessors? According to the painstaking analysis of the Trial by Paul Winter, Jesus was condemned, with the co-operation of the Jewish authorities, for the crime of rebellion against Rome. One might say this is clearly historical? But if compared with the account given in the *Ascension of Isaiah*—"The children of Israel delivered him to the king and I saw him hanged in Jerusalem", Mark, writing for Romans, simply substituted Pontius Pilate for the king, and the Roman "crucifixion" for the Jewish hanging. The older story is obviously a myth—why should the later one be anything else?

Many Gospels and texts have disappeared. Quite so, but which? Obviously, those which contradicted Christian doctrine, and particularly those which "prove" the historic reality of the Crucifixion of Jesus, except false documents like the Acts of Pilate and the fraudulent passages inserted into Josephus. And it is still more remarkable that before the Gospels appeared, we had the Pauline Epistles, the Apocalypse, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the *Ascension of Isaiah*—all completely silent about the Crucifixion of Jesus by Pontius Pilate. There is still one more objection to the mythic theory. We admit other religions had their founders, why not admit the same for Jesus? This objection was decisively answered by Dr. Couchoud. He asked, when Jesus appeared was he a God or a man? To go to Islam, Jesus was not "Muhammed" he was "Allah".

Here then are the three proofs from the texts themselves:

1. In the account of the imprisonment of Paul given in Acts, no mention is made of the Crucifixion of Jesus. The only explanation is that it was not an historical event.

2. The way the name of Jesus is used both in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and in Phillipians makes it certain that Jesus is the name of a cult and not of a man.

3. In the *Ascension of Isaiah* the Son of God, as a man, is killed by the Prince of this world, and his body hung on a tree. His story was later transferred in Mark to the Romans.

It has been objected to the mythicists that they produced nothing but theories: where were their texts? Well, we have brought some here, and we have the right now to say to the believers in Jesus either we have not understood them, or our interpretation is true. What do they say?

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of the humanitarian. Thus the historian in the book makes one realise that what was once called "the soul" may be a hidden personality created by some moment of pain.

Perhaps Mr. Vansittart's achievements in *Sources Of Unrest* may not strike you as being particularly original; but they are no less valid. His poetry of place is exceptionally gifted, his psychological insight is profound, and his ideas flash with freethinking brilliance. Maybe the best I can do to convince readers of this paper that they should become readers of this novel is to quote a short conversational extract:

"The point is made far too often that supernatural Belief is necessary to cement society. Actually, it's more likely to divide it. What really is flat nonsense, and lately I've heard it said in the highest circles, is that a Christian has more moral purpose, more moral capital, than anyone else. Actually, led by Nansen, the greatest moral leaders of our age have been, at the best, agnostic. Yet the Christians will never admit it. A man sent to us by Providence, Pope Pacelli said. But about Mussolini."

I was forced to pretend interest. "You don't find any evolutionary symbolism in myth and ritual?"

Far from it. The exact opposite. Bloody crusades, brain-washing, witch hunts, blood-sacrifices, anti-semitism, colour-prejudice and slave-trading are traditional Christian practices of no evolutionary merit whatsoever. . . . Far from Christians being better than other people, they're frequently worse, conceiving themselves to be above the moral law. Luther and Calvin, Knox and Torquemada, can you wonder that Europe's now in the hands of some very odd people? You wouldn't trust any of 'em to love a dog, let alone a human being. And, as you know, almost everywhere statistics confirm that violence, sexual neurosis, intolerance are highest amongst all religious groups except Jews."

Rousing stuff! and I might have chosen one of a dozen other speeches equally pointed. A *cri-de-coeur* about Death and Obedience being the only two enemies of mankind is pure glorious secular freethinking!

## CORRESPONDENCE

### SPINOZA AND THE JEWS

Mr. J. Renton's letter (5/1/62) raises three entirely separate points I deal with them seriatim. (a) Apostasy: If your correspondent will consult the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Vol. 2, p. 12f, Article, "Apostasy") he will find much valuable data; e.g. that the *Third Book of Maccabees* (1st century AD) records many Jewish apostates under the mad emperor, Caligula (37-41) who were "punished and ignominiously put to death by their fellow Jews for this crime" (reference to *Maccabees* given in article). (b) James: I must state first that I do not at all agree with Mr. Renton's suggestion that the passage in Josephus which describes the stoning of James (or Jacob?) is actually a Christian forgery. It seems altogether unlikely that any Christian forger would have referred to James as (literally translated) "the brother of the so-called Christ". In any case, whoever James was, and whoever the "Christ" (a title, not a proper name) may have been, the fact is that, according to Josephus, James was stoned for apostasy by the High Priest. This surely proves my point that apostasy was a capital offence among the Jews? (c) Spinoza: The Synagogue had no power to pass sentence of death in comparatively liberal Protestant Holland (the most liberal land in the Europe of that day) when Spinoza lived (1632-77). I suggest again that this was very fortunate for Spinoza. Mr. Renton should study the contemporary case of Spinoza's fellow heretic, the Portuguese Uriel Da Costa who, for heresies much milder than Spinoza's, was first whipped 39 stripes and then trampled under foot by the congregation *after* he had recanted and done severe penance (c.f. article "Da Costa" in *Jewish Encyclopedia*).

I ask your correspondent that, if the rabbis of Spinoza's day behaved like this to a penitent like Da Costa, what would they

have done to an unrepentant atheist like Spinoza? Surely stoning is the most likely surmise.

Mr. Renton, however, can draw a legitimate satisfaction from Mr. Ben Gurion's recent appeal to the Dutch rabbis to expunge from their written records the ferocious anathemas passed by their 17th century predecessors upon Baruch Spinoza, which, as Matthew Arnold so finely commented, cut him off from the children of Israel only to make him "the child of modern Europe".

F. A. RIDLEY.

May I point out to Mr. Renton that Josephus does in fact state who was the person who was stoned by permission of Ananus. He was presumably a brother of Jesus the son of Damnaeus, as Josephus states after relating the instructions for the stoning that: "Albinus listening to this argument writes in anger to Ananus threatening to exact Justice from him: and King Agrippa on this account took away the high-priesthood from Ananus after he had held it three months and appointed Jesus, the son of Damnaeus". Therefore, leaving out the interpolated words, "who was called Christ", we have a consistent tale. Albinus illegally puts to death a brother of Jesus, and King Agrippa, as well as depriving Ananus of his office confers it on Jesus, presumably in compensation for the loss of his brother.

C. STANLEY.

## OBITUARY

Jimmy Morrison was for many years a lecturer on the platforms of both the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association, and never concealed his atheism. In his early years he was an active trade unionist and socialist.

His interests and activities covered a wide field, educationalist, musician, linguist, and as an artist he had paintings shown in the Scottish Fine Arts Exhibition. Mr. Morrison's advice and help on all sorts of matters were freely given. To Gladys, his loyal and devoted wife, we send our heartfelt sympathy. To this gentle and friendly man and comrade we bid farewell.

Mr. R. M. Hamilton, that veteran of the Glasgow Secular Society, now in his 81st year, conducted a Secular Service at the Crematorium.

JIM BARROWMAN.

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