

# The Freethinker

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THE ATHEIST often has occasion to rebuke Christians for their arrogance and condescension; to dispute, for instance, that he "can't really disbelieve in God" or that he is a Christian "without knowing it". Now, after long being treated as the agent of the Devil, it seems that he is actually the agent of God. Is he expected to show gratitude for his "elevation", to fall on his knees before the altar of South Bank modernism? I for one cannot. Of

course I welcome liberal trends in Christianity: I prefer a peaceful Pope John to a (cold) warlike Pope Pius; Dr. Robinson to Dr. Verwoerd. In other words, I am all for physical co-existence. This does not mean, though, that I can overlook the intellectual differences between Atheist and Theist. Indeed, I regard it as a mistake to do so.

Thus, when Dr. Robinson tells me that, though as an Atheist I may not recognise Christ, in so far as I have responded to the claim of the unconditional in love" I have "responded to" Christ, for he is the "depth" of love, I am neither convinced nor flattered. Jesus Christ is not "the embodiment . . . of the transcendence of love"; "the one in whom Love has completely taken over"; as the Bishop of Woolwich would have us believe. A reading of the Gospels is sufficient to disprove the Bishop's claim that Jesus is "perfect man". Whether or not he is "perfect God", I leave Christians to decide for themselves. What I object to—as I have said before in these columns—is Dr. Robinson's commandeering love and making it exclusively Christian.

**Insulting**  
Whether he realises it or not, he is insulting non-Christians when he does this. The idea that a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim and an Atheist are "responding" to Christ in their expressions of love is arrogant as well as preposterous. Were it not that Dr. Robinson and his fellow "modernists" perverted language to suit their emotions, they would see this. If, however, God is the "depth and ground of all being", which "despite all appearances" is Love, and if God "vested himself utterly and completely in the man Christ Jesus", then Jesus is Love, however much hatred he may have preached. By this type of woolly Woolwich reasoning, one may prove anything to one's own satisfaction.

And, of course, to the satisfaction of avant-garde Anglicans like Canon Max Warren, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. "Down the centuries the spirit of man has pursued the quest for understanding", the Canon told the first plenary session of the Anglican Congress in Toronto on August 14th. But the quest is not man's initiative, it is "man's response to the divine initiative". And for the religious man, said Canon Warren—paralleling Dr. Robinson's quotation that "nothing is secular"—"all life is religious". God apparently "meets" the Canon everywhere: speaks to him in the newspaper as well as the Bible; in the theatre, in the novel, indeed in all art (Toronto *Globe and Mail*, August 15th).

## God in Marx

One might be tempted to dismiss this as naive. It is, in fact, a tactic. "Consider how immensely strong is our position", said the Canon, "when we start on a dialogue with the man of another faith, or of no faith at all, if we believe we already know in some small degree the God who is active in the one we meet". He believed it important to see God at work "in those who, because for

them the word God had lost any meaning, denied that He existed". And he called upon his Anglican listeners to flex the muscles of their imagination far enough to see God at work "in that bitter critic of nineteenth century society,

who once laboured in the British Museum, whose dust lies in a London cemetery, and whose name still conjures up the fears of half mankind and the hopes of the other half". The British Labour Movement might owe more to Methodism than to Marx, but this apparently does not mean that the latter owed nothing to God.

## . . . And Freud

And if Marx can be Christianised, why not Freud also (not to mention Atheistic novelists, painters and playwrights)? No reason at all, with Canon Warren on mission. Think, he said, "of that Viennese psychoanalyst who, studying the diseased minds of innumerable patients, first charted the unknown continent of man's unconscious. We may judge, rightly perhaps, that some of his conclusions about that continent are wildly distorted . . . But we, who know what an immense contribution this discovery of the continent of the unconscious has made to the ministry of Christian healing, let alone to the whole practice of psychosomatic medicine, will humbly thank God for His grace at work in Sigmund Freud, no less at work because Freud did not acknowledge Him".

## Posthumous Converts

God, then, is to be given the credit for at least the best aspects of Marxism and psycho-analysis, their founders being mere vehicles for His grace! The Church Missionary Society seems bent on making converts (even posthumously) on the principle that if you cannot defeat your enemy you should absorb him. Indeed, according to the Canon, "In the beginning of every political change and of every political revolution is God", which is well on the way to the ultimate in absurdity, in meaningless mumble, leading as it must to the complete denial of human influence in human affairs, and posing, incidentally, the question how these views can be reconciled with Anglican free-will.

## "No-God"

But Canon Warren went merrily on his word-spinning—and word-twisting—way: glancing from Bonhoeffer's "religionless Christianity" (which was later to be attacked by the Archbishop of Canterbury when he received an honorary degree in Toronto) to "Godly irreligion". "Build religion on mystery, on the inexplicable, and sooner or later you banish God to the periphery of His

### VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## Anglican Double-Talk at Toronto

By COLIN McCALL

universe. The God up there, the God out there . . .". That, said the Canon, "is the God that is dead". Supposing, however, that "God isn't like that at all", then "to refuse to believe in a no-God is a step in the right direction. Godly irreligion is in sight. And it is on our side of the frontier!"

Ironically enough, Canon Warren is aware of the inadequacies of religious language—or at least, of others' religious language. I must assume that he is oblivious of his own linguistic gymnastics, though he strains my charity with that "God" to "no-God" switch. Disbelief in the traditional Christian God "up there" cannot be passed off as equivalent to disbelief in "no-God", in order to produce a double-negative=positive equation. And, anyway, though the God "up there" has, in the Canon's words, "been abandoned by multitudes", it is still believed in by the bulk of Christians. This God is not dead, is not "no-God" for them. True, the world cannot be "neatly divided between believers and unbelievers", but there *are* believers and unbelievers, as well as in-betweens. And the Canon sometimes confuses the last two. The man who claims to be a Christian but whose beliefs are "vague and feeble" does not, for instance, represent the "exact opposite" of "finding God everywhere".

#### Two Venuses

God might be everywhere, but the world can be divided, by the Canon's standards, into the "measurable" and the "unmeasurable", exemplified by two Venuses. We are,

he said, "within measurable distance of knowing all that there is to know about the planet Venus. But is there any married man present who would lightly presume to say he knew all there was to be known about the lady who is his own particular epitome of feminine grace?" This is indeed a confusion. We may or may not be "within measurable distance" (oh, these measures!) of "knowing all there is to know" about the planet; the lady certainly presents us with other problems. In general animate matter is more complex than inanimate matter; but more complex still in its "conscious" forms, but not in principle unknowable; not beyond the scope of scientific investigation. And one might cap the Canon's "married man" question with: is there any scientist who would lightly presume to say he knew all there was to be known about *anything*?

Science, said Canon Warren, "has no brief to tell religion the meaning of life and love". Fair enough. But Science does not search for "meaning" in this sense. But we must deny the implication that religion has the right to tell "science"—or us—the meaning of life and love, as also the explication that the "great role" of science is to make men "more religious", because "it is forever increasing our knowledge of the universe . . .". Canon Warren may, like the Bishop of Woolwich, have rid himself of some antiquated religious notions, but neither has he rid himself of theological double-talk. Their fuddlement may be forgiven, but it cannot be disregarded.

## Doubt About Quails

Translated by S. D. KUEBART from the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*

"JESUS IS A BUM" wrote a 17 year old Catholic labourer, "I do not think much of him . . . To me, only my foreman has any reality, if he fires me there will be no Jesus around to reinstate me." This impious confession is listed in a psychological research report compiled by Professor Theophil Thun of the Catholic Pädagogische Akademie in Paderborn and based upon statements obtained from Protestants and Catholic juveniles.

Psychologist Thun, who in 1959 published a book, *The Religion of a Child*, collected the material for his new inquiry in three cities of different sociological and confessional structure. For six months he questioned school leavers of three primary schools and pupils of grammar and technical schools. He promised the pupils not to disclose their confessions to anybody, guaranteed anonymity in case of publication but in return asked for unreserved honesty. The result was 6,000 comments from 375 juveniles on 16 subjects ranging from spare time pursuits and favourite literature to the all important question on religion.

Thun never intended nor hoped to obtain a representative cross-section of opinion in the sense of a demographic poll. Because of the typical reservation encountered in the developing youth, the quantitative-statistical method was thought unsuitable by the pedagogue. Instead, Thun calls his inquiry a "qualitative collection of significant facts".

However, the outcome of his research left the Professor more depressed than hopeful. Theophil Thun found it a "significant fact" that today's youth shows an almost destructive apathy for religion. This apathy is not however, confined to youth but runs parallel with a general turning away from Christianity that has occurred in Germany over several generations. On the other hand,

the pedagogue believes he has discovered the existence of a "religious élite" amongst juveniles.

The "faith-positive" attitude of these Christian young men and maidens is by no means dependent on their education, Thun states in his book. As proof he cites a 16 year old labourer, who answered the question of what he thinks of religion, thus:—"I believe in God and I pity those people who laugh when somebody tells them that he believes in God . . . And why I believe in God is very simple, because I cannot imagine that all shall be finished when one is dead". [In the original German version, this passage is strewn with grammatical errors, making it painfully obvious that its author is semi-literate. I wonder if this is a "significant fact". Transl.]

Thun's comment:—"In spite of its primitiveness, a clear and penetrating train of thought".

The researcher values as positive with reservations (a fellow-traveller's confession) the comment of another youthful labourer:—"I believe in God because everybody else does and because the teachers of religion bashed it into us. I have often had doubts, as for instance when the Christians were allowed to leave Egypt and ran out of bread, roasted quails immediately dropped from above".

Opposing these confessions of the élite and fellow travellers, are those which the pedagogue cites as examples for the widespread destructive attitude towards the faith, as utterances of the agnostic, materialistic, "science-believing" and cynical negationist (*Ungeist*).

A 15 year old mechanic has, as he states, "never experienced the works of God, at any rate never consciously conceived them"; he is, "where these things are concerned, far too sober and practical". A 15 year old school girl

(Concluded on page 276)

# St. Giordano Bruno!

By F. A. RIDLEY

ON FEBRUARY 17TH, 1600, the arch-heretic Giordano Bruno, former Dominican monk and Copernican astronomer, was burned alive at Rome upon a spot later to be surmounted by his statue. Bruno, who had been extradited from Venice seven years previously on a charge of heresy, was convicted and, as the inquisitorial ritual went, was solemnly "released to the secular arm" for the pious purpose of being burned alive at the stake. His judges were all cardinals of the Roman curia representing the Holy Office, conspicuous among them being the famous, now canonised Jesuit, Robert Bellarmine, probably the most influential Catholic theologian of the post-Reformation era. Bellarmine later served in a similar capacity during the first trial of Galileo.

The principal charges against Bruno were that he had taught (as fact and not as a mere hypothesis) Copernican astronomy contrary to both the religious authority of Holy Scripture and the scientific authority of Aristotle and Ptolemy; that he had blasphemously asserted the existence of other planets and of human beings upon those planets for whom Christ had not died. That he had denied the existence of a personal God and had deified the material universe as God in a pantheistic and altogether heretical manner. (N.B. This was in 1600, some time before the Bishop of Woolwich.) Such heresies were enormous, almost unprecedented even in the Italy of the Counter-Reformation.

Nor did Bruno adopt a conciliatory attitude towards his judges; on the contrary, he haughtily reminded them that "it is perhaps with more fear that you pronounce this judgment than that I hear it". For such unparalleled effrontery, only one punishment was possible: Giordano Bruno was duly publicly burned at the stake. On the evening of his martyrdom, one of the spectators wrote his epitaph:

Today perished the heretic, Giordano Bruno of Nola. We trust that on his way to Hell, he stopped at the other worlds of which he spoke, to tell their inhabitants how the Romans deal with heretics.

(cf. Lewis McIntyre—*Giordano Bruno*.)

At the time that Bruno perished, the Copernican theory, as yet undemonstrated beyond doubt by Galileo's telescopic discoveries, was, nevertheless steadily gaining ground amongst the educated classes in Europe by virtue of its greater plausibility. Amongst its adherents were Bruno and Galileo (born 1564 in Italy), whilst in Protestant England, where in the absence of the Inquisition greater speculative freedom existed, Leonard Digges was already proclaiming, far in advance of his time, that "there be many other suns far larger and more resplendent than ours", and Bishop Godwin of Hereford (the author of the pioneer science fiction in the English language) was already citing Copernicus with approval during his hero's pioneer trip to the moon!

In 1609-10 came the decisive turning-point between medieval and modern astronomy, when Galileo first turned his newly-invented telescope skywards. Thereafter opposition to Copernican astronomy could only remain upon theological, not upon scientific grounds. After the lapse of two centuries (1834) even Rome formally acknowledged that Galileo (and Bruno!) had been right and the Inquisition wrong. One may relevantly add that the victory of Copernican astronomy was primarily due to two men of very different mental calibre. Galileo, the

practical scientist, established the new theories empirically by means of his pioneer telescopic research, whilst Bruno's daring pioneer speculations drew a picture of a Copernican universe swarming not only with inanimate worlds in space, but with worlds peopled by living matter in perhaps more advanced forms than are to be found in our own planetary environment.

It has taken modern scientific astronomy three and a half centuries to catch up with Bruno's prophetic vision. For during the past year, two leading astronomers, Sir Bernard Lovell of Jodrell Bank, and Patrick Moore of BBC fame, have come out strongly in favour of the scientific probability that life, far from being confined to our planet in a geocentric manner, is currently and widely scattered throughout the innumerable galaxies that make up the illimitable universe. In 1963 we are at long last catching up with Giordano Bruno, whom an eminent Humanist author, the late Archibald Robertson, has aptly termed "the greatest thinker of his age".

Giordano Bruno perished at the stake in 1600. He perished for scientific premonitions that were centuries in advance of his time; one of the most notable examples in all recorded history of that apt proverb, "pioneering doesn't pay", except—we may add in Bruno's case—in terms of posthumous glory. The ironies attached to universal history are on a colossal scale, for today not only the scientific world, but even the Church of Rome which murdered Bruno, is apparently catching up with his then novel ideas. For in a contemporary Catholic weekly, *The Sunday Review* (Dublin, 21/7/63), we find a presumably Catholic correspondent asking these surely pertinent questions: "What sort of beings live on the other stars [planets?]? Are some of them higher forms of life than us?" "Do they look like us—or what are they like?" "Do they worry about nuclear bombs, car-parking, television?" "If they are like us, do they worship God as we do?" "If we established contact with them or reached them, would it be our duty to give them our religion and other ways of life?" "Are some of these beings in a sinless state [Gardens of Eden?] or has Christ been crucified on other crosses on other universal Calvaries?" (a logical question from the point of view of Catholicism—F.A.R.).

These, or very similar ones were the questions that Bruno asked, and it was for the last two theological ones in particular that he eventually perished at the stake. In 1963—or so it would appear from the above comments in an apparently orthodox Catholic journal—the "infallible" Church has caught up with Bruno! Already in the 16th century, Giordano Bruno had foreseen with a scientific insight that can only be described as astounding, both the future course of scientific evolution and its philosophical prerequisites a fact that surely stamps him as one of the master-thinkers of the human race.

We respectfully suggest to Pope Paul that, as part of the currently much boosted "new look" of the Church of Rome, the Holy Office makes tardy amends to its most illustrious victim, by elevating the former Dominican monk, Giordano Bruno of Nola to the ranks of the saints as Saint Giordano Bruno, Patron Saint of Space Travel and of all new worlds to be presently discovered in space. Such a celestial promotion might provide us with some real proof that the present liberal "new look" at the Vatican has some substance behind it!

## This Believing World

The Brixton Tape-Recording Club is nothing if not original. It is going to attend a Spiritualistic seance and make a tape recording of the supernatural voices to be heard there. It should prove thrilling to hear Julius Caesar and Cleopatra having a discussion in Latin and Egyptian, and perhaps we shall hear Moses speaking Hebrew, William the Conqueror telling us how he conquered England. If we are lucky, we might even hear Charles Bradlaugh laughingly admitting that he is now convinced of the truth of Christianity. There is no end to tape-recording possibilities.

★

Canon Pearce-Higgins has been showered with replies sent to the *Daily Mail* for having the impudence to dismiss parts of the Bible as being untrue and garbled history. For example, the Rev. B. M. Rees of St. Albans angrily asks him if he "knows better than the Lord Jesus who himself authenticated the Old Testament"? That should pulverise the worthy Canon for a start, but Mr. Rees also wants to know how the Canon can remain in the Church of England and still claim to be honest to God? We hope the Canon will reply, for we simply don't know.

★

We note—not at all with surprise—that Mr. John Steel whose wife was expecting a new Messiah on the strength of spirit messages, and who had written 45 wonderful plays dictated to her by the great Bernard Shaw himself from Beyond, has gone bankrupt for £24,000 with assets only of £700. The new Messiah, when born, turned out to be a girl, while no one wants to produce the numerous masterpieces from the unforgettable G.B.S. which came through a medium. What a pity! And it is even more sad that something went wrong about the new Messiah. Perish the thought, but can the Spirit World have made a mistake?

★

We often wonder whether the abdication of King Edward VIII was forced on him not because he wanted to marry the woman of his choice, but because he did not servilely follow Christianity—that is, did not do what he was told to do by our bishops in the interests of the Church. In the *Sunday Express* (August 11th) will be found a paragraph headed "Cryptic talk" in which it is stated that "the Bishop of Bradford had said that some people wished the King would show more positive signs of his awareness of the need of God's Grace". The King preferred the lady who became his wife to God's grace, and lost his throne in consequence—no doubt followed by the picus "Amens" of all good Christians including the bishops. Is this what is meant by the *Sunday Express's* "Cryptic talk"?

★

The "Observer" must have thought that the two articles on a possible rapprochement between Christians and Jews—actually between Roman Catholics and Jews—which the journal recently published were so important, that a pamphlet containing them is to be published, price 9d. The first article was by a Jew, the second by a Roman Catholic, Barbara Ward Jackson. Needless to point out while deploring the bestial atrocities Rome has been guilty of against helpless Jews through the centuries, she carefully points out that this was not "true Christianity"! She never mentions her fellow Catholic, the great and holy Adolf Hitler, who, however much he differed from the Vatican, never gave up his religion, never ceased to appeal to God, and was never excommunicated by his Church.

All we get in Mrs. Jackson's article is verbosity piled on verbosity with a hope, difficult to disentangle, that Christians will not encourage anti-semitism now that there is to be a meeting between Jews and Christians. The only point she makes worth repeating is that after all—that is, after nearly 1,900 years of attacking Jews—"any serious study" of the trial and execution of Jesus, "puts humanity on trial"—what this means we cannot fathom—it was "not Jewry, not Roman power, not even this or that Jew or Roman". Whether this kind of "hope" will bring all Jews into the Vatican remains to be seen. But it is very difficult to imagine that the black, brown, yellow, and white Jews living now, will ever accept Jesus as their "Saviour". What did he or what can he save them from?

### DOUBT ABOUT QUAILS

(Concluded from page 274)

doubts the existence of Jesus Christ and makes "not the slightest effort to think about him". A 20 year old apprentice, who gives his father's occupation as "millionaire" does not believe in the existence of God "in the sky above the clouds because of space travel".

A Protestant grammar school leaver looks upon Jesus as "a kind of Faust of Antiquity" and a Catholic girl of similar education thinks Christ "to be an ordinary man" gifted with "some miraculous powers".

Researcher Thun was so shocked by some of the more drastic answers that he could not repress some massive moral verdicts. A grammar school leaver was found guilty of:—"Arrogance and pseudo-certainty . . . immaturity, superficiality and irreverence that we are likely to encounter in snob circles and certain types of modern intellectuals".

The young man had told his professional quiz-master:—"You are a scream! I believe neither in God nor do I doubt the existence of anything divine. [The, no doubt, unintentional contradiction is in the original. Transl.] To believe in God is taking too much of a chance . . ."

### DOCTOR AT LARGE

Moralology is a word purloined from the dregs of pseudo-verbage to describe the beliefs of a brotherhood of men that is growing up in our midst

If, to those who know better, it sounds like a tenuous and paltry kind of word with a rather silly connotation, it is because it sums up in a manner of speaking the phoney pursuits of some rather doubtful brethren who call themselves "Moral Re-Armers".

Part of a speech at an MRA rally, recently quoted in *The Guardian*, seems to imply that there is something morally wrong with mixed marriages. Dr. Ernest Claxton, the Assistant Secretary of the British Medical Association, told his pathetic flock of hungry sheep that chastity would remove "the fears of mixed marriages resulting in children of mixed blood that are becoming an increasing problem". If this does not imply that there is something morally wrong with mixed marriages, then Dr. Claxton has been misquoted or he is not very good at expressing himself (perhaps he means something infinitely worse?). Whatever is on the poor man's mind, his statement is either fatuous or insulting.

If it is merely fatuous then we must dispel it from our minds as the kind of drivel one would expect from the MRA. If it is insulting, Dr. Claxton should be challenged to back up his words or keep his unsavoury thoughts to himself. But for Dr. Claxton to keep his thoughts to himself would require a decline in the hyperbolic spiritual ego of the exponents of humbug who rally round the MRA flag.

Whatever is at the back of the confused minds of people who propound such cheap and nasty gossip in the name of "morality" is a matter for them, their conscience and their psychiatrist, but when a man of considerable public stature makes a feeble attempt to strengthen the case for apartheid whether it be in the name of the Moral Re-Armament Association, the British Medical Association or the Devil, then it is time that one or other of the former entities—as the latter is still thought to be beyond our immediate means of communication—is asked to clarify the official view without further delay.

BOB CREW.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (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. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoon (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

## Notes and News

THE ANGLICAN CONGRESS in Toronto opened on August 14th with a massive service—over 300 archbishops and bishops, a 1,200 voice choir and a congregation of 15,000—at which the Archbishop of Canterbury appealed for Christian unity. Rome and Canterbury, he said, “are speaking to one another in a new charity without belittling their respective concerns about truth” (*Daily Express*, 15/8/63). In fact, as THE FREETHINKER has repeatedly indicated, it is the spread of unbelief that is turning the Churches’ thoughts towards “reunion”. And Dr. Ramsey, in fact, referred to “the great mass of modern secularism”.

★  
TAKE THE situation in England, as reported by *Time* (16/8/63). “It’s not a question of the Anglican Church’s losing ground”, says the Suffragan Bishop of Middleton. “We’ve already lost it”. Of 27 million Englishmen baptised in the Church, only 3 million receive Communion even once a year, and “cathedral deans hollowly conduct their stately services before a silent few” (*Time* showed an almost empty Southwark Cathedral service on August 4th). The Nonconformists do no better. During the past fifty years, membership in English Congregationalist churches has declined 50 per cent, and in the Baptist churches 25 per cent. Thanks to Irish immigration, said *Time*, “Roman Catholic’s have increased rapidly since World War II, now number 5,000,000. But Sunday attendance at Mass is depressingly low”. Hardly surprising, then, that the Archbishop of Canterbury and his “close personal friend”, Roman Catholic Archbishop Heenan should come closer in distress.

★  
IN WHAT THE *Daily Express* called “an unprecedented appeal”, the senior Canadian cardinal, Cardinal Leger issued an edict calling on all Roman Catholics to pray for divine guidance to be given to the Anglican Congress.

THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN objected to a line in the Edinburgh Festival “Fringe” production, *The Bubonic Plague Show*, as blasphemous and it was therefore deleted (*Daily Telegraph*, 19/8/63) even though the Church of Scotland had approved the line as fit for public performances in one of its halls. The line was: “This is my beloved secret agent in whom I am well pleased”, a retort to an argument for the necessity for international spies.

★  
DR. CALVIN E. GROSS, Superintendent of Schools for the City of New York, is to ask the Board of Education to discontinue the 100-year-old practice of Bible reading at school assemblies (*New York Times*, 19/8/63). When he made his statement public on August 18th, Dr. Gross said that he would also recommend the rescinding of the 10-year-old order requiring the fourth stanza of *America*, to be sung by all students daily at the opening of school. The stanza goes:

Our Father’s God to Thee,  
Author of Liberty,  
To Thee we sing;  
Long may our land be bright  
With freedom’s holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God, our King.

Dr. Gross will ask the Board of Education to make the singing of any patriotic song, voluntary, and this, unlike the elimination of Bible reading, will require no change in the bylaws.

★  
ON JULY 26TH, the New York State Education Commissioner, Dr. James E. Allen Jr., ordered local education boards to comply with the US Supreme Courts’ decision that Bible reading in state schools was unconstitutional.

★  
WE REFERRED, a fortnight ago, to Mrs. Madalyn E. Murray’s new role as editor of the *American Free Humanist*, and the latest (August) issue reflects her lively influence. It also contains a letter querying the “Free” in the magazine’s title, and prompting Mrs. Murray to ask if the name should be retained or replaced by *The Freethinker*.

★  
ANOTHER American Freethought monthly, *Progressive World*, is serialising the autobiography of the ex-priest William Moore, whose article “Now I Am A Man Again” first appeared in its pages, was reprinted in THE FREETHINKER, and is now available as a leaflet from 103 Borough High Street.

★  
AT THE time of Julian Grimau’s execution, Franco was reported to have said that it would merely be a “two-day wonder”. The garrotting of the two Spanish anarchists has again opened even apathetic eyes to Falangist brutality. As Hugh Klare, Secretary of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: “Judicial murder in the United States by the electric chair and the gas chamber, hanging in Britain, and the guillotine in France are gruesome enough. But this is medieval”. The *Daily Herald* described garrotting as “slow strangulation by a macabre machine using a wheel and screw to constrict the windpipe and crush the spinal cord”, and cited the latest Spanish penal code of 1944. Capital punishment, it states, is by no particular method, but usually by garrotting. English tourists must not expect to see a demonstration, however. They will have to be content with bullfights.

★  
THE RECENT Moral Re-Armament Assembly in London cannot complain about press coverage. Hardly a day, hardly a paper, that didn’t carry a report. It pays to advertise, especially if you can afford a full-page from time to time.

# Is There A Purpose in History?

By R. SMITH

I GRAVELY DOUBT IT. The belief in a purpose in history has a religious origin, the purpose being the salvation of man and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. But in this age of disenchantment, such a view is wishful thinking plus cowardly optimism, as well as a failure to understand the facts of life.

Sextus Empiricus called history a confused collection of accidents. And Thomas Carlyle, although an historian himself, did not hesitate to describe his own profession in the most contemptuous terms:

Alas, what mountains of dead ashes, wreck, and burnt bones, does assiduous pedantry dig up from the Past Time, and name it History and Philosophy of History . . . and over your Historical Library it is as if all the Titans had written for themselves: "Dry rubbish shot here!"

T. H. Huxley, one of the most eminent interpreters of the doctrine of evolution, did not entertain very sanguine views on history, and concluded that:

Social progress means the checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process.

How in a few centuries can a man hope to gain the mastery over the cosmic process, which has been at work for millions of years? "The theory of evolution", said Huxley, "encourages no millennial anticipations".

Schopenhauer recognised progress, social, economic, and political, but as a fact that contains no certain guarantee of happiness. On the contrary, the development of the intelligence increases suffering.

Marxists, as well as Christians, believe that there is a purpose in history. For Marxists the purpose is a human one, not a divine one. Although, I must say, a human purpose is indeed very questionable in the Marxian conception of History. For we are told by the Marxists that the dialectical laws of historical development take place independently of men's wills. Therefore the purpose of history must be working itself out independently of men's wills. At best men can only get to know this purpose and work accordingly to its realisation in society, the purpose being the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a classless society where the state ceases to exist. This is the Marxist interpretation of the kingdom of God on earth, the final goal of all human endeavour, the great human society of the future.

History is as sacred to the Marxist, as God is to the Christian. And the Christian and Marxian historians aim at much the same destination in history, although they differ widely about the way of achieving and explaining it.

Marxists believe that men make their own history, but they do not create the purpose of history. They only fulfil this purpose through historical development. Marxists believe that in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its emancipation, therefore this historical order must contain within itself the goal of history and the salvation of man.

One may ask here where a purpose emanates from outside of individual minds; for if a purpose exists in history outside of the mind, why not also a purpose in nature?

But Marxists won't have this.

In nature [declares Engels] insofar as we disregard the reaction of man upon it, there exists only unconscious blind agents which influence one another and through whose reciprocal interplay general laws assert themselves . . . On the other hand in social history the active agents are always men working towards definite ends, with thoughts and passion . . . But this difference does not alter the fact that the course of history obeys general laws.

The role of consciousness here is not consistently main-

tained, and therefore the rational consciousness of men making history in the Marxist sense is debased to a mere tool of the impersonal forces of blind necessity.

How can we rationally talk about the historical impersonal forces of blind necessity having a purpose? If history obeys general laws and there is a purpose in these laws, where, may we ask the Marxists, does the purpose spring from, seeing that they do not believe in a purpose in nature. If they claim it springs from the historical order in social evolution, why do they not believe that there is a purpose in the order of the laws of nature? For according to Marxists men do not create the laws of history, any more than they create the laws of nature.

Talking to a Marxist regarding this question, is like asking a Christian about God's divine purpose for history. If you ask a Christian for a meaning of all the human activity in human history, he will probably give you the unctuous answer that, "God has his own plans for men, and they fulfil them without knowing it".

He who is not satisfied with this answer must go away empty.

If we put history in the place of God in this answer, we could regard it as the Marxist answer to the meaning of human activity in history, could we not?

Engels says in his letter to J. Bloch:

History is so made that the end result always arises out of the conflict of many individual wills, in which every will is itself the product of a host of special conditions of life. Consequently there exist innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite group of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant product—the historical event. This again may itself be viewed as the product of a force acting as a whole without consciousness or volition; for what every individual will separately is frustrated by what everyone else wills, and the general upshot is something which no-one willed. And so the course of history has run along like a natural process; it is also subject essentially to the same laws of motion.

It is obvious from this statement that Engels did not believe that the purpose of history lay in the individual consciousness, seeing that the individual human wills constantly frustrate each other, and the outcome of all this is something different from what the innumerable human wills had striven for.

This, according to Engels, is how history is made. But why the mutual frustration of innumerable human wills should produce a purpose in history which will finally lead to a "happy ending" in a classless society is certainly not very convincingly explained by Engels—or any other Marxist for that matter.

That there is a purpose in history is not a proposition, but rather a presupposition, and those who believe in it are men of faith rather than of reason.

## BIRMINGHAM NSS DINNER

THE Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society will be holding its Annual Dinner on Saturday, September 28th, in the Market Hotel, Station Street, opposite New Street Station. The Branch Chairman, Mr. W. Miller, will preside and the NSS President, Mr. D. H. Tribe, Hon. Treasurer, Mr. W. Griffiths and Mrs. Griffiths, and General Secretary, Mr. Colin McCall and Mrs. McCall, will be among the guests. This, then, will be an occasion when Midland Freethinkers and friends will be able to meet the NSS officers socially. The reception will be at 6.30 p.m., tickets are 15s., and dress is optional. The Branch Secretary is Mr. J. M. Chappell, 156 Victoria Road, Birmingham, 6.

# “An ABC of Colour”

By MARGARET McILROY

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, 95 year old American negro scholar, has since the beginning of the century been a leading figure in the struggle for racial equality in the USA. Nor has he limited himself to this great field of activity; he has taken part in the Pan-African movement, supporting the rights of African leaders also, and he has been awarded a Lenin Peace Prize. *An ABC of Colour* (Seven Seas Books, London, 3s. 6d.) is a selection from his writings between 1896 and 1958, dealing with a wide variety of topics, but nearly all relating in some way to the colour question. This is a book from which everyone has something to learn. It contains profound analyses and interesting anecdotes, poems, and excerpts from novels. Dr. Du Bois emerges as a great and good man, who is never too involved with the appalling wrong suffered by his own people to sympathise with other victims of injustice—the Irish, suffragettes, uncivilised Africans—and who is never afraid to expose so-called friends of the negro whose friendship consists in offering charity to those who do not demand equality.

The reader will be immediately struck by the immense strides forward that have been made in the status of negroes in the period covered by the book. In 1906 we find Dr. Du Bois writing: “In the past year the work of the negro-hater has flourished in the land . . . The work of stealing the black man’s ballot has progressed . . . Discrimination in travel and public accommodation has spread.” State after state was passing discriminating legislation. Then the negro was in retreat; now he is dramatically advancing. If there is still a long way to go to attain justice, it is a least cheering to realise how far the United States has travelled.

In 1910 Dr. Du Bois writes on segregation in education: “Human contact, human acquaintanceship, human sympathy, are the great solvents of human problems . . . Separate school children by colour and they grow up without learning the tremendous truth that it is impossible to judge the mind of a man by the colour of his face”.

Whites might well feel ashamed as Dr. Du Bois speaks movingly to negro parents of their special problems in bringing up children. “We know too well that beyond the disillusion and hardening that lurk for every human soul there is that extra hurting which, even when unconscious, with fiendish refinement of cruelty waits on each corner to shadow the joy of our children; if they are backward or timid there is the sneer; if they are forward there is repression; the problems of playmates and amusements are infinite, and street and school and church have that extra hazard of pain and temptation that spells hell to our babies”. Dr. Du Bois warns against pampering and over-protecting children to make up for the hurts they must suffer, and also against “thrusting them forth grimly into school and street to learn as best they may from brutal fact”. Parents must explain the fact of discrimination clearly. “Once the coloured child understands the world’s attitude and the shameful wrong of it, you have furnished it with a great life motive—a power and impulse towards good, which is the mightiest thing man has.

How many white folks would give their own souls if they might graft into their children’s souls a great moving, guiding ideal.”

A particularly interesting section deals with the record of negro soldiers in the Civil War. Dr. Du Bois quotes from contemporary accounts numerous instances of the

heroism of coloured troops. Many even of the opponents of slavery had not thought that negroes would make soldiers, but witness after witness is loud in their praise. An Ohio soldier was reported in the *New York Herald* as saying: “I never saw men fight with such desperate gallantry as those negroes did. They advanced as grim and stern as death, and when within reach of the enemy struck about them with pitiless vigour, that was almost fearful”. A colonel commanding them wrote: “It would have been madness to attempt with white troops what was successfully accomplished with black ones”. Here indeed were men like Cromwell’s Ironsides “who know what they fight for and love what they know”. Dr. Du Bois remarks on the ironic fact that “the ability and willingness to take human life has always been, even in the minds of liberal men, a proof of manhood. The negro was called a coward and a fool when he protected the women and children of his master. But when he rose and fought and killed, the whole nation with one voice proclaimed him a man and brother. Nothing else made negro citizenship conceivable, but the record of the negro soldier as a fighter”.

I have just one point of criticism—in a number of places more notes should have been supplied. For example, an article written in 1925 tells how a negro doctor and his wife and friends were charged with murder after he had shot and killed one of a mob attacking his home. Surely the reader is entitled to know what happened to these people, but we are never told the outcome of the trial.

*An ABC of Colour* introduces the reader to the mind of a great man with an unsurpassed breadth of culture, human sympathy and courage. What an irony that the ignorant, narrow-minded louts that form so large a proportion of the population of the Southern states think that the colour of their skins makes them superior to this great scholar and humanist. This is a book which should remind us all of our duty to fight in every way open to us this monstrous evil which darkens from birth the lives of so many men, women and children.

## CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

### JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

Neither THE FREETHINKER nor any freethinker is likely to deny Mr. David Bird the right or the opportunity to think freely or to speak freely. And that surely, is the essence of freethought in contrast to authoritarian religion. Any better explanation that Mr. Bird may have of what freethinking is or what conduces to it will be warmly welcomed.

As for Jehovah’s Witnesses, I don’t think I did disparage their personal habits about which Mr. Bird is no doubt largely right. Their industry as industry may set a good example, but that doesn’t alter the fact that from another point of view, it is industry directed to extremely questionable ends.

Their religion and their god may have the merits Mr. Bird ascribes to them, but that does not make their tenets any the more compatible with reason and experience. Neither does it absolve Witnesses from a narrow self-righteousness which arrogantly condemns all other religions as well as freethought.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

In two recent contributions to THE FREETHINKER it has been claimed that Jehovah’s Witnesses consider the Bible beyond criticism. For instance Mr. F. A. Ridley bore witness that “higher and/or lower biblical criticism might as well not have existed. The Holy Bible is verbally inspired; every word, syllable and (or so it would appear) even its punctuation, is the work of a divine penman” (August 16th, 1963), while in the issue of

July 26th, Mr. Reginald Underwood was barking up the wrong tree when he wrote: "It never seems to occur to them to question the authority of the Bible . . .". These statements are not strictly accurate because this sect will resort to lower biblical criticism when necessary to undermine a rival sect's beliefs.

Amongst the usual tedious Witness literature that is often left at my door, was one article on "Snake-handling Religious Rites" in *Awake* (November 8th, 1962) that caught my eye. It would be interesting to know whether along with Russell's (the founder of the JW's) presumed abhorrence of blood, he also had an inordinate fear of snakes, for his successors at any rate show rare common sense in rejecting Mark 16, 17-18 (which has to do with playing with serpents) "as being an uninspired addition to God's Word", i.e. a forgery. Along with the modern scholarship used to vindicate his position, the author also mentions the story of St. Paul carrying a bundle of sticks out of which wriggled a snake which fastened on his hand. The saint was appalled and shook it off (was it a Russell's viper?) into the fire instead of fondling it as in modern snake-cuddling cults.

D. M. CHAPMAN.

### THE ASSASSINATION OF LINCOLN

Emmett McLoughlin thinks Lincoln's assassination was due to the Pope; Colin McCall, to a Confederate conspiracy (*THE FREETHINKER*, 26/7/63), but there is a third possibility; that it was prompted by War Secretary Stanton. He was ruthless, and an opponent of Lincoln's policy. In charge of the manhunt after the murder, he left unguarded the one road by which Booth escaped, and the photographs he issued were of Booth's brother. The body in the barn was said by Booth's physician not to be Booth's, and Lincoln's son later told a friend who asked why he was burning certain papers, that he did not wish to reveal that there had been treason in his father's cabinet. Mary Surratt's trial by a military tribunal instead of by due process was Stanton's doing.

Incidentally, I think it unfair to class the Southern Confederacy alongside Pius IX. It was strongly Protestant and Anglo-Saxon, and it fought for its independence as a nation, not for slavery. Lincoln's countenance of Sherman's barbarism in Georgia and Grant's attrition tactics in Virginia surely vitiates his claim to personify democracy and justice.

The information on which I base this letter was a *Reader's Digest* book section about two years ago, and an article in *The Humanist* some months ago. I regret that, not having either to hand, I must write from memory.

FRANCIS SOATER.

[Colin McCall writes: "Emmett McLoughlin considers Mr. Soater's third possibility but concludes that: 'The work of Thomas and Hyman (Stanton, Alfred Knopf, 1962) and the official Congressional documents leave little doubt that Stanton neither plotted, aided, abetted, nor approved the murder of his Commander-in-Chief.' My main concern was to assess Mr. McLoughlin's own thesis of Vatican complicity and I found it not proven. There can be little doubt, though, that Vatican sympathies were with the Confederacy in the Civil War, and that it aided John H. Surratt."]

### TRAGEDY AND MARXISM

I remain unimpressed by Eva Ebury's view of Marxism and the collective purpose of the Bolsheviks, and I find her acceptance of the popular scheme of thought regarding human progress, represented by a sequence of "ages" which are distinguished by technological labels, to be very superficial.

Egyptian civilisation never transcended the Bronze Age, nor the Mayan civilisation the Stone Age, but who is to say that we are more civilised and more cultured than the Egyptians and Mayans?

Would Eva Ebury claim that the Egyptians were more cultured than the Mayans because they come under the Bronze Age?

Our own age, which has produced the most destructive weapons imaginable, and what Eva Ebury calls the Atomic Age can hardly be looked on as a talisman of culture.

In regard to a definition of Will and World, I advise Mrs. Ebury to read Schopenhauer herself.

I think it would also do her good to study Marxism a little more, as she may then see what I am getting at in my criticisms.

R. SMITH.

### CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

Your correspondent, Adrian Pigott, while admitting that he was the writer of the confused article on Mindszenty, avoids the main point of my letter which appeared in your issue of July 26th. I seized on his article in order to destroy the suggestion that the rising of the heroic workers of Hungary was led by the dignitaries of the Catholic Church. No person who has made a serious effort to find out what really happened in that rising would put it down to Catholic leadership.

I am prepared to let Mindszenty and the Government of Hungary sort out their differences in their own way, but, unlike

Mr. Pigott, I fail to see any good in a government that came to power over the dead bodies of workers killed by Russian tanks. It may be that there was no persecution of the Catholic Church in Hungary, but the torture and murder of political opponents has been openly admitted. Surely, Mr. Pigott knows that.

It is not true to say that I am a defender of Mindszenty. I simply said that had he been a leader he would be justified in going into hiding, and that in view of what happened to Nagy, he was perhaps justified in being a bit cautious. Like all his fellow cardinals, he is an enemy of progress, but that should not cause us to support others equally dangerous.

HARRY MCSHANE.

### FAITH HEALING

Mr. Colin McCall's Lourdes article (9/8/63) was very interesting. The sick living in the Enfield (Middlesex) area, however, have no need to go abroad. You will see from the cutting from the *Enfield Gazette and Observer* (also 9/8/63) that we have our answer in faith healer Mr. William Budd.

It is a pity that these grateful patients do not apparently wish their names and addresses to be published. And of course, always lurking in the background are anonymous heart specialists, doctors and surgeons.

I am told that a certain faith healer (not Mr. Budd) has a collecting box in his "surgery" for a cancer research fund. Whilst this is very laudable, it seems odd that such a box should be in the "surgery" of one who claims cures by mumbo-jumbo, certainly not by any form of intelligent research. P. A. WEST.

### "ON THE TRIAL OF JESUS"

Mr. Cutner does not realise that Winter's book *On the Trial of Jesus* was written for people who possess a good knowledge of the conditions in Judea two thousand years ago, and who are acquainted with the literature of the period. There is no need, as Mr. Cutner has suggested for the author of *On the Trial of Jesus* to refer to all the Roman, Greek and Jewish authorities who mention the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

Mr. Cutner has also misquoted Mr. Winter in his free-wheeling review of his book. Mr. Winter did not write "the Talmud confuses critical readers". He wrote the exact opposite, "the Talmud, in conjunction with the deliberate misstatement in John 19,16, is apt to confuse uncritical readers" (p. 180, note 23 of *On the Trial of Jesus*). Has Mr. Cutner ever read the Talmud?

"NICODEMUS"

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