

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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PRESENT attempts to bring about some sort of Christian reunion between Rome and Canterbury, have produced a whole spate of controversial literature, both Roman and Anglican which harks back to the English Reformation of the 16th century.

What did actually happen during that stormy but memorable era? Was the English Reformation in reality a genuine theological revolution like its Lutheran and Calvinist opposite numbers upon the European continent, or was it merely an administrative change as a result of which the English Church passed from papal to royal control?

In the light afforded by present-day efforts to undo in this 20th century the work of the English Reformation of the 16th, it may be desirable to find out precisely what the English Tudor Reformation intended to do, and what, in point of fact, it actually did.

The Political Reformation

The first, and historically most important distinction between the English Reformation and its European contemporary, was that it was started and led throughout all its successive vicissitudes by politicians, whereas on the continent it was professional theologians like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli who initially made the running. At Worms (1507) and Geneva (1536 *et seq*) Luther and Calvin led a theological revolution against the whole Roman system; a revolution which began by denying the divine right of the Papacy to govern, or even to exist at all. Nothing analogous to this ever took place in England, where Henry Tudor (Henry VIII, 1509-47) was, and remained to the end of his days, a devout Catholic. He firmly believed the whole medieval system of theology and whilst hanging Catholics wholesale as traitors, yet impartially burned Protestants alive as heretics, just as the Spanish Inquisition was doing on the continent, or as his own medieval predecessors had done in England.

What the men who originated the English Reformation initially aimed at, seems to have been merely the substitution of the royal authority in the Tudor state for the alien jurisdiction of the Papacy. When once the autocratic monarchy of the totalitarian Tudor state had made good its claim to supercede the alien jurisdiction of Rome as its supreme head of the English Church, the Reformation had achieved its purpose from the point of view of the king and his ministers who had actually started it.

Defender of the Faith

For Henry, who had earned his title of Defender of the (Roman!) Faith from the Pope as a reward for "refuting" Martin Luther, never appears to have had the least sympathy with the iconoclastic heresies of the continental reformers. As a learned Catholic historian of the English Reformation has observed, all that "the mighty Lord who broke the bounds of Rome" (Henry), really desired, was to become entirely independent of the Papacy: in short, to be his own (secular) pope, just as the Byzantine emperors of Constantinople had been, or as their imitators, the

Tsars of Russia were to be down to the end of the Russian Empire in 1917.

The Protestant Reformation: First Phase

While Henry VIII lived, there was no question of any specifically *Protestant* Reformation in England in any way analogous to the contemporary upheaval on the continent. The Catholic historian already cited (M. Louis Constant) gives Henry Tudor an explicit testimonial as regards his

bona fide Catholic orthodoxy. Circumstances had made Henry anti-Roman but not anti-Catholic.

The Protestant Reformation came after the king's death. It came on two successive waves separated by nearly a century. The first wave broke immediately

after Henry's death, under the titular reign of his son Edward VI, (1547-53) and under the real leadership of the young king's two successive Lord Protectors, the Dukes of Somerset and Northumberland, both Protestants in the continental revolutionary sense. For Somerset, perhaps the most farsighted statesman of the Tudor era, actually repealed the laws against heresy in accordance with the Reformation's cardinal teaching of "private judgment". He introduced religious toleration in England for the very first time, a revolutionary development that must surely have made Henry Tudor turn in his grave.

As it was, the ensuing Catholic counter-revolution under Mary, who succeeded Edward in 1553, had to convene a special parliament in order to reinstate the laws against heresy previously repealed by Somerset, before they could again get the fires of Smithfield blazing merrily with Protestant fuel. It should be noted in passing that neither the Roman nor the Spanish Inquisition ever had any jurisdiction in medieval (Catholic) England. All the laws against heresy were constitutionally enacted by English parliaments. The most important was the *De Haeretico Comburendo* (For the incineration of heretics) enacted in 1401 primarily against the Lollards by the fanatical ex-Teutonic Knight Henry IV (1399-1413). The Marian persecution proceeded under this statute.

The Protestant Reformation: Second Phase

The excesses of the Marian counter-revolution produced a corresponding reaction. This took the form of the Elizabethan compromise. Elizabeth Tudor (1558-1603), in essence restored the regime set up by her father, Henry VIII, a Byzantine Catholic Church orthodox in doctrine (though with some medieval accretions offensive to Renaissance scholarship removed) with a Catholic hierarchy of bishops but with the monarch substituted for the pope as the supreme head of the church as well as the state. Most important of all, Elizabeth did *not* repeal the laws against heresy, and heretics continued to be burned under her and her successor James I (1603-25)—the last in 1612.

However, militant Protestantism got another opportunity later in the century when, during the Civil War (1640-51), the Calvinist minority again seized power under the dynamic military leadership of Oliver Cromwell. For eleven years (1649-60) the Protestant Revolution con-

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The English Revolution

By F. A. RIDLEY

tinued, and England for the first time since Edward VI (or rather, of his Protectors) became a really Protestant country. And the Radical "Barebones Parliament" 1652-3, again repealed the laws against heresy exactly a century after Somerset had first done so.

However, reaction again triumphed, this time permanently. For since the Revolution of the Stuarts in 1660, England has retained the Tudor set-up of a Byzantine Catholic regime substantially unaltered.

Reunion with Rome?

In the light of the above summary outline, the following facts would appear to be relevant in particular reference to the present ecumenical movement towards reunion with

Rome. The English Reformation was never a genuinely Protestant one, except for two short periods of a few years under respectively the two Lord Protectors, Somerset and Cromwell.

The Church of England by Law Established, is not the result of any genuinely Protestant Reformation, but of a series of political compromises. In doctrine, in administration, and above all in basic mental outlook, it remains a Catholic, *not* a Protestant Church, but in the Byzantine not Roman tradition, with the unity of church and state.

I submit that these historical facts ought to be kept in mind in any current consideration involving Christian reunion between Rome and Canterbury.

Women in Society

By KIT MOUAT

THE National Council for Civil Liberties issued in May a most valuable and informative pamphlet *Women*, which is based on a study undertaken by Data Research Ltd. At 2s. 6d. no Secularist or Humanist should be without it. Education, employment, prospects, the professions, unequal pay, marriage and work and women's place in society are all dealt with concisely and readably. As the introduction points out, "The argument over women's rights has always been confused with the argument about women's role. But until these are regarded as completely separate issues, millions of people will continue to be second-class citizens".

Discrimination begins at school. "There is deliberately one standard for boys and another for girls . . .". Girls leave school earlier than boys, and only 25.4 per cent of women go to university; "in the general competition for university places girls have far less chance than boys". For a girl who has full qualifications and wants to be an engineer or a scientist, the outlook is bleak. There is no opportunity at all for those who want to be more than a clerk in the printing trade, to be a stockbroker, or, for that matter, a clergywoman. "The medical schools have not yet adopted the idea that admittance should be as a result of open competition with no regard to the sex of the applicant". Women go into offices and factories and then get married, very often to escape the dreary work involved. As regards pay, the slogan is "equal but different". The work for both sexes is equal; the difference lies in the pay packets. Even holidays were distributed unequally, it was found, "and in some firms it was reported that women had to work for eight years to earn the same holiday entitlement that men received after five years". Although the BBC gave equal pay to women in 1926, only half-a-dozen or so of its top jobs out of 150 are held by women. There has never been a woman judge in the High Court, nor a woman editor of a daily newspaper, and women journalists are still expected to concentrate their efforts on subjects that are of interest only to their own sex.

The pamphlet deals effectively with the traditional arguments against progress on the grounds that the "time is not yet ripe". And, of course, by encouraging and praising apathy in women and by suggesting that it is "unfeminine" to fight for one's rights, men succeed from generation to generation in preventing the "ripening" process. There are, however, "eight-and-a-half million women at work in Britain today. Seven million of them have not yet been granted equal economic rights. An enormous force, should they choose to make an immediate demand for equality".

Perhaps more than ever before we need another Secularist Annie Besant!

The pamphlet is called *Women*, and so inevitably the instances where men are the victims of discrimination are omitted. There are, however, some valid points that are not mentioned; for instance, a married woman cannot have a hysterectomy operation without signed permission from her husband, and even if a man and wife jointly own their house, it is most probably only the husband's name that will be marked for jury service. (When I remarked on this in my own district, I was greeted with, "surely you don't want to be on a jury?")

In common law (we read) "the husband and wife are one, and the husband is the one".

The laws regarding the guardianship of children are outrageous. In a happy marriage the wife and mother may submit with good humour to the indignity of her status, but I cannot imagine how the woman who has to beg for every shilling she needs, does not know her husband's income and has no rights over her children, can ever create a relationship of any value with her overlord. Perhaps there ought to be serious research into a possible link between the so-called female "frigidity" and the position of women in this country when they are not in bed. If women are too lazy, too lacking in confidence to fight their own battles, what excuse have men for not fighting them for us? Is it still only the Rights of *Man* that concern even the most progressive?

The Conclusion of the pamphlet sums up: "If a woman marries, she loses her legal rights as an individual; if she remains single, she loses her right to equal pay and opportunity as a working person. If she has legitimate children, she has no rights over them; if she has illegitimate children, she suffers both economically and socially".

In his foreword Martin Ennals (General Secretary of the NCCL) writes, "we hope that many of those who read *Women* will decide to join and give their support to our work". Well, he has persuaded me. His observation that "a revolutionary change in the attitude of mind among many men" is needed is certainly not an overstatement, and I am afraid that this applies to many Rationalist and Humanist men as well as to Christians.

Do get this excellent pamphlet and show it to your friends.

HANDBOOK OF CITIZENS' RIGHTS

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The Evidence for Jesus (3)

By GEORGES ORY

(Continued from page 204)

APART from the gospels which are later than is commonly pretended, reference to Jesus may be found in Gnosticism about AD 115-120, in Saturnius, or Saturninus, for whom Jesus is bodyless and unborn, not a man. For these Gnostics Jesus was a divine being, replacing in the Gnosis the Mother of the Living; the female divine element fading out before the male god Jesus.¹⁶

In Hermas's *Pastor*, Jesus is an archangel; and the *Didache* knows not a historic Jesus. The book of Revelation, the Apocalypse, composed somewhere about AD 100, revised later, certainly after 135, refers to a divine Jesus in several forms which are difficult to reconcile: the Celestial Messiah, the Lamb sacrificed at the end of the world, the heavenly High-Priest, the Child of the Bride of the Lamb and of Jahweh who escapes from the Dragon and rises to heaven. Here again Jesus is clearly no man.¹⁷

In the primitive text of the Pauline Epistles, the name Jesus plays a subsidiary part, being added to the title of Christ who was, for the apostle, a god of mystery, a redeemer, enemy of the Jewish Law, crucified cosmically by the Princes of this World, i.e. by Jahweh and by the planetary demons who hold souls in captivity.¹⁸ Similarly, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, composed c. 145, Jesus is the Heavenly High-Priest, "better than the angels", yet "a little lower than the angels", "in all things made like unto his brethren", yet he is no man, but the divine sacrificer. In the Gospel of Peter, without laying too much emphasis on apocrypha, the Christ is a giant loftier than the heavens who is identified with the heavenly Cross.

Marcion, writing about AD 140 in his *Evangelion* makes Jesus, the son of God, come down from heaven in the form of a grown man, but he is not a man; his body is ethereal, incorruptible; he is the Saviour Spirit, a phantom. For Justin, too, writing in 150, the god Jesus is ethereal and has taken on the shape of a man. We need not be surprised that later disciples should have been unable to grasp these subtle fancies and should have finished by looking on this Jesus as a man.

It would seem probable that this confusion was largely due to Marcion who was the first to imagine the terrestrial epiphany. With this we can perceive the germ of the metamorphosis of the god into the man. His disciples thought that the period which separated Marcion from his epiphany was a century; the well-known phrase "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius" (Luke 3, 1), that is in the year 28-29 suggests that a hundred had been subtracted from the date 128-9, the year when it was revealed to Marcion that the god had come down to earth.^{19 20} Then the date was taken by the disciples of John the Baptist as that of the manifestation of their master, and thus it appears in Luke. It was never claimed as marking the apparition of the man Jesus.

Jesus, fully grown, appears in the gospel of Mark, who knows nothing of his childhood. Next, Matthew and Luke invented genealogies for him; unfortunately they did not tell the same tale, so the two pedigrees are incompatible and fanciful. Celsus was unacquainted with these two genealogies going back to Abraham and Adam, but he knew one for Mary which he treats as a pompous yarn. Justin had met with one which was quite different from that in Luke or that in Matthew. Epiphanius (xxx, 13 . . .) declares that the Christians possessed no information as to the youth of Jesus.²¹

About the year 177—or perhaps earlier if he wrote the *Diatessaron*—Tatian brought order into the gospels, but he did know of the two chapters in Luke concerning the birth of Jesus. According to O. Cullmann (*Christol. du N.T.*, p. 111) there were already in certain rabbinical circles full genealogies of the awaited Messiah.

Fancy filled in the blanks left by ignorance: Son of God, Son of the Holy Ghost, Jesus became the Son of Joseph and, hence, Messiah and Son of David. As these additions were inserted into the gospels, the Greek-speaking Christians wanted to know what they meant; so John 1, 41 explained "the *Messias*, which is, being interpreted, the *Christ*" although in verse 36 "he saith, Behold the *Lamb of God*". Mark apparently did not like this, 8, 29-30, "Peter saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him". Nor again did Mark approve of the descent from David, 12, 35-39 any more than did Matthew 22, 43-45.

Contemporaries knew that the House of David was extinct; the later prophets, viz. Ezekiel, 2nd Isaiah, and Malachi had no knowledge of the Davidic origin of the Messiah.

Matthew 2, 1; Luke 1, 5 and Mark 6, 14 all tell us that Jesus was born in the days of Herod the King. Similarly the gospel of the Ebionites places the activity of John the Baptist in the time of Herod, King of Judaea. It is not therefore a question of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 BC-AD 39. But which Herod? For there were two: Herod the Great who reigned from 40 BC-4 BC; and Herod Agrippa the First who reigned c. AD 37-43. Luke 3 places the baptism and death of Jesus in the reign of Tiberius, i.e. between AD 14 and 37. Was this Tiberius the Emperor or the Procurator Tiberius Alexander who ruled at Jerusalem from 45-48 under the Emperor Claudius, who expelled the Jews who followed Chrestos from Rome in 49? This latter Tiberius put to death in 47 James and Simon, the son of Judas the Galilean. Luke clearly states Tiberius the Emperor, but confusion is not out of the question. Tertullian (*Apol.* ix) refers to one Tiberius, pro-consul of Africa. Luke declares that Jesus's birth took place during a census, which occurred in the year 6, and that Christ was thirty years old in 29. John states that Jesus was not fifty years old when he died, so that Jesus must have been born about 22-15 BC. Eusebius made out that, by a false report from Pilate Jesus was put to death in AD 21, which did not seem likely. The early Christians, wishful to fix the date of the birth of their Lord, wavered between January 6th, March 28th, April 18th or 19th, May 29th and December 25th. Ignatius (so-called Bishop of Antioch, but really a Christian of Philippi) wrote about AD 150 or later that the birth and death of the Christ was unknown to Satan, who was thus less well informed than the Evangelists, and people objected to him, that what they could not find in the records they could not believe. It is comforting to think that the critics of today had their forerunners in the second century.

If Pilate had really condemned Jesus, he would have reported the case to the Emperor. As no one had ever heard of this report, the faithful invented one; and the pagans another one. The gospels teach us nothing of factual value; they are evidence of the beliefs held between

(Concluded on page 222)

This Believing World

SHOCKED listeners to the BBC radio will be wondering what has happened to the religious directors there. On June 20th, the *Observer* headed a report, "Atheist to put their case in six BBC talks". This is enough to cause revolution in all Christian circles. It is one thing to publish a few pamphlets and books advocating atheism, but quite another to tell millions of listeners that there is no evidence whatever for the existence of God. The curious thing in the report is however the absence of any mention of atheism. Professor A. J. Ayer, the new President of the British Humanist Association, is to take part in the talks, and it will be interesting to see if he is allowed to proclaim his own unbelief in religion as "atheism". We ourselves would like to see *all* points of views clearly expressed—but above all, to allow an Atheist to describe himself as such without equivocation.

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THE SAME journal reported that the Archbishop of York, Dr. Donald Coggan, at the Liverpool Diocesan Conference, had made no bones about his dissatisfaction with "TV religion", which he called "a tragedy". What Dr. Coggan wants is for modern speakers to hold fast to the religion of Jesus as expressed 1,900 years ago. He told his hearers that he himself belonged "to the Catholic Church of this country" which was also "the Reformed Church". And, he said, "we do not need to ape the Roman Catholics or the non-Anglicans", although "we can learn from both". Why incidentally does not the BBC arrange a full scale debate between Professor Ayer, and the Archbishop of York? Or would one with Cardinal Heenan draw a bigger audience?

★

THERE is one other point about religion in England which badly needs clearing up. Now that thousands of African and Asiatic students are studying in our universities—where do they exactly stand with regard to Christianity? Do they come to accept Jesus as their saviour? And, fresh from a science course, do they believe now in miracles, in the Virgin Birth, and in the Resurrection, as fervently as our Archbishops? Selected coloured students, it is true, on radio and TV, most piously express their belief in every thing Christianity stands for, but the mass of them, are they really believers?

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A DOUBLE page spread of the *Daily Sketch* (21/6/65), headed an article, "Do You Believe in Miracles?", and there is no doubt that hundreds of Christians would answer with a shout, "We do!" But the particular miracle described is, we need hardly say, the cure of a crippled woman at Lourdes who, at one time, "lost her faith", and now, as in millions of similar cases, is thoroughly convinced that God himself has cured her.

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TO MAKE it even more convincing, the Roman Catholic Church admits that the Lord had intervened in her favour. And this should settle the question, once and for all. As far as we can judge from the account, it all looks suspiciously like many similar "cures" at Lourdes, and anybody who believes in those will believe anything. Needless to add, there is very little chance of investigating this cure, any more than there is of investigating the thousands of cures by Spiritualist healers in this country. But what does this matter to the *Daily Sketch*.

SPECIAL OFFER to readers of this paper. The Autobiography of Major Christopher Draper, D.S.C., entitled *The Mad Major*. First published in 1962 at 25/-. A limited number offered at 10/- post paid. 230 pages fully illustrated and autographed from C. Draper, 2 Conway Street, London, W.1.

Secularists and the Past

In his letter, THE FREETHINKER (4/6/65) Mr. Shepherd among other things complains that we Secularists overstress the repressive role played by the Church in the past. He refers to Slavery, the Wars of Religion and the mental blight that settled over Europe with the coming of Christianity. If Mr. Shepherd will read a manual of "Christian Evidence" he will be informed that all that is best in our world such as it is, was brought about by the benign influence of Christianity. Most Christians swallow this stuff hook, line and sinker and consequently their religious guides get away with it. We Secularists expose these statements for what they are — lies. We do our best to enlighten the dupes who are easy prey for the army of clerics who fasten on the infant mind as soon as possible.

How flimsy are these claims Mr. Shepherd will see if he can obtain Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe* or McCabe's *Social Record of Christianity and Testament of Christian Civilization*, or Chapman Cohen's *Christianity, Slavery and Labour*. With these at his elbow Mr. Shepherd will have no difficulty in seeing why we Secularists can never cease exposing the hollow claims so often put forward from Christian pulpits. The goodness of individual Christians does not alter the case against the repressive influence of the Church as a whole.

May I wish Mr. Shepherd good luck in his Sunday Freedom League campaign.

E. MARKLEY.

Well! Well! My recent letter to THE FREETHINKER seems to have brought down a hornet's nest upon my enquiring head, albeit I explained, I thought quite clearly, I am a new boy to organised Secularism, and sought the help of readers for information and "ammunition" when arguing against Christian people, when, whom! my name is brought up in front page news! I asked for assistance to illustrate to opponents, just what Secularism has *recently* done, and is doing *today*, for all human society, as distinct from what seems to me, a constant adulatory repetition of the works of Charles Bradlaugh, Francois Voltaire and Thomas Paine of the 17- and 18-hundreds (a smattering of each of which I read, mostly in public libraries in London 40 years ago, and I remember thinking *then*, rather outdated) and of Secularism's part in the abolition of slavery against religious opposition, which is also history now, which has been harped upon, year in and out—dare I say it, *almost ad nauseum*!

And what do I get? Just *this*, all over again! Charles Bradlaugh's 1880 pamphlet on atheism (which Colin McCall admits is not read today — I probably read it in my twenties, and may even read it again, when I retire and have time) which to my mind is — or was, rather — a lot of hair-splitting on the question of the existence, or non-existence, of God. If, as Colin McCall says, one does not *deny* God, then this admits the possibility of God's existence, and this is Agnosticism. The atheist says: There is no God (a=not, theos=God) or have I quoted Greek, or the Oxford Dictionary wrongly? Every Atheist who has spoken to me says "There is no God." I think I'll stick to Agnosticism — a man is as big a fool, etc.

But away with all this — put the past behind us — goodness knows, we accuse the world of Religion, of living and dreaming in the dim past of the Old and New Testaments — especially the Roman Catholics — away with past Secular glories, and let us boast of *today's* achievements — *can we?*

I firmly believe, and can Colin McCall, or anyone else, deny me, that the work I am doing *now*, against the religious dictatorship of the Lord's Day Observance Society, is Secularism fighting Religion, *in* 1965, and will, *and* is, benefiting the community now. Thank you again, Mr. Editor, for all you've done for our cause.

JOHN SHEPHERD.

The Sunday Freedom League.

P.S.—May I plead for yet *more* names, more letters, please?

[Personally—and Mr. Peters notwithstanding (25/6/65)—we think that Mr. Shepherd overestimates the influence of the LDOS. Is it really worth taking seriously in 1965?—Ed.]

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

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. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: 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. Every Friday, 8 p.m.: L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, July 11th, 6.45 p.m.: A meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, July 11th, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "The Social Status of the Social Psychologist"

Notes and News

THIS YEAR marks the seven-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri, and it is expected that the great anti-papal poet will be honoured by a papal encyclical. The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* is to publish a 32-page supplement dedicated to Dante, and it recently carried an article which, George Armstrong reported (*The Guardian*, 18/6/65), fitted the poet's medieval philosophy to the problems now being discussed in the ecumenical council. As for Dante's "allegedly negative views of the Church", nothing had ever been "more distorted or twisted". The Pope's encyclical was expected to define the Florentine supporter of the anti-papal Ghibelline Party, who condemned three popes to his Inferno, as "the greatest Christian poet of all time". Yet Dante's *De Monarchia*, advocated a universal monarchy in which all temporal power would be vested and which would exercise its authority independently of, but alongside the pope. This, as Mr. Armstrong wryly remarked, earned the poet his place on the Index, "where he stayed until the beginning of this century".

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IT HAS come to the notice of the Rev. John R. Williams, vicar of St. Stephen's, Selly Hull, Birmingham and the Rev. Keith Mawdsley, minister of Selly Park Baptist Church, that many people in their area had been "troubled (and even pestered) from time to time by Jehovah's Witnesses". The clergymen were at pains to point out, in a May newsletter to their flocks that this group does not hold "orthodox belief about Jesus Christ as is held by all the major denominations, e.g. Anglicans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, etc". The Witnesses—the newsletter continued—"deny the full divinity of Christ, are basically Unitarian in outlook and

cannot be called Christians (nor would wish to be so called)". But they appeal to the Bible. In fact, the clergymen said, the views of Jehovah's Witnesses are similar to the heretic Arius, condemned by the Christian Church in AD 325.

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A LETTER to the *Observer* (20/6/65) from Dr. Levi Dawson, protested that every time the paper wanted the Christian point of view expressed in its columns, it "found it necessary to call on the Bishop of Woolwich". There are, Dr. Dawson said, "many of us in the Christian Church who do not feel that the Bishop represents more than a very small minority in the Church today". No doubt, but what orthodox Christian writer has the popular appeal of Dr. Robinson?

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THE SAME issue of the *Observer* reported the series of six BBC programmes in the autumn in which "leading atheists" of the British Humanist Association will be interviewed on the Home Service. And the new BHA President, Professor A. J. Ayer, told the paper's reporter, Ivan Yates, that it was hoped to convert people. The Professor thought that the case against religion should be stated publicly. But he didn't want to see "the sort of puerile attacks on the churches which were all too common 30 years ago". He conjectured that the majority of people today were "deists in a very vague way".

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HUMANISTS were well organised and active at Oxford, Professor Ayer said, and religion "very little entrenched there". He wouldn't want to abolish the college chapels though, if he were involved in the founding of a new college, "I think I would support Professor Crick", who had opposed the building of a chapel at Churchill College, Cambridge. "I don't want to match religious intolerance with humanist intolerance", Professor Ayer added. "And I'd like to get away from the vegetarian and sandals, Welwyn Garden City sort of image and recruit more writers and get humanism to have more appeal to the young and to universities". The programmes will start on October 9th, and the interviewer is expected to be Mr. Erskine Childers.

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A BAPTIST convention at London, Ontario, was told on June 19th that unrest in Quebec might result in the Province's seceding from the Christian Church. E. M. Jenkins, interim general secretary, feared that French Canada could be lost as a province and from Christianity. And M. H. Racicot of Ottawa added that the Roman Catholic clergy in Quebec was losing control and domination over the public. The "Quebec revolution" had touched religion, Mr. Racicot said, and was "asking embarrassing questions" (*Montreal Gazette*, 10/6/65). This had prompted a priest to remark that one-third of the students at French Canadian Catholic universities were atheists. Mr. Racicot did not name the priest and said he did not agree with the statement.

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HERE is a footnote to last week's issue featuring Roman Catholics and the Pill. It was reported by the British United Press from Denver, Colorado, on June 30th, that Donald Aishman, a college student, had obtained an annulment of his marriage on the grounds that his wife went back on her word and refused to use birth control pills. The Denver District Judge granted the annulment on grounds of false representation, Aishman claiming that before their marriage on March 24th, his wife, a Roman Catholic, had agreed to use the pill until he had completed his college education.

The Evidence for Jesus (3)

(Continued from page 219)

the years 150 and 200, determining certain aspects of religion at this period. St. Augustine wrote that only on the authority of the Church could he believe the gospels (*Contra. Epist. Fund.*).

To find material for their biography of Jesus the scribes sought fresh detail, particularly from the Jewish Bible, which they had not found before, and fabricated a "mosaic", a cento, with a multitude of scraps picked out from all sorts of places, careless of whether the scrap fitted in with probability or with the original sense of the context, provided that it could be made to build up the required picture. In the 17th and 18th Psalms and in *Esdra*s and in *Baruch* the messianic king liberates Israel and holds the gentile under his yoke, whereas Jesus was overcome by the Princes and Powers of this world and his Kingdom was elsewhere and to come. It is one of History's little ironies to have awarded to Jesus the title of Messiah which he did not deserve and to have applied to him prophecies which he never fulfilled.

Matthew and Luke chose Bethlehem as Jesus's birth-place as it was in David's country; and he was born in a stable in a cave, because a grotto was a proper place for a god to be born in (e.g. Tammuz, Adonis, Mithras, Dionysus, Hermes, Horus and Zeus). Bethlehem was preferred to Nazareth for those who could not accept so pagan a region as Galilee as suitable for their god's nativity (John 1, 46; 7, 52, "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet"). Matthew thought that Jesus was brought to Nazareth to fulfil a prophecy so that Jesus might be called the Nazarene. As, however, there is no prophecy which speaks of Nazareth, one can only imagine that the evangelists finding the title Nazarene (consecrated to the Lord) in the Jewish Bible, thought that it must refer to a town; as this did not exist, they invented it. It looks as if Nazareth has replaced Capernaum, the hamlet of the Consoler, which was for Mark the home of Jesus; but this name may be nothing more than a Gnostic symbol.

The orthodox opinion is that Jesus lived with his disciples for three years. Some critics reduce his prophetic career to a single year. Whether three years or one, this is a very short time in which to found a religion and to give it a sound foundation. However it may be, during this brief period Jesus must have spoken, written and acted, and all that he did must, we suppose, have been important to his disciples so that they would have preserved some exact and lasting record of all this. Not so. The gospels devote only a third to a fifth of their text to the doings of Jesus; and their reports relate to only eight days. All that is given of the rest is a few scenes of theological significance.

So, of that celebrated life which is said to have lasted thirty years, all that we are told is a story of eight days and a mythological pedigree; which is not very convincing, particularly when criticism reveals that the story of the Passion was in the first place a narrative with a special meaning. This uncertainty on the part of Christian writers as to the life of Jesus is met with later; for in 180 Irenaeus speaks of Christ going up to heaven before his crucifixion.

Hence for a century to a century and a half after Herod and Pilate, Jesus was not looked on as a real man, but, under various forms, as a divine person. If, from the very beginning he had been a man, he would scarcely have been the Lamb or the Divine Child. If his disciples and adepts had, as is pretended, worshipped a mortal man,

they would not have shown for a century and a half a complete indifference to his biographical detail. If, on the other hand, he was in his origin a God sacrificed from the foundation of the world, being crucified by the "powers and principalities of this world", he could not as a man be crucified by the Romans.

The earliest known texts of St. Mark do not mention the Resurrection; the early Christians probably did not believe in the bodily resurrection, only in the survival of the spirit and its return to heaven after the destruction of the body. When the people no longer understood the mystery of the god who died and was born again, they were told the story of the man crucified by the Romans.

The mystic cross existed long before Christianity and became associated and confused with the Roman instrument of punishment. That evangelists could regard it as a symbol is apparent in Luke 9, 23; Mark 8, 34; Matt. 16, 24; "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me". This did not mean that they would all be crucified; the cross here is the divine symbol of victory, the cross of light and not of death. It was thus that the early Christians considered the Cross. The Rev. P. Daniélou agrees: "if the sign of the cross today evokes a gibbet on which the Christ is nailed, that is not its first meaning; the sign of the cross marked on the brow represented for the early Christians the name of their Lord, The Word, and meant that they had been consecrated . . . the sign of the cross was made originally not in allusion to Christ's Passion, but as a mark of divine glory . . . the four arms of the cross are a symbol of the cosmic quality of this act of salvation". This admission is simply the statement of an undeniable fact witnessed by numerous and ancient Christian texts. In the same review as this article by P. Daniélou (*La Table Ronde*, Dec. 1957), M. Adolphe Dupront, professor at the Sorbonne, wrote, "It is certain that the cross of the Passion is that of our modern laments; in the early times the cross was above all the cross of glory; the infamy of the crucifixion is a later development because customary [i.e. the cross was a customary form of execution] or by masochism".

The stories of the Passion are full of impossibilities and contradictions;²² they abound in borrowings from ritual and from antique legends, and mirror a primitive mentality. The early Christians were so well aware that the drama of the Passion and of Salvation were placed in heaven that they did not bother to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to pray over the tomb of one Jesus; for it is only after 338-347 that the legend of the Holy Places was created and that the "true cross" was found between those of two robbers. It was not until 692 at the Council of Constantinople that the Church was to decide that the Cross was no longer allegorical but real—and of what reality? One drawn from the fancies of believing crowds establishing a "spiritual truth" which could find no support in history.²³

There would seem to be then, strong reasons for regarding the man Jesus as an artificial creation; born no one knows how or when or where; at one and the same time prophet, messiah, king, high-priest, miracle-worker, and yet helpless in the face of force: adulated and yet abandoned by the mob, accompanied by symbolic personages, e.g. the prosecuting king, the evil high-priest, the wicked Roman, the traitor Jew, etc. In the bright light of criticism he fades and vanishes; like the ghost of Hamlet's

father he becomes visible only in the darkness of faith. The creation of the Holy Ghost is the ghostly fancy of men; in the Paradise of fairy-tales he is the elder brother of William Tell.

Confronting this vague simulacrum of a man who in his wanderings through Galilee picks up his companions, preaches and gathers crowds about him, is the god that works wonders, resurrects after a descent into death and then ascends to heaven. These two personages are not and cannot be the same, though the gospels vouch for their unity. We ask ourselves what can have taken place in the minds of those mystics who dreamed that they lived in the beginnings of this religion or held that it had been revealed to them in their ecstasies, their visions and their reveries.²⁴

Gods are the creation of man, and Jesus was a god "from the beginning"; he precedes human history and is an object of worship. Only a god can understand and compile the history of gods. Christ's history is like that of other gods, perceptible in fragments only; and it is easy to observe that, like many another oriental god who came before him or was his contemporary, he was a god of mystery, of gnosis, of magic. He displays many aspects recalling the syncretism of the gnosis, which adapts itself to most varying religious systems. The names, the forms may change, but the essence remains the same. This god no matter whether he be the god of Simon Magus, or of the Naassenes or of Saturninus or of other sects, whether he is called Jesus or known by some other name, whether he be incarnated or not, comes down from heaven to save the believers. At first an immaterial spirit, he or it takes on the shape of man; then is born of a virgin miraculously; then a human father is found for him and a pedigree; finally a birthplace and a birthday. Thus we can follow its progress through the Christian texts. This passage from IT to HE is a commonplace in the history of religions, and the Christian legend displays little originality. Many of the biblical persons are derived from deities; among the most recently recognised are Esther and Merodach (Merodach) the ancient Ishtar and Marduk.

Marcel Granet in his *Religion des Chinois* reminds us of an old Chinese myth: Ho-Tsi was born by the power of Heaven which breathed into his mother a breath of the celestial spirit. Ho-Tsi was therefore entitled to be joined for worship with the Celestial Sovereign and to be the mediator of his people with the Supreme Power. Nevertheless it was repeatedly declared that this Son of Heaven was also a Son of Man. This would have been scandalous if Kiang-Yuan, the Virgin Mother of the god Ho-Tsi, had no husband. Thus Ho-Tsi had a father Ti-Ko in the manner of men. Tradition reports that Ti-Ko made some difficulties before he bowed to the holy miracle. He yielded, however, and was rewarded by becoming the patron of conjugal life.

In Greek legend, Zeus himself came down to earth and by him Alcmena conceived Hercules, the messiah who put an end to the age of iron and brought in the age of gold. Like Ti-Ko and Joseph, Amphitryon, husband of Alcmena, yielded to the god, and the prophet Tiresias addressed Alcmena in these terms: "Rejoice, thou who has brought forth the most valiant of sons . . . thou shalt be worshipped by the people of Argos". Even as, later, "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest . . . and all the generations shall call me (Mary) blessed".

Ulysses, Romulus, Alexander, Solon, Pythagoras, Plato were all, so the stories go, of extraordinary birth. That of Plato was certainly impressive; according to Diogenes Laertius, Plato's father Ariston was told in a dream of his birth and at Apollo's command postponed his union with

his wife Perictiona and did not go to her until she was brought to bed. Just as Joseph, according to Matthew, 1, 24-25, "took unto him his wife and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son". Origen thought that the story of Plato's birth was a myth such as was told to explain the wisdom of great men.

Two thousand years ago the mass of the Greeks believed in the union of a god with a mortal as exemplified in the births of Hercules, Perseus, Aeacus, Minos, Hermes, Helen, Dardanus, Tantalus, and many more of whose existence there was no doubt nor of their lives on earth. Today these legends are no longer believed; they have been replaced by the legend of Jesus.²⁵

It is not enough to have shown that Jesus was a god made into a man: we will try to make clear how this was done. First of all, we note that this biography of Jesus is fabricated from a mass of selected biblical items, arranged and interpreted most often in a glaring manner. Next we observe that²⁶ much of this biographical material has already served for John the Baptist and has been transferred to Jesus.²⁷ Lastly, and we emphasise this, there existed other Jesuses of whom use was made in manufacturing the Jesus of the gospels. Jesus was a not uncommon name and several who bore it took prominent parts in an agitated political and religious period. In Hebrew history written in Greek are to be found references to forty-one of this name.²⁸ Some of these played an active part just before the war of 66-70. All were Jews; none can be considered to be the Jesus of the gospels, though scraps of their records are to be met with in the New Testament.

It is affirmed with truth that Flavius Josephus did not know of Jesus Christ; but it is sometimes overlooked that he was acquainted with several of the name of Jesus. He refers to (*Ant xx*) Jesus the son of Damnaeus and to Jesus the son of Gamaliel, who, before the rebellion of 62-63 were both high-priests and took part in the fighting, recruiting supporters from the mob. He also knew a Jesus high-priest contemporary of a Lazarus; and had an enemy Jesus, the son of Sapphias, who was an adventurer (*Vita*, lxvi) leader of the fishermen of the Lake of Tiberias and of the poor; and this last Jesus was confused seemingly with a Jesus, son of Tupa (or of Saphatos), who won a brief if brilliant success against the Romans (*War*, iii, 450).

Another Jesus met in Josephus (*Vita*, 105) was chief of a brigand band of 800 men in the neighbourhood of Ptolemais who was at first hostile to Josephus and later his ally. Again there was a Galilean Jesus, chief of 600 armed men holding a veritable fastness in Jerusalem itself; and yet another, the son of Ananos, who foretold for seven years the ruin of Jerusalem and of the Temple and who was slain in the course of the siege. We could add to the list.²⁹

It would seem incontestable that, in view of the name common to them all and of their mention in the same work of Josephus, all these persons called Jesus who lived at the same period should have contributed to the creation of a fabulous personality fitted to the god when he was made man.

16. See *Cahier Renan*, no. 12, *Le Mythe Samaritan d' Hélène*. The *Clementine Epistles* were directed against this female supremacy. Certain gnostic sects before Christianity, e.g., the Naassenes or, before the gospels, e.g., the Nicolaites, worshipped a female Holy Ghost who was the Mother of God and of the Living; derived directly from the Asiatic Magna Mater, who was also mediterranean. She was interpreted mystically as the Church Spouse of Christ. The Virgin Mary, replica of the goddess of fertility, is not a historic person. The Madonna existed several centuries BC and statuettes of Isis figured the Virgin and the Child. Mary was easily given the ancient functions of goddess of springs and of trees, and her churches were erected on the sites of ancient pagan temples. Justin complained that the Greeks

raised near springs temples to a pagan virgin whom they called Kore.

17. The visionary of Revelation tells us in ch. 20 that an angel "laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent . . . and bound him for a thousand years".

18. Revelation and parts of the Epistles are composed in rhythmic strophes, and are liturgical, not historical.

19. Jesus is the name of the divine Christ transformed into man. (Justin, *Apol.* ii, 6). Similarly Krishna is the name of the re-incarnated Vishnu. The Ascension of Jesus and the Assumption of the Virgin are in the proper order of their divine natures; they had to return to that heaven from which they had descended.

20. See Couchoud, *Jesus le dieu fait homme*, p. 162 and note 2; *The Creation of Christ*, vol. 2.

21. Mahomet knew only of the virgin birth.

22. See *Jesus a-t-il été crucifié?* *Cahiers Ernest Renan*, nos 6, 7 and 8.

23. Writing about the year 200, Clement of Alexandria makes no mention of the cross among Christian symbols though he gives the boat, the fish, the anchor, the harp, and the dove. The Latin cross did not appear in the catacombs until about 450; even then it was evidently symbolic and decorated with flowers. The famous "labarum" of Constantine (312) was not a Christian cross, but the imperial Cross of the Victorious Sun, not that of the Crucified Son. It was not until the 6th or 7th century that the crucifix is met with. It was only in the 4th century that the child Jesus is shown in the catacombs with his parents, and the ox and the ass.

24. For the Rev. Father de Grandmaison "the union in a single person which pre-existed . . . of two natures—the divine and the human—is a mystery which is beyond the understanding of man; there is therefore no question of justifying the doctrine of the Incarnation, of demonstrating by intrinsic reasons that it is the sole veritable doctrine" The Dogma is received from the Christian Church Catholic which is the depository and interpreter of Christ's authentic teaching (op. cit. p. 211). It is evident that the argument from authority is the only one that can solve the problem.

25. This belief in incarnation was common to many religions, particularly in India. There is also an Egyptian inscription in which the god Ammon says to Rameses or Sesostris: "I am thy father; I engendered thee as a god; all thy members are divine; I produced thee, possessing thy august mother".

26. v. *Bulletin Renan* no. 34; P. Alfaric counted 240 borrowings from the Jewish Bible.

27. *Cahier Renan* no. 10 "John the Baptist".

28. "Inventaire de quarante-et-un porteurs du nom de Jesus dans l'histoire juive écrite en grec" W-L Dulière, *Novum Testamentum*, vol. iii, fasc. 3, 1959.

29. There were two more Jesus high-priests in the days of Herod and Archelaus; one of the son of Phabi c. 27 BC and the second son of Siah in 4 BC. A passage in *Matthew* 23, 31-36 refers to the period of the Jewish war, in which a pretended prophecy, evidently thought of after the event, makes Jesus accuse the Scribes and Pharisees "ye are the children of them which killed the prophets . . . some of them ye shall kill and crucify . . . that upon you shall come all the righteous blood shed upon all the earth from the blood of the righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar". These Jewish martyrs were those of Hanan the high priest in AD 62 and this Zacharias is mentioned by Josephus (*War* iv, v. 4) as assassinated by the Zealots during the siege of Jerusalem (AD 67 or 68). This passage is clearly later than AD 70, although attempts have been made to consider it as referring to an earlier Zacharias. Jesus's prophecy of the fall of the Temple (*Matt* 24, 29) was not known to Paul, to the Fourth Evangelist, to Justin, to Athenagoras or to Theophilus of Antioch. According to W-L Dulière, in his paper to the congress on the History of Religions at Marburg, 1960, this prophecy was inserted into the Synoptics and refers to Jesus the son of Ananos (Josephus, *War*, vi, 300-314) who was taken before the governor Albinus who released him. If so, there was a confusion between the Jesuses. Eighty years ago, Georges Solomon (*The Jesus of History and the Jesus of Tradition Identified*, Reeves and Turner, 1880) suggested that the Jesus who announced the fall of Jerusalem and the Galilean Jesus, son of Sapphias, who was associated with Simon and John, had been treated as one and the same person in the gospels.

[With the above we end our three-part extract from *An Analysis of Christian Origins* by Georges Ory, President of the Cercle Ernest Renan, Paris. The complete 60-page pamphlet, translated from the French by C. Bradlaugh Bonner, is available from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop for 2s. 6d., plus 4d. postage.]

CORRESPONDENCE

JUGGLING WITH "GOD"

Critical readers of Bishop Robinson's books *Honest to God* and *The "Honest to God" Debate* will readily agree with Mr. Ridley's prognosis that the only strategy of future theologians will necessarily be that of "juggling with 'God'" (March 26th).

Dr. Robinson is a perfect exponent of this. While in *Honest to God* he unctuously "purges out the dead myth" (p.133) of "God as a person living in heaven, a God who is distinguished by the fact that 'There is no god beside me.'" (p.32)—and the last quotation plainly reveals that he was dismissing the West Semitic god Yahweh who said it and who was notably the god and father of Jesus—in *The "Honest to God" Debate*, the Bishop completely renegades and reaffirms the same myth (p.262). He says: "The only God who meets my need is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . "—in short, the same god Yahweh of Israel!

This sample of juggling with "God" does not appear to me as either ingenious or amusing. It is rather very, very plain double-talk. No wonder, Dr. Robinson has been so quickly found out by his fellows—genuinely honest to God Christians.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS, (Australia)

THE AGE OF UNREASON

The efforts of Mr. Goodman to show the astrological basis of Christianity are welcome. It has always surprised me that the pioneer work of Robert Taylor in this field has been so little recognised. Many Secularists have pointed out the similarities between Christianity and earlier religions; but few have traced the stories to their origin: men's observations of the stars and planets and the stories they invented to account for, or dramatise, the movements of those bodies.

HENRY MEULEN.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY

I have so much admired Gillian Hawtin's trenchant writing, that I was perturbed to see in THE FREETHINKER, (June 18th) that she, too, is echoing the Reverent Humanist scare "Not to empty the baby out with the bathwater": the baby being Christian morality and the bathwater Christian theology.

To say the least, the analogy is stupid, and it illbecomes a militant Freethinker to regret the passing of Christian morality. That "baby" is a monstrosity, conceived by superstition out of fear and fostered by priestcraft. The sooner it is emptied away with the bath of Emmanuel's blood, the better. The best thing that can be said of humanity is that that "baby" has always been an unwanted child. Human love and sympathy has turned its back on that creature throughout the centuries; people are better than their creed. Some there have been who have welcomed it, saints, hermits, inquisitors, witch-hunters, floggers, flagellants, warmongers, all beloved of the Church which nourishes your "baby".

When that horrid child has gone, perhaps we can set about nourishing the neglected child or reason, mutual aid, enlightened self-interest, who, despite all the fires on this earth, and threats of damnation in the world to come, has survived, because it is a child of nature not theology.

EVA EBURY.

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