

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXIII—No. 45

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

AS HAS OFTEN been pointed out, perhaps most notably by that too-little-read author, Gordon Rylands, in his *Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity*, Christian theology began in the Gnostic Pauline Epistles and in their continuator, the author of the Fourth Gospel. To Paul and John (or rather their impersonators) are to be traced the beginnings of Christian dogmatic theology. The Epistle to the Romans, which certainly was not an epistle (i.e. a letter)

and was not in all probability originally addressed to the Romans—"that monumental treatise on Catholic theology" as Albert Kalthoff once aptly described it—laid the foundation of what later became Christian theology, by its original theory of the creation and redemption based initially upon the old Jewish legend of Adam narrated in Genesis but never mentioned in the canonical Gospels. According to the Pauline scheme, sin originated with the Fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Eden, and the subsequent redemption of the human race was effected by the life and death of the "Second Adam", Christ. For, as in Adam, all die, so in Christ all rise again. The first Adam was of the earth, earthy, the second is the Lord from Heaven. Here in these pithy phrases of the old Gnostic writer, lie the origins of that theological system which, however much it may now be discredited by modern (post-Darwinian) evolutionary science, has unquestionably exercised an enormous influence on the human race.

Judaism and the Fall
Whether in Palestine or in Rome (or as has also been recently suggested in these columns, elsewhere in the Diaspora) it is at least certain that Christianity emerged into the sight of history as a Jewish heresy. The Messianic conception around which it originally centred, was an exclusively Jewish conception. Similarly it was on essentially Jewish conceptions that the Pauline Gnostics who wrote the Epistles, founded their theological conceptions, and theological adaptations for which universal history had reserved so brilliant a future.

For, quite irrespective of his truth or falsehood, the author of Romans *et al* was certainly one of the most influential thinkers in recorded human annals. In particular, the old legend of Adam, Eve and the serpentine adversary of the then embryo human race, had long since been endorsed by Jewish theology. Even though Genesis itself was originally "borrowed" and subsequently "edited", the Genesis mythology dates from far older Mesopotamian sources.

According to Joseph Turmel, the greatest critical historian of Catholic dogma, Genesis was first composed in its present form about 800 BC in the northern kingdom of Israel which had direct access to Mesopotamia. The original version was polytheistic: "In the beginning, the gods [elohim] created . . ." (*Histoire des Dogmes*).

Originally conceived in a polytheistic society, Genesis had long before Paul been edited by Jewish rabbis in conformity with rigorous monotheistic conceptions; the plur-

alistic "gods" of the original Mesopotamian script had long ago been transmigrated into the solitary celestial gardener, Jehovah (Jahveh) who "walked in the cool of the day" round his aboriginal Paradise. As for Adam and Eve, they too stemmed from Mesopotamian prototypes, but their reincarnation in Genesis was essentially a Jewish one. As the chronology of Jesus Christ prefixed to Matthew and Luke clearly testifies, Adam "the son of

God" was not only the ultimate ancestor of humanity, but was so very particularly of the Chosen Race, the Jews.

Actually the Genesis story of the Fall does not bulk very largely in the Old Testament; but the early

Gnostics who founded Christianity, were heretics on the fringe of Judaism, which prior to the fall of the Temple (70 AD) was more fluid and less uniform than it is today. In the writings of now forgotten Jewish sects with which Christian Gnostics were familiar, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, the legend of the Fall may have bulked more largely and possessed an importance denied to it amongst the more orthodox rabbinical schools. Be that as it may, the unknown theological genius who linked up Adam and Christ as the beginning and end of the divine scheme of salvation, thereby created a new theological system—one might indeed almost say a new religion.

Aristotle Was But the Wreck of an Adam

In Pauline theology and later on in the official corpus of Christian theology, Adam and Eve were our first parents. They fell due to a serpentine, Satanic manoeuvre and they and their descendants willy-nilly inherit the taint of original sin. But had Adam and Eve successfully resisted the Devil, they—and we as their descendants—would have remained perfect and sinless in the eyes of God. In which case presumably, this article could never have been written!

As for the manner of Adam's perfection, this knotty point in theology has been the subject of widespread inquiry by speculatively-minded Christian theologians, and most of them appear to have held that our first parents were created morally and physically perfect, but their intellectual capacities were discreetly passed over. But this silence was not universal, for some intrepid reasoners did not shrink from ascribing to Adam mental qualities on the same elevated scale as were his moral and physical perfection. As Robert South, a famous Anglican preacher of the 17th century did not hesitate to assure King Charles II and his court, "Aristotle was but the wreck of an Adam".

The Second Adam

Whereas the Old Testament began with the birth of the first Adam, the New Testament begins by recording the birth of the second. It was this ingenious Pauline speculation, unknown to the Synoptic Gospels, that really laid the foundation of that monumental theological system later erected by Catholic theology with enormous patience and often incredible ingenuity that reminds a modern reader

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Creation and Evolution

By F. A. RIDLEY

irresistibly of a Gothic cathedral in its massive outlines; of *Alice in Wonderland* in its often bizarre ingenuity.

If, as Genesis assures us, "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field", he can hardly have been more subtle than were some of the deductions made by theologians of unimpeachable orthodoxy about the precise nature and consequences of Eve's original *faux pas* in the Garden of Eden, which ultimately necessitated the intervention of the second Adam with all the intricate results that it eventually set in motion. No Adam, no Christ; no Eve, no original sin; no original sin, no Crucifixion; for the sins of the world were the direct consequence of the Fall and of the original sin that initially accrued from it.

Evolution and the Fall

However, after an uninterrupted reign of some 19 centuries, the once unchallenged dogma of the Fall, is in a very parlous situation, even with the Christian Churches themselves. For since Darwin, the scientific evidence in

favour of the evolutionary view of mankind has become so overwhelming that the Churches—even the Vatican—are forced to accept it. Even popes have given a cautious approval to it, and Catholic theologians have written learned treatises expressly designed to reconcile *Darwinism and Catholic Thought* (cf. H. Dorlodot). But how is it logically possible to reconcile the Pauline theory of the Fall with the Darwinian theory of evolution of mankind? One falls, the other rises. How is it even conceivably possible to reconcile them? Was Adam an ape who acquired a soul? The old Pauline dogma of the Fall, granting its premisses, had at least some logical consistency. But evolution surely makes any "second Adam" totally superfluous. Evolutionary Christianity despite its present fashionable vogue, appears to us to be a contradiction in terms. Orthodox Christianity depends for its very existence on the historical existence of the Garden of Eden and of the dire events that transpired there.

Remembrance Sunday

By DENIS COBELL

THE ANNUAL panegyric known as Remembrance Day will be celebrated at churches, chapels and war memorials this Sunday throughout the land, the panache reaching its ultimate around the Cenetaph, Whitehall. Both the Established Church and many Non-conformist branches betray their cause when joining these deliberations; the cause they will be supporting in a few weeks at Christmas, "peace, goodwill toward men", is an absolute denial of the narrow form of patriotism eulogised on this occasion.

It is interesting to note the attitude adopted by certain prominent Anglicans towards peace and war in Remembrance Day sermons. Dr. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's believes "war is the greatest evil for a nation, save one. A greater evil would be to commit the sin of Judas and betray the ideals and values which we have inherited". It is true Judas was a traitor, but not of ideals and values—he never recognised them—therefore this is a false parallel. Dr. Matthews continued: "A nation which does not honour its heroes is on the way out", to oppose the view that Remembrance Day had outlived its usefulness.

Many people will maintain that this day is not, and never has been, used as it should be: to remind us of past folly and spur us to future wisdom. It has become a reminder, with full military attendance, of how gloriously we have fought, and with what eagerness we would fight again to defend ourselves. Like many churchmen, Dr. Matthews suffers from a schizophrenic attitude towards peace: "Our memories should not gloze over or minimise the devastation of life, culture and morality which the two wars brought to the world". So, in one short sermon, Dr. Matthews has informed us that by war we uphold our ideals and by war we lose them. How low ecclesiastical logic can stoop to approve of our evil actions, while giving a brief reminder that we really should behave better! It is well known that the Anglican Church preaches peace when there is no active warfare, but sends its members to the battlefield when the state demands.

The four Gospels are full of utterances from the mouth of Christ, advocating the pacifist outlook. However when speaking to his disciples, Christ was more concerned with reverence and service towards himself, than with any other cause: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10, 34). This is a direct refutation to those Christians who see their

cause synonymous with peace, and a support for those who believe armed violence is justified in the fight against "evil".

Contradictions in the Bible and the ambiguity of religious bodies towards peace renders them dangerous, their united support of Remembrance Day activities is based on sentiment as opposed to reason. The Haig Fund with its Poppy Day, bears the name of one who possessed much power to alter the course of World War I but did little to halt the slaughter of countless naive troops. I appreciate that all Freethinkers may not be pacifists, but they must surely rejoice in the establishment of an international "peace" organisation with its own radio and press by Bertrand Russell who is also well known for his sympathy towards secularism. The destruction that has been, and still is, advocated in the name of Christianity, might have been considerably mitigated if more of its followers had acted on Christ's injunction: "Have peace one with another" (Mark, 9, 50).

Church and State in America

British readers interested in church-state relations in the United States will find rather useful Paul Blanshard's *Religion and the Schools: The Great Controversy* (Beacon Press, Boston, U.S. \$4.95. 265 pages). Blanshard, the United States's leading authority on church-state relations and its most vigorous champion of religious liberty, is the author of such familiar works as *An Outline of the British Labor Movement*; *American Freedom and Catholic Power*; *Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power*; *The Irish and Catholic Power*; and *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal*.

In his latest book Blanshard traces the history of church-state relations in the United States, summarises all the relevant US Supreme Court decisions, and analyses (and presents the complete texts of) the Supreme Court's recent rulings in the Engel (1962) and Schempp-Murray (1963) cases which banned prayer and Bible reading from the public (state-owned, tax-supported) schools. The principal dangers to religious freedom in the United States, Blanshard shows, are the drive to get religion into the public schools and, more especially, the powerful drive by the Roman Catholic Church to obtain public financial support for its vast system of indoctrination centres, which, though they do manage to perform many of the functions of public schools, cynically and falsely claim to be an integral part of the "American educational system". This book is of especial importance to Americans, but friends of religious liberty in the Commonwealth and elsewhere will find it interesting and useful.

EDD DOERR

Politics and Religion

By JENNIE W. M. TURNER (USA)

I AM CONSTANTLY amazed to hear people whom I had regarded as intelligent and sensible say that we should not take religion into account when voting for candidates for public office.

I do not see how any person who has any ideas of his own as to what he wants to accomplish for the general welfare can help taking into consideration the affiliations of the candidate with all organisations, including religious organisations, which have a programme which calls for political action, or which operate in any of the fields in which political institutions also operate.

Most religious sects today appear to have two types of concern and activity: their relations with God, and their relations with mankind. Included in their relations with God are their ideas of what He is like; of His power, and of what He wants them to do; how He wants them to treat Him, to worship Him—the whole ritual of worship; and also how He wants them to live—to behave themselves, and to behave towards their fellow men.

Now, there may be some sense in saying that we should not vote for or against a man because of his religion if we include in his religion only that part of it which is ritual, although the ritual a person performs constantly may indicate and influence his character. But it is the other part of his religion which is definitely important to the voter, namely, his ideas of how to behave, and of how to behave toward his fellow men; how his fellow men should behave and how they should behave toward him; and his ideas of the laws which should be passed and enforced or repealed to bring about the behaviour he would approve.

Insofar as a religious organisation advocates any political action, it is also a political organisation—a propaganda organisation, a political pressure group. The Christian Scientists are thus a political organisation opposing certain health regulations and practices; the Quakers are a political organisation opposing compulsory military service and favouring a definite peace programme; the Catholics are a political organisation which takes a definite, official stand on several of the most controversial political issues, including divorce, birth control and education. Many religious sects use their church as a place for discussion of issues for individual action, without taking official action.

Whenever a church takes official action on any political issue, binding on its members, it becomes a political organisation. Consequently, an informed voter may reasonably and conscientiously vote against a candidate because he is a Friend (Quaker), a Christian Scientist, a Catholic or a member of some other denomination which has declared views on political questions; or he may just as reasonably and conscientiously vote for him for the same reason.

But frequently we hear people described as "intolerant" or "bigoted" if they consider the religious affiliation of a candidate as a factor in their vote. The person who uses such terms does not understand that in a democracy a political election is for the expression of serious views on matters of great public concern; it is not a popularity or beauty contest, or a time for unthinking sentimentalism.

It is not intolerance to vote against a person whose views on public questions differ from our own. We would be intolerant if we tried to keep the candidate from expressing his views; if we tried to suppress his views; if we ourselves refused to listen to them and consider them. But we are not intolerant if we disagree with him and refuse to vote for him because of his views, if by refusing

to vote for him we refuse to provide him the public platform from which to continue to express his views and to put them into force.

The word "bigot" has become a sort of scare word. So far as I can remember, I have heard it used only with reference to Protestants who express disagreement with Catholic policy. I have never used it myself in application to anybody.

According to my dictionary, a bigot is a person who is "obstinately and blindly attached to some creed, opinion, practice or ritual; unreasonably devoted to a system or party; and illiberal toward the opinions of others". Under that definition, I do not see how anyone can be called a "bigot", except perhaps, the person who calls someone else by that name. For only a person who has these qualities himself could conceive of any other person having them; could be so lacking in a sense of humour and in human understanding as not to realise that everybody, in his own mind, is reasonable in his devotion to his creed and his party, and liberal towards the opinion of others.

It is true that in many of the relations of life, religion makes little difference. Like most citizens of this varied nation, I have in my family and among my closest and best-loved friends people of almost every religious faith and people of no faith: agnostics, atheists, Baptists, Baha'is, Buddhists, Catholics, Christian Scientists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Jews, Lutherans, Methodists, Free Methodists, Mormons, Friends, Unitarians, etc. In the performance of services, religion may or may not make a difference. I have had secretaries of various faith, and their faith did not seem to affect their service; some Catholics were good, some not so good as secretaries; some Protestants were good, some not so good. My druggist is a Catholic. The skilled surgeon who removed a goitre for me was a Catholic. So is the doctor we have had for my grandchildren, a wonderful children's doctor. He ought to be. This community is full of the children he has brought into the world and kept alive in emergencies. But the people who contemplate having him in childbirth have a right to know that his Church teaches that in case of a difficulty which would make necessary the choice of saving the mother or saving the child, the doctor should save the life of the child. This knowledge might make some reject the Catholic doctor; it might make others choose him.

The point is that we have to examine the religious as well as other affiliations of people in order to determine whom to choose for various services. We cannot just set up "religion" or "the Church" as sacred objects which must not be examined closely.

If I were seeking public office, I should feel that voters were quite justified in inquiring into my religious affiliations and views, which might very well keep me from being elected to any office.

In my youth I left the orthodox Protestant sect into which I was born (Methodist) for two main reasons. First, I deeply admired what I considered to be the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ, based on human brotherhood, and it seemed to me that most members of so-called Christian Churches were far from accepting these ethics. (I think they are much closer to it now than they were sixty years ago.) Second, I felt that the idea of the virgin birth of Jesus was unscientific, and immaterial and unimportant

(Concluded on page 356)

This Believing World

The unchanging Church of Rome has at last very grudgingly consented to a "fixed" date for Easter. Obviously if Jesus really was crucified on say April 30th, then April 30th would have to be the date kept every year. But though most people do not know it, Easter is a Pagan festival, a relic in fact of Sun and Moon worship, and having nothing to do with the crucifixion of Jesus. Rome's consent however depends on what other Churches may say. What is going to happen if Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Christian Scientists, and the Plymouth Brethren, refuse to co-operate?

★

It seems also that the Civil Powers will have to consent for, according to the *Daily Mail* (October 26th), a fixed calendar would mean that one day in our present year would have to be sacrificed. We should lose December 31st, and it would have to be called "Neutral Day", for "officially it would not exist", and December 30th would have 48 hours. Which all goes to show that you can't monkey with Sun or Moon worship even for Jesus's sake.

★

Two dear little Christian boys, aged nine and ten, and thoroughly indoctrinated with religion—one of them in a Catholic school—admitted having set fire to a church (which was insured for £62,000, and which was burnt down). They also admitted that they had almost ruined the Harvest Thanksgiving by throwing eggs and apples all over the place, actually smashing the Harvest Loaf. It is all very sad and very strange, as our educationalists are quite certain that religion prevents juvenile delinquency. We wonder what went wrong?

★

The writer of "A Saturday Reflexion" in the London *Evening News* for October 26th, admits "we cannot put our finger on an absolutely convincing proof of God's existence". Moreover, the same writer insists that "we have no evidence that the soul lives on after death"—a shattering blow to the 600 millions of Christians who so fervently believe in eternal life, and to the many millions of Spiritualists who believe much more than that. But "our Lord" believed in eternal life, in eternal Hell, and naturally in his Father's existence. So why ask for evidence?

★

The Bishop of Woolwich, after dislodging the Almighty from his comfortable seat on the clouds "up there", has recently turned his attention to the "Fairy Story Gospels" as the *Daily Express* (October 22nd) heads an article. Dr. Robinson is convinced that "modern man looks on Gospel accounts of Jesus's birth as belonging to a fairy story world", as he says in *The Honest to God Debate*. SCM, the publishers, are so sure of the book's success that they have printed an edition of 100,000 copies to start with. What a change in thought did Paine's *Age of Reason* bring about so that at last his ideas on the myths of Christianity, which made him the most hated Englishman of his time, should now be commonplaces with some of our Christian bishops!

★

But whatever the explanation, it is now a fact that the stories of the birth of Jesus, as described in Matthew and Luke, are now recognised by a Christian bishop as myth. And in a later work he will deal with "the Resurrection and Ascension stories"—with what result we shall see. But we are sure that one day, when the complete story of "our Lord" is analysed and pronounced altogether mythical, the credit will be given, not to Dupuis,

Robert Taylor—who spent three years in jail for saying so—and John M. Robertson, but to our courageous bishops. Christians will see to that.

POLITICS AND RELIGION

(Concluded from page 355)

for the living of a good life, and compared with the living of a good life. To me, the ethics of Jesus, not his origin, were the important thing.

With that part of religion which consists of ritual worship of God, I have no concern. I do not claim to know anything about God. I have always been overwhelmed with awe and wonder and reverence before the vast universe in which I find myself, a tiny speck on a tiny ball of earth whirling around in space among other whirling bodies in orderly, regular activity. The question of when and how and by whom this gigantic, intricate machine was created has fascinated me from childhood; and I did not for long accept the explanations of Moses, an intelligent leader of an advanced race, but at a time when that race was in its childhood, scientifically. I am interested in every discovery by scientists working patiently with telescopes and microscopes and other delicate instruments, which might throw any light on the problem of creation. But I have not learned from the scientists, and I have never had any contacts or experiences, which would prove to me that there is a personal "God". Perhaps there is one; perhaps there is not. All I can say is that I do not know. The technical word that describes a person in my condition is "agnostic".

I do not spend any time worrying about whether there is a personal God or not, because it seems to me that there is nothing I can do about God; while I can do something about man, and there are so many things that need to be done to insure a satisfactory existence for all mankind on this earth. Every human being can work to make a better life for mankind. This is the part of religion in which I am interested; and it is also the part which belongs to politics.

I do not know whether a "soul" goes on living after death. My behaviour on this earth does not depend on fear of eternal punishment or hope of eternal reward in life after death. I believe that people can live good lives without the stimulus of fear of punishment or hope of reward. I believe that in our public schools we can and should teach ethics; can prepare our youth for a good life. We can do it by helping them to see the things that need to be done next to make this a better life for most people, the problems that need to be solved; by making them acquainted with the people past and present who have worked and are working for the next steps in civilisation; by having them discuss behaviour: what is right and what is wrong on the basis of its effects not only on ourselves but also on the people around us; on mankind.

A man in Denver, Colo., who objected to having his dog vaccinated because of his religious beliefs (the man's beliefs not the dog's), was fined for letting the unvaccinated dog run loose. The man's religious beliefs would not let him (the man) be inoculated and he felt that his views covered his dog, too.

[Reprinted from the American Freethought paper, *The Liberal*, September, 1963.]

THE FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

(A Penguin Special)

By Dr. Ronald Fletcher

3s. 6d.

Plus postage from THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP

THE FREETHINKER

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

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25, half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40).

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. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAB 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 (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.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, November 12th, 7.30 p.m.: P. R. CRELLIN, M.A., "The New Humanism and Education Today".

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, November 10th, 3 p.m.: J. A. MILLAR, "Why I Am Terrified of Christianity".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, November 10th, 6.30 p.m.: FILMS, "The Captive River" and "Unseen Enemies".

Marble Arch Branch (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, November 10th (Remembrance Sunday), 7.30 p.m.: DR. J. W. BURTON, "Steps Towards Co-existence".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, November 10th, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Objections to Christian Belief".

Notes and News

WE HAVE had several letters from readers praising Joel Carmichael's *The Death of Jesus* (Gollancz, 25s.), which was reviewed last week by Colin McCall, and which has now reached its second impression. Clearly these readers do not share the view of its English publisher that the book's thesis is "finally untenable". Still less do they agree with the grossly prejudiced Christian review that appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* (20/9/63). This was disparaging—and inaccurate—from the start, referring to Mr. Carmichael's "select Reference List" as "the brief bibliography" and passing off the work as "all familiar and all so absurd". Detailed criticism, "though easy", was "a waste of time". The *TLS* reviewer wrote a lot of rubbish about Christianity and its "success story", that we can't deal with here. But one allegation against Mr. Carmichael must be refuted.

★
IF THE real story of Jesus had been what the theory "aims", said the reviewer, "the motive for the transformation [of Jesus] would have been altogether lacking". This, in fact, is dealt with in Mr. Carmichael's sixth chapter and may be summarised as follows: Jesus taught an imminent Kingdom of God on earth. This did not materialise to the early generation of Christians looked to the Second Coming. "When that was also postponed, or adjourned to the day after tomorrow, the Church was forced to alter the entire con-

ception...". Indeed, Mr. Carmichael suggests, "it was just this failure of the Kingdom to materialise that generated the Christian Church". But a *TLS* reviewer can't be expected to see it that way.

★
IN A lecture to the National Marriage Guidance Council in Marylebone on October 16th, Dr. Ronald Fletcher (author of the Penguin, *The Family and Marriage*) said that there was no reason why sexual intercourse should be confined to married couples. The only conditions for intimacy should be that the union was one of responsibility and the parties were considerate (*Daily Herald*, 17/10/63). Sex and love were good, said Dr. Fletcher, "but we can't be forever in one another's arms. The perpetual embrace is in danger of becoming a stranglehold. We must again consider the divorce law. The relatively high divorce rate may not be indicative of decline, but rather of improvement".

★
GRANTING A decree nisi to Mr. F. A. G. Buckland (now of Toronto) because of desertion by his wife of Broxbourne, Herts., Mr. Commissioner Latey said that when Mrs. Buckland became a Jehovah's Witness in 1950, it marked a turn for the worse in her marriage. "She turned her husband from the matrimonial bed and told him she did not want him" (*Daily Telegraph*, 18/10/63). "If, in fact, this sect practices Christian charity, humility and forbearance", said the Commissioner, "its influence seems to have had a disastrous effect upon this wife's mind in relation to her husband. Her devotion to the sect became her chief interest in life".

★
"IT SEEMS that there is some opposition in Ilford Council chamber to the idea of granting the freedom of the borough to the Archbishop of Westminster, Dr. John Heenan", commented the *Ilford Recorder* (24/10/63). And it certainly does. In fact the *Recorder's* reporter, David Rose, was told that "feelings ran high" at a secret debate on the proposal, and although it was decided that the Freeman's Roll Committee should give it further consideration, such was the "outcry" against it that "one councillor said afterwards he thought it would not see the light of day again". A majority of councillors favoured the proposal, but "it was clear that it would not have secured the necessary two-thirds majority at a special council meeting at which Archbishop Heenan would have to be present to receive the honour". And that would be a most embarrassing situation. To the *Recorder*, the quibbling was ill-timed. "In the eyes of Catholics, Protestants and agnostics alike", Dr. Heenan's rise was an honour in which Ilford had a share.

★
RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS, we read in the *Daily Telegraph* (28/10/63) attacked the Ministry of Education in Jerusalem on Sunday, October 27th, "after 24 hours of demonstrations and sharp exchanges with police". Seven people were arrested and one policeman was injured, bricks and "other missiles" having been thrown from balconies and rooftops. The demonstration began because two hundred tourists had crossed the border from Jordan under police protection and "passed through religious quarters in buses on the Sabbath".

★
"GOD-FEARING" folk are in a minority in North-East Scotland as elsewhere in Britain, as three young divinity students discovered recently. After cycling more than 1,500 miles and calling at farms, manses and "even pubs", the students had to report (*Daily Express*, 2/10/63) that though many people owned the Bible, there were few who read it. One man even had six, but never looked at them.

Science and Religion

By G. L. SIMONS

IN THE PAST religious apologists attempted to counter scientific thought either by cursory dismissal, or by burning books and heretics. But eventually science began to get the upper hand and today it cannot be dismissed, nor can heretics be burned. The only answer for the religious apologist is to show that the conflict between science and religion is only apparent, that in fact they each have an important role for man. This is what Harold K. Schilling attempts in his book, *Science and Religion* (Allen and Unwin, 25s.).

The book starts with a statement of the main thesis. According to Schilling science and religion "are fundamentally not incompatible . . .". They are different, he admits, but not "mutually irrelevant". He goes further; they are "remarkably alike . . . in their spirit, temper of mind, and in their basic attitude toward truth and reason, and freedom of enquiry . . .". Schilling maintains that although science and religion are limited to their own fields, they do interact and are enriched in consequence.

He explains the difficulty of a brief definition of either science or religion, and examines their respective natures in several ways. For example, he lists the sort of questions that they ask, and suggests that each is characterised by a type of faith. Science depends upon faith in the relationship of man to Nature, religion is that of man to God. In examining science and religion he discovers further important points of similarity, i.e. neither progresses solely according to strict formal reasoning but largely by creative insight; also they are each essentially social activities.

Furthermore, both science and religion are characterised, Schilling maintains, by a three-fold nature. Each depends upon (a) collecting data of an experiential type, (b) co-ordinating this data in a theoretical framework, and (c) applying the results to practical affairs. In religion the second aspect is called theology; in science the third aspect is called technology. He shows how there is feedback between the various stages, and how they are applicable to different sciences.

Schilling next examines how notions change within both science and religion. Here he claims to have found another important similarity. Both had ideas which now are regarded as unsound; he lists examples. He makes a further distinction between the experiential and theoretical traditions in science, and between the permanent elements (the experienced data) and the transient elements (the theories that accommodate the experiences). Theology, he maintains, is similarly characterised.

Next follows a discussion about creeds, and the nature of the language used to convey religious meaning. Schilling attempts to draw a close analogy between the nature of theology and the nature of science (as revealed in the previous part). Even dogmatism is shown to be a part of both science and religion. For example, the unqualified acceptance of certain basic ideas is necessary for passing examinations and earning a living.

Schilling then suggests that scientific notions, e.g. light, can be conceived in three different ways—according to experienced data, to theorising, and to intuition. He suggests that the concepts of theology, e.g. God, can be approached in the same way. He then elaborates some of the ideas already expressed and examines the nature of concepts, and tries to show how there is a "cognitive spectrum" embracing both scientific and religious knowledge.

He speculates about the future of science, and concludes the book with a discussion of why so many religions exist, and whether this can be satisfactorily accounted for, if, as he maintains, religion and science proceed in a similar fashion.

Schilling's thesis is an interesting one and is presented intelligibly. His prose is adequate although not inspired, and he is rarely obscure. However, I think that the logic of the book is poor, that Schilling is guilty of special pleading, unwarranted assumptions and even self-contradiction. Before giving my reasons for thinking that he fails to establish his thesis I will make some preliminary objections.

On page 19 he calls the horror at scientific experiments on unwilling victims a "religious reaction". Schilling has an obvious tendency to identify religion and morality. This is, of course, an independent thesis which he makes no attempt to support. But as we shall see his case depends upon it, amongst other things.

In distinguishing between science and religion, he lists questions peculiar to each. But those asked in religion (page 20) are quite capable of being approached scientifically, if indeed they are genuine questions. For example, "Who am I?" and "What is death and why?" can quite properly be regarded as belonging to science. This means that religion no longer has a question-answering role, as it did in the ignorant past.

An attempt is made to re-interpret Genesis in "poetic and symbolic language". This casuistry leads to such significant remarks as "Whether Mary was or was not a virgin physically seems not too important . . ." (page 118). Schilling would have been put to death by the Church a relatively short time ago for such insights. Of the dark days of persecution, he says, that despite the "heresy trials and excommunications" there was "momentous progress in thought" (page 122). But by whom—the clerics or the heretics? The latter, I suspect.

On page 125, in talking of the new symbolic interpretation of religious statements, Schilling first says ". . . this does not mean that the fundamental beliefs . . . are now being repudiated" and then "It would be a mistake . . . to suppose that the transience of religious thought resides only in the changing modes of linguistic expression . . .". At best this is obscure, at worst contradictory.

Schilling says, in talking of assigning attributes to God, that this might be done "metaphysically in terms of attributes that *should* go with an a-priori conception of God" (page 166). But he has already said (page 86) that ". . . history seems to show convincingly that systems built upon a-priori, metaphysical foundations are built on shifting sands".

He says that science can achieve certainty (page 107) but of a type that cannot "satisfy him who demands that all possible doubt be removed" (page 176). What sort of certainty is this? He also states (page 179) that "the Church has become rather wary of miracles". Is this due, I wonder, to clerical thought or to scientific progress.

These objections (which could be extended) are secondary, although significant. Schilling's thesis fails for important logical reasons of which he seems unaware. His lack of philosophical acumen is shown on several occasions, e.g. when he says (page 107) that science can achieve certainty (has he read Ayer's *Problem of Knowledge?*), when he implies a necessary corollary between a-priori notions and metaphysics (page 86), in his unreflective talk

of "ultimate" values and concerns (pages 19 and 217). He admits (page 142) that he is proceeding "not as a philosophical analyst". This is a pity since his thesis is philosophical.

His thesis fails, however, because of his bland assumption of religious truth. God is assumed to exist throughout the book (in particular see pages 64, 168, 232 and 244). Schilling maintains that theology is based on religious experience, by which he means such things as "experience of good and evil, love and hate, physical and spiritual hunger, peace and war, justice and injustice, the holy and the diabolical, redemption and forgiveness" (page 111). But to assume that an experience is holy or redemptive begs the question. And the other "religious" experiences cannot be used logically to arrive at God. Indeed they are all within the province of the psychologist; in short, theology is a non-starter—it cannot be legitimately derived from human experience. Perhaps Schilling recognises this, which may be why he makes so many *ad hoc* assumptions.

And in talking of the abandoned ideas of science and religion, an important difference emerges which I am sure Schilling has not noticed. Of the abandoned scientific ideas, Schilling says "Today no jury of scientists would accept any of them" (page 93) (my italics). Of the abandoned religious ideas, he says that they have been "abandoned by all but the most conservative segments of the Christian Church" (page 110) (my italics). Note the different emphasis in these two quotes, surely indicating the superior objectivity of science.

Hence I believe that Schilling fails to establish his thesis. His argument is loose and often question-begging. His attempt is courageous but superficial. I feel that apart from comforting the unreflective religious believer, his book has little to recommend it, unless it be its (unintentional) capacity to indicate the anachronistic nature of theology, and the adequacy of science.

Enriching Thetford's Library

THE COLLECTION of rare books and pamphlets by Thomas Paine that had been collected by the late Ambrose G. Barker over many years, and "religiously" kept by Miss Ella Twynam, were ceremoniously handed over to the library at Thetford — the town where Paine was born in 1737 — on October 23rd in the presence of the Mayor, Lord Fisher, and the officials of the Town Council and Library. There was an excellent attendance.

Miss Twynam and Mr. Herbert Cutner were most hospitably entertained and later, after Lord Fisher's introductory speech, Mr. Cutner gave a short address on Paine stressing his magnificent achievements in the cause of liberty and pointing out that he was more than a citizen of Thetford — he was a world-citizen whose name is perpetuated in every country for his famous *Rights of Man*. Mr. Cutner stressed that Thomas Paine was not an Atheist, but a Deist like Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln, though he had no belief in the Bible as a "revelation". Mr. Cutner also suggested that most of those who attacked him never read either the *Rights of Man* or *The Age of Reason* — the book in which his Deistical views were clearly expounded.

The address was followed by a tea enjoyed by those present as the guests of the Mayor. Many press photos were taken, and an account of the proceedings appeared in the *Eastern Daily Express* (24/10/63) and (illustrated) in the *Thetford and Watton Times* (25/10/63).

It should be added that all the books were very tastefully shown, and greatly admired. And both Miss Twynam and Mr. Cutner wish to express their thanks for the very cordial hospitality given to them.

D. H. Tribe on "Sunday Break"

ON OCTOBER 27TH, the ABC Television programme, *Sunday Break*, opened with funeral scenes: the coffin taken from the hearse, borne to the graveside and then lowered, with the camera, it seemed, peering just over the edge. This was the prelude to the presentation and discussion of three attitudes towards "Life After Death": those of a Roman Catholic priest, an Atheist and a Spiritualist.

Father Michael O'Dwyer, whose disrobing struck a note of comic relief after the stark beginning, recited and emphasised his belief in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. A soul without a body—"its instrument of action"—was, he said, "an incomplete thing"; completeness would seem to demand a resurrection of the body, therefore "God will give us back our bodies". Questioned by a group of intelligent teenagers, Father O'Dwyer had some difficulty deciding at what stage the body would be resurrected: in youth, middle age or old age. He took refuge in Augustinian "perfect forms".

Next, David H. Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, presented the atheistic view, pictured against the book-lined committee room of 103 Borough High Street. Among a number of points in Mr. Tribe's well-reasoned case against life after death was the linguistic one. If by "life" we mean—as we do—a living, functioning, organisational state, and by "death" we mean the cessation of that living, functioning process, how can there possibly be a life after death? It is a contradiction in terms. Mr. Tribe also approached the matter empirically, and asked for the evidence for immortality. He dealt capably with the questions.

Then Father O'Dwyer joined in and, having made "three points" at some length, did his utmost to prevent Mr. Tribe from answering them. Quietly, effectively, however, Mr. Tribe disposed of the validity of the Josephus, Pliny and Tacitus "evidence", and so on. Father O'Dwyer's determination to hog the microphone, if not the camera, prevented questions from the youngsters at this stage.

Finally came the psychic Mr. Gordon Johnson, shown first with a starry- and staring-eyed visitor, who was presumably being given a message from the other side, the other world or the other plane. Mr. Johnson told us that he possessed an extra—or extended—sense, likening himself to the sheepdog which hears the whistle inaudible to man. He didn't "call up" the dead, mind you: they came of their own accord, but appeared before him as tangible as ordinary flesh and blood people.

Questioned about these "materialisations" by Mr. Tribe, Mr. Johnson seemed to have forgotten about them. "What do you mean by 'materialisations'?" he responded. Here, chairman Mr. Barry Westwood reminded Mr. Johnson of his own words, and Mr. Tribe wondered if the "Psychic" suffered from hallucinations and needed to see a psychiatrist. And Father O'Dwyer couldn't let Mr. Johnson get away with the remark that a Catholic could be a Spiritualist. Definitely not, said the priest. Forbidden.

C.McC.

CLASH OF OPPOSITES

There could hardly be greater diversity than the views of an atheist and the faith of a Roman Catholic priest.

The "Sunday Break" provided a fascinating clash of opposites. Mr. David Tribe, Secretary of the National Secular Society, was a lone voice in the studio—most of the young questioners were committed Christians—but he made sure it was heard.

The priest, having insisted on the existence of purgatory and life after death, interrupted the freethinker so much that Barry Westwood, the chairman, should have intervened.

But Mr. Tribe was not to be shouted down. He revelled in the clash and the ensuing point and counterpoint debate was one of the liveliest since Lord Boothby became

incensed over the wartime raids on Dresden.

Just as secular fireworks were being scattered and theological dogmas being reasserted, time closed the debate.

Why must the programme planners always be in such a hurry?

In debates of this kind extra time should be allowed or lopped off "About Religion". —*Leicester Evening Mail* (27/10/63).

CORRESPONDENCE

D. H. TRIBE ON TV

I must congratulate the National Secular Society President Mr. David Tribe on his ITV appearance on Sunday, October 27th. Considering the inexcusable rudeness of the Roman Catholic priest, who seemed to be trying his best to prevent the "Atheist" having any say at all, and the chairman, who should have kept him in order, Mr. Tribe did an exceptionally fine job, and I would not be surprised at subsequent appearances.

The teenagers, though Christians, were obviously intelligent and I cannot remember that there was any disagreement between them and Mr. Tribe, although "God" and "Purgatory" were criticised. The Spiritualist, who was recommended to "a good psychiatrist" was rather inane. The time would have been put to better use had he been left out.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY

(Secretary, Leicester Secular Society).

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

In his speech on the occasion of the 57th anniversary of the Reformed (Orthodox Protestant) Students' Society at Utrecht, D. S. Attema, Professor of Arabic at Amsterdam Free (Protestant) University, said that "Possibilities of a dialogue between Christianity and Islam have increased in recent times by the growing secularisation of our world—in the East perhaps somewhat more hidden than in the West, but present there too—and by the threat of materialistic systems to both Christianity and Islam . . ." (*Trouw*, Protestant daily, 18/10/63). A. M. VAN DER GIEZEN.

SWEETNESS AND LIGHT

I would like to say how thoroughly I agree with D.W. in his shrewd and timely article "Sweetness and Light". The present access of sweetness in the Romish Church is altogether too sweet to be sound, its light too lurid for any but the most sinister shadows.

It is too often forgotten that what is called the Roman Catholic Church is, in the last resort, nothing more than an imposing facade built up to screen the activities of a hierarchy of craft, power-greedy prelates. Once these gentry got the upper hand they would let us know what they mean by sweetness and light.

I see it is reported that the sacrament known as Extreme Unction is to be renamed the Last Rites. Apparently the extreme unction is being translated into another sphere for this has certainly been nauseatingly in evidence during the past few months.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

ESP

As one who believes in an ultimate cause but is distrustful of much of past practices of original religion in its association with power, I find your journal, its comments and criticisms, interesting and valuable.

Your criticism on Telepathy in your issue of September 20th, was interesting, but I think Mr. McCall's judgment was perhaps obscured by the stunts of the hypnotists. Rosalind Heywood's *The Sixth Sense* (Chatto and Windus) contains much matter of moment to those who think all humanity possesses an inherent spirituality latent in their mind, and a key to the full life.

I see our indefatigable contemporary, the *News of the World*, has abandoned the delights and distractions of Miss Keeler, in favour of a series on the psychic. But despite these incredulities, it seems to me there is, amongst the reported manifestations of extra-sensory perception, a few clues to the depths of the mind and the mysteries of memory which remain closed to the psychologists.

GODFREY R. BEANEY.

MARBLE ARCH BRANCH NSS

One of the most popular and active members of the National Secular Society in the London area, Mr. Richard J. Sproule, is the new Hon. Secretary of the Marble Arch Branch. Mr. Sproule was unanimously elected by the Branch committee to succeed Mr. William J. McIlroy, who recently took up his appointment as General Secretary of the Society.

At the Annual General Meeting, the Marble Arch Branch committee was strengthened by the election of three additional members, Mr. R. Condon (Literature sales organiser), Mr. S. D. Kuebart and Mr. R. Murray.

THEATRE

"THE POSSESSED"

"Dostoevsky's characters, as we know well by now, are neither odd nor absurd. They are like us; we have the same heart. And if *The Possessed* is a prophetic book, this is not only because it prefigures our nihilism, but also because its protagonists are torn or dead souls unable to love and suffering from that inability, wanting to believe and yet unable to do so—like those who people our society and our spiritual world today". I have quoted from Albert Camus's foreword to his stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel because I consider it important to our understanding of the play. Camus regarded it not only as a dramatisation of one of the world's literary masterpieces, but also "a work of current application".

How far can we agree? It will depend upon our temperament, and I am temperamentally far from Dostoevsky and Camus; from the anguished-absurd view of man. I have never needed to ponder the moral predicament of man without God. Morally, as intellectually, God is a handicap, not a help. To me, atheism is realistic, not nihilistic.

Partly, of course, my attitude is English, not Russian or French. And to me, as I think to most theatregoers, many of Dostoevsky's characters are odd, if not absurd. Some, however, are deeply moving and drawn with tenderness. And many of us suffer from inability to love, if not inability to believe. We have the same heart. Once again, then, the Mermaid Theatre is responsible for providing us with an unusual and valuable theatrical experience in which Barrie Ingham as the despairing Stavrogin and Sheila Shand Gibbs as his pitiful wife are perhaps outstanding.

C. McC.

RECENT PAPERBACKS

UNWIN BOOKS

Political Ideals, by Bertrand Russell, 4s. 6d.
Mysticism and Logic, by Bertrand Russell, 8s. 6d.
Bertrand Russell: The Passionate Sceptic, by Alan Wood, 3s. 6d.
The Essential Trotsky, 8s. 6d.
Philosophical Aspects of Modern Science, by C. E. M. Joad, 6s. 4d.
Fifty Poems, by Boris Pasternak, 5s.

PELICANS

The Marxists, by C. Wright Mills, 6s.
Roman Catholicism, by Sebastian Bullough, 4s. 6d.
Anger and After: A Guide to the New British Drama, by John Russell Taylor, 5s.
The Family Life of Old People: An Inquiry in East London, by Peter Townsend, 5s.
The Gentle Art of Mathematics, by Dan Pedoe, 3s. 6d.
A History of British Trade Unionism, by Henry Pelling, 5s.
Literature and Criticism, by H. Coombes, 3s. 6d.
The Necessity of Art: A Marxist Approach, by Ernst Fischer, 4s. 6d.

PENGUIN CLASSICS

Aristotle: Ethics, 5s.
Homer: The Iliad, 4s. 6d.
Homer: The Odyssey, 3s. 6d.
Lucian: Satirical Sketches, 3s. 6d.
Lucretius: The Nature of the Universe, 3s. 6d.
Machiavelli: The Prince, 3s. 6d.
Montaigne: Essays, 7s. 6d.
Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 5s.
Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel, 7s. 6d.
Stendhal: Scarlet and Black, 6s.
Tacitus: Annals of Imperial Rome, 5s.
Voltaire: Candide, 3s. 6d.

CONTINENTAL FICTION

The Fall, by Albert Camus, 2s. 6d.
The Wayward Wife and Other Stories, by Alberto Moravia, 3s. 6d.
Iron in the Soul, by Jean-Paul Sartre, 4s. 6d.
 Plus postage from THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP

The Controversial Play about Pius XII
The Representative, by Rolf Hochhuth, with historical appendix.
 Translated by Robert David McDonald. (Published by Methuen)
 PAPERBACK EDITION 16s. HARDBOUND 25s.

A Freethought Approach to Witchcraft
The Dark World of Witches by Eric Maple.
 (Published by Robert Hale)
 HARDBOUND 21s.

Please add 1s. postage per volume.
 Available from THE FREETHINKER BOOKSHOP