

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXXV—No. 39

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

FOR some time past, a controversy has been in progress in these columns respecting the origins of Christianity in general and in particular, the historicity of Jesus Christ. In the course of this argument, widely divergent opinions have been expressed ranging from those of Paul Winter who gave a quasi-orthodox interpretation of Christian origins (even accepting the substantial authenticity of such nowadays generally suspect witnesses as Josephus and Tacitus), to Herbert Cutner, that still intransigent champion of the mythicist interpretation of Christian origins. All these erudite protagonists at least agreed that the Jesus of history was not a god but a man—or a myth; but with this exception, there was hardly a single point upon which they agreed.

It would surely be interesting and instructive if their views were issued in a collective symposium with a preface by, say, Archbishop Roberts SJ, or Bishop Robinson of Woolwich (and *Honest to God*).

## A Third View

In perhaps rashly venturing to gatecrash this complex controversy, the writer of these lines does so under the soubriquet of the "rejoicing third". This point of view may perhaps be described as the collectivist interpretation of Christian origins. As and when viewed from this point of view, the whole question of Christian origins appears in a somewhat different light from the more conventional interpretations, a difference that applies especially to the highly controversial problem of the historicity and ultimate historical importance of the titular founder, Jesus Christ himself.

For it would surely appear that here as elsewhere, extremes meet. The supreme importance ascribed to the individual Jesus by the historicists appears to be exactly duplicated by the mythicists. My colleague, Mr. Cutner, for example, whilst he completely and consistently rejects the historical existence of any gospel Jesus, yet persistently appears to treat the problem of the existence (or non-existence) of an individual named Jesus in the Palestine of the first century as the primary and fundamental problem of Christian origins and (quite logically from such a point of view) keeps returning to it again and again.

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

Accordingly, both orthodox and mythicist scholars, however sharply opposed they may be with regard to their precise conclusions, both agree that the critical problem of an individual Jesus constitutes the primary problem for the critical student of Christian origins.

From what we have termed the collectivist interpretation of Christian origins, the above point of view, fundamental to both the historicist and the mythicist schools of thought is, if not entirely irrelevant, at least of quite minor importance. For primitive Christianity was not, in point of fact, the creation either wholly or even in any significant degree of any one individual religious teacher, whether posthumously denominated as Jesus, Paul, John

the Baptist or anyone else mentioned between the covers of the New Testament. That it was the end-product of a collective religious tradition dating back for several centuries may now be regarded as certain. So much so in fact, that the whole traditional individualist assessment of Christian origins may, nowadays be regarded as a scientifically discarded phase of the problem.

The epoch-making discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, contemporary with Christian origins, have proved empirically that the thesis put forward half a century ago by such pioneers of the collectivist interpretation of Christianity as Karl Kautsky and Albert Kalthoff, is true beyond question. For the Scrolls, whatever their

authorship and precise context, at least prove beyond any room for doubt, that all the leading ideas of primitive Christianity, the Messiah, his martyrdom and resurrection, even his church upon earth, were all in being in Palestine before Christianity as such, had ever been heard of; all that was left for the Christian Messiah to do, was to baptise this collective creation of a Jewish Gnostic messianic cult in the name of Jesus.

It surely follows clearly from such a context that, even assuming that there actually *was* a Jesus of history his actual historical role can only have been quite a minor one, and in no way fundamental to Christian origins, as both Mr. Winter and Mr. Cutner (not to mention the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury), agree in supposing.

For the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided the brilliant pioneer speculations of Kautsky and Kalthoff with unanswerable documentary proofs. Primitive Christianity represented an authentic creation of the Jewish messianic tradition which had already produced such kindred phenomena as the Essenes (with their Dead Sea Scrolls), John and his primitive Baptists etc. Early Christianity was in no sense the original creation of an individual Jesus, the historical existence of whom becomes in consequence quite a minor problem.

## Was There a Jesus of History?

The actual historically-conditioned question: was there any Jesus of history? is clearly itself one of unusual complexity; a fact made conspicuously evident by the extensive literature devoted to this intriguing theme. In view of the almost total failure of so many experts (sic) to reach any agreed conclusions, we may perhaps suggest that no definite conclusion is now likely to be reached upon this question until perhaps some new Dead Sea Scroll may be unearthed in a specifically Christian context. As matters stand at present, it would appear to be unlikely that there ever was a Jesus Christ, a recognisably human prototype of the Jesus of the Gospels; for had such a prodigy existed, the surviving traditions about him would surely be more precise and less obviously contradictory than they are.

However that may be it would be rash to dismiss the Gospel narratives as being *completely* fictitious; for some at least of the sayings and doings which they record display signs of contemporary authenticity, though perhaps

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## Jesus Christ and Christian Origins

by F. A. RIDLEY

not always referring to the same person. Both Pilate and John the Baptist were, for example, historical characters explicitly vouched for by their near contemporary, Josephus. (If Origen was correct in stating that this Jewish historian "did not believe in Christ", he must surely have said so somewhere. In particular, there does not appear to be any doubt that one, at least, of the sources of what later became Christianity was a messianic insurrection, the leader of which was crucified by Pilate; for there was no

reason at all why a Christian Church seeking to establish itself at Rome (as the Church was at the time the Gospels were finally edited) should have invented this scandalous story, and many why it should not have done so. Probably then, the unknown crucified Messiah is the nearest we can get to the Jesus of history. In any case, we repeat, whoever the Jesus of history was, he was far more the result than the effective cause of both history and Christianity.

## Egypt, Jesus and the Myth Theory

By H. CUTNER

WHILE it is always a good thing that THE FREETHINKER should carry articles like G. R. Goodman's "Easter" on May 7th, 1965, it is well that he should give us his sources. In addition, it might have been even necessary to point out that "Easter" is not exactly Jewish or Egyptian.

Easter is, as most of us know, the name of the Spring Festival dedicated to the goddess Eostra, whose cult emerged among the West-Germanic tribes, and came with them when England was invaded by the Saxons (I believe, however, that these Saxons appear never to have mentioned her). As the Jewish Passover, and the resurrection of Jesus took place about the same time, it is not surprising that the name "Easter" gradually displaced the Biblical terms. What Christians have never been able to reconcile with the awful death of Jesus is the way Easter is always so joyously celebrated. The people do not mournfully eat their Easter eggs or even their hot cross buns.

Mr. Goodman tells us that not only were there three "court trials" of Jesus, but, "the story was 2,000 years old before the alleged events in Judaea"—in fact, "Egypt had already this dramatic play enacted, portraying the Sungod's disappearance at the autumnal equinox, and his return at the vernal equinox". I find this very interesting, but where can I find the references? I am sure that the Sungod's adventures were enacted at one time or another in dramatic form, but I have never been able to find out the precious details. Who says that at 2000 BC it all happened and how is the date computed? Where, moreover, can I find the names Anup and Aan as those of the two crucified thieves?

If Egypt really had "long known a Jesus" called Iusa, I must confess I have never seen any reference to him, in spite of extensive reading about the numerous gods Egypt lays claim to. Would Mr. Goodman give us his authority about this god? If he had "an immaculate parenthood" (whatever this means, for I do not know), was "circumcised, baptised, tempted, glorified on the mount, persecuted, arrested, tried, condemned, crucified, resurrected, and elevated to heaven", it appears strange that John M. Robertson, who wrote so extensively on Jesus as a myth, never mentions him. Nor is the name to be found in the massive *Century Encyclopedia of Names*.

We are told that "Egypt had listened to a sermon on the mount and the sayings of Iusa for ages". Where is this said? Mr. Goodman even magnifies the Egyptian Messiah (by the way whose "Messiah" was he?) and tells us that there are "180 items of identity, similarity and correspondence in word, deed and function with his later copy". Where can I find these marks of identity?

I note that Mr. Goodman refers to the 16 "crucified Christs" which Kersey Graves has made the subject of his

most informative work, *Sixteen Crucified Saviours*, but Graves never mentions Iusa. Why?

In the meantime, I hope R. Smith who, in general, writes such interesting letters will forgive me for not having been before able to deal with the one on Jesus in THE FREETHINKER for May 28th. He is quite right in maintaining that Sir James Frazer did not, in *The Golden Bough*, accept the non-historicity of Jesus. The first edition of this masterpiece was published in 1890, but it is well to remember that even great anthropologists can change their minds in the course of time. There is no doubt whatever that Frazer believed in an historical Jesus, and it would not be difficult to explain why. For him, the gods of the many "native" tribes he wrote about so learnedly were obviously myths; he was more likely to accept the gods of cultured white people as having lived, if not as gods, at least as men. It was just as simple as that.

Unfortunately for Mr. Smith Frazer was not so sure about it later, as he was when he first wrote *The Golden Bough*. For example, in his own abridgment in one volume of the many volumes which had by then accumulated (in 1932) he says nothing about the non-historicity of Jesus, though he has quite a deal to say of Christianity and its likeness to the Paganism surrounding it, as it gradually evolved. As he says, "Taken altogether, the coincidences of the Christian with the heathen festivals are too close and too numerous to be accidental"—a quotation, I am sure, Mr. Smith will not like. Why didn't Frazer repeat the quotations Mr. Smith so triumphantly gives us?

Well, it so happens that one of Frazer's greatest friends was Dr. P. L. Couchoud, for whose brilliant study, *The Enigma of Jesus*, 1914, Frazer wrote an admiring introduction, which almost pulverises what he had claimed for the historicity of Jesus and Buddha. Couchoud was an uncompromising unbeliever in anybody called Jesus, and what could Frazer say about this in introducing a book which proclaims Jesus as a myth? Frazer wrote:

Whether, therefore, Dr. Couchoud be right or wrong in his treatment of the central figure of Christianity which he would banish from the real world of men to the limbo of error and hallucination, he appears to have laid a finger on a weak point in the chain of evidence on which hangs the religious faith of a great part of civilised mankind. The hypothesis of a purely mythical Christ is not novel, it has often been advocated in our time. To me, I confess, it seems to create more difficulties than it solves . . .

That may well be, but he was quite unable to answer Dr. Couchoud and I have an idea that few Christians would quote Frazer after reading the whole of his introduction to Couchoud's work with the same enthusiasm which characterises Mr. Smith's letter.

# Is Religious Education a Cause of Delinquency

By ALEX STEWART

THE argument for the retention of religious education in schools is usually based on the need for a strong moral code, and a seemingly steady increase in delinquency, especially among the young is frequently cited as evidence of this need.

To relate present standards of morality to that of previous generations is an almost impossible task. Think of the parcel of rogues, clerical and lay, that Chaucer describes so vividly; think of the England of Dickens, of the Scotland of *Holy Willie's Prayer*.

Where is the norm? So far as public morality is concerned, at no time in our history has our care of the weak, the elderly, the unprotected been so comprehensive as it is now. It is nearly always the attitude of the Jeremiah to point to a golden age which, on closer examination, is found never to have existed.

It is, however possible to argue that over a recent period of time there has been an increase in scepticism so far as religious belief is concerned and at the same time there has been the increase in delinquency already mentioned.

To state that scepticism by itself is the sole cause of delinquency is too facile an explanation. If unbelief resulted in crime, then one would expect our prisons to be full of atheists and agnostics instead of, what is more likely, some of the followers of Rangers and Celtic. It is common experience that the homes of avowed unbelievers are on average among the most moral in our society. This is not surprising as no one can reach the conclusions of the agnostic or atheist without a great deal of independence of mind and intelligence; and how often do you find your delinquents at the top half of your class? It is fortunate for us that the greater the intelligence, the less likely the criminal.

Let me make it clear that I am not saying that all intelligent people are agnostics; I am saying, that an agnostic is likely to be intelligent and will behave in the same way as other intelligent people. It is not the intellectual approach to unbelief which constitutes the social danger.

A recent attempt on my part to teach religious education to an unenthusiastic fifth form of boys led me to conduct an inquiry into their beliefs. I composed a questionnaire asking, after a few simple introductory questions, some of increasing difficulty, such as,—"What is your definition of a Christian?"; "Do you consider yourself to be a Christian?"; "If not, why not?"; "Do you believe in God?"; "What do you consider the greatest problem facing the world today, excluding 'the bomb'?"; "If the solution to this problem involved some sacrifice on your part, such as a somewhat lower standard of living, would you accept the sacrifice?" and so on.

Encouraging as many of the answers were, they nevertheless revealed a very great confusion of thought as well as a considerable amount of doubt and unbelief. The greatest confusion lay in the conception that standards of morality were founded on religion, a religion which many of them doubted. This led one youth to claim that although he was an atheist he was a Christian! It is in this confusion that the danger lies.

If a child is trained to believe that standards of morality are based on Christian dogma, and he later begins to doubt that dogma, it is very likely that he will disregard the standards of morality too. It seems to me quite possible to argue that some teenage delinquency is a result of a general, unconscious, unrealised withdrawal from old religious ideas and the moral code that went with them.

This results not so much in immorality as in amorality.

In the circumstances there are two possible answers, an all-out attempt to re-establish the old forms, or a consideration of an alternative approach. At this moment of time in the history of Western civilisation the first of these, the re-establishment, has probably become impossible. Our environment is scientific, and increasingly humanist. In any case, is it ever possible to put the clock back? The only satisfactory answer seems to be to make it clear that standards of morality are essential for reasons other than religious belief, and do not depend upon the latter.

It is easy to demonstrate that morality, no matter on what it is based, is not based upon religion. No one can judge whether the Ten Commandments have any moral authority or whether the actions of Christ are "good" unless he has a previous conception of "goodness". As morality improves so does the understanding of what constitutes a Christian act. This is usually defined by Christians as a revelation of what Christianity really means. The bloodstained history of the Christian faith is a matter of deep regret to most modern Christians, although these acts in their day were hailed with delight by churchmen and laymen alike. They were regarded as both moral and Christian.

At first the Church's task is straightforward: teach a belief in the existence of God and the dogmas of the Church; state that God says this action is good, the other evil; affirm that God rewards goodness and punishes evil. This is a basis for a stable moral code in an unchanging, unsophisticated society with no need for any alteration of moral values. Whenever doubt of the premise arises or the religious moral code is called in question as not being necessarily moral—Is the segregation of children by religion not equally as immoral as segregation by colour?—then the Church's difficulties begin. What happens when there is no belief, or a doubtful belief in God?

For centuries education was the handmaiden of religion. In many countries this is still the case; the schoolmaster is subservient to the priest. Where this is not the case, as in Scottish public schools, there still lingers a faint shadow of clerical domination, shown particularly in any discussion on the value of religious education in schools, or in the co-optation of clerics to education committees or even to the Teaching Council. If religious belief were essential to a highly developed moral code there might be some argument for this, but I have already attempted to show that morality which affects all men is not the same as religion which affects principally its adherents, and that the claim, which is constantly and loosely made, that religion and morality are one and the same, is logically wrong, and in our society dangerous for the community as a whole.

In these conditions the teacher's answer must be related to his circumstances alone. The problem facing him is not the same as that facing the minister or priest. To me the teacher has a higher duty to perform. Before him are the children of parents of widely differing views on religion, and of none. His duty should be to help to develop a moral human being regardless of religious belief; the duty of the cleric is to develop a moral Christian human being, within his particular church's definition of Christianity and morality. The teacher's duty transcends all dogmas; that of the priest is restricted and restrictive.

(Concluded on page 308)

## This Believing World

THE BBC memorial talk on Albert Schweitzer was certainly memorable for two things. Here was one of the most famous men of our time, with a lifetime of humanism behind him, yet the speakers nowhere referred to him as an orthodox Christian; nor was what is perhaps his most famous work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, mentioned. No wonder. Schweitzer was a heretic—a believer in a *man* Jesus, but not in a Son of God, or even in miracles, devils and angels—the stock-in-trade of all good Christians. The once famous *Quest* proved the cemetery of most of the “lives” of “our blessed Lord”, and therefore was best forgotten.

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OH DEAR, the impossible has happened—in Italy of all places! The Pope toured a floodswept suburb of Rome, and was actually *jeered* (*The People*, 5/9/65), by many who saw him. One of the flood victims shouted, “We don’t need your blessing—we need money to rebuild our homes”; and another screamed, “Even if God came here it would be no help”. Italy is obviously not so Catholic-ridden as is generally claimed (the suburb is, in fact, a Communist stronghold). At all events, what is going to happen to poor people if neither God nor the Pope is of any help whatever?

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NOBLE LORD, or not, Dr. Donald Soper still considers himself an “infidel killer” (London *Evening Standard*, 3/9/65) in spite of the fact that he likes attacking anti-Socialists perhaps more than anti-Christians. Mind you he is always ready, on Tower Hill and elsewhere, to take on both at the same time! Naturally he is—as a convinced Socialist himself—quite sure that the Labour Party’s troubles were mostly due to the fact that it was not Socialist, and he most convincingly said so. Perhaps he may find that a goodly number of Labour MPs were not Christian either. Anyway, we cannot help wondering how many Methodists agree with him.

★

AS you may now be aware, that fount of theological wisdom the London *Evening News*, publishes every Saturday a “Reflection”, and in the September 4th issue we were informed that “the Christian faith teaches that there are two distinct worlds and that we are concerned with both of them”. Of course, the Christian faith is quite certain that there is another world to which all good Christians go and live for eternity; but it also teaches that there is a “bottomless” pit of eternal fire. A third world?

★

A CORRESPONDENT to the *Daily Mirror* (3/9/65), tried to get a prescription for the birth control pill from her doctor, and failed. It was apparently against his religious principles to prescribe them. Well, what did she expect from a doctor whose religion is against contraceptives? She did what all sensible people ought to do in similar circumstances—change her doctor. Will the Vatican Council change the Roman Catholic Church’s mind—and the lady’s doctor’s mind at the same time? That remains to be seen.

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IT WAS recently reported that a notice in the window of an Army surplus shop was offering: “Ex-WD inter-denominational hymn books suitable for all purposes. 2s. 6d.”

## IS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION A CAUSE OF DELINQUENCY?

(Continued from page 307)

So far as young children of primary age are concerned, morality can only be taught by example, encouragement, and inhibition. It cannot be an intellectual exercise. Young children are happy to do whatever meets with approval, and to behave as the adults around them behave. Shutting their eyes and saying a prayer meets with approval; so they do it although they haven’t the faintest idea of what it’s about. They could more readily understand the thanks due to the hands, white and coloured, that brought food to their breakfast table or contributed to the clothes they wear.

The problem in secondary schools is different.

“Thou shalt not commit adultery”.

“What’s wrong with adultery?” a facetious sixth-former might ask. Well, what is wrong with adultery? Is it based on the laws of inheritance? Does it involve danger to the person or the personality? An act of selfishness, of meanness, of theft? It must be a demonstrable crime against a human being or against society in general. Other than the unsatisfactory—“God says it’s a sin”, any reasons must have a basis in society. In the end, the explanation, whatever it is, must be rational. The strength of any moral law fundamentally lies in this, that it makes sense to human beings.

For older pupils, the best moral teaching that is ever done in schools arises naturally in class. All of literature is about the thoughts and actions of men and women, and it is here, if anywhere, that the most satisfactory work is done without any self-conscious attitudinising. We are all suddenly flung into a discussion on morality without being aware of it, and usually without any religious reference.

If moral codes are the result of the actions of human beings one towards another, of the absolute necessity for the realisation of the brotherhood of man, then this is what should be taught in school. The issue should not be clouded by the problematical and divisive forces of religious dogma. “No man is an island” applies in all human societies. I teach because someone else is sweeping the streets, and another attending the sick. We depend upon one another for comfort, assistance, love and the very basic necessities of life. It seems to me that morality can be clearly taught, and with a greater certainty of success, if it is discussed at this level.

What I have stated is, I believe, a case for the removal of religious education from the time-table.

A great many teachers in my experience, believers and otherwise, teach it with little satisfaction. Its removal would enable all children, regardless of creed, to come to the same school to learn of their common humanity and of the unimportance of religious difference.

This is the rule in America and in some parts of the Commonwealth and the Americans at least claim a church attendance far in excess of our own.

Religious belief is the concern of the family and the church; morality is the concern of us all.

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### OBITUARY

Mr. John Pardo who died recently aged fifty-nine had been a reader of THE FREETHINKER for many years. He was employed in the Housing Department of the Greater London Council, and had been actively associated with Morley College.

The General Secretary of the National Secular Society (Mr. W. McIlroy) conducted the committal ceremony at West Norwood Crematorium in September 11th. Our deepest sympathy is extended to Mr. Pardo’s family.

## THE FREETHINKER

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

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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 USA 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.

### 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 (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. and 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

Surbiton and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, September 24th, 8 p.m.: JACK ROBINSON, "The Anarchist View".

Worthing Humanist Group (Morelands Hotel, The Pier), Sunday, September 26th, 5.30 p.m.: Mrs. VIRGINIA PENN, "The Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding".

### Notes and News

"WHATEVER one thinks of Pakistan's knife-edge exercise" in Kashmir—wrote Peter Preston from Karachi—"the simple fact is that it has brought a desperate reponse totally out of keeping with the scale and aim of the original murky initiative" (*The Guardian*, 10/9/65). That is, of course, the danger with knife-edge exercises, especially when hate seethes just below the surface. "Hindu and Muslim are more alien than we knew", remarked the *Observer* two days later. But didn't we know, and didn't we fear? Pakistan is a religious state, owing its very existence to Islam, and dedicated to it. There was considerable bloodshed and wholesale emigration when the partitioning took place; now Pakistan has a military ruler and India no longer has Nehru.

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WHAT India has, however, is precious. "People seem incapable"—John Grigg said in his independent column in the *Guardian* (10/9/65)—"of grasping the unique importance of Indian democracy". We cannot afford, he went on "to treat a secular state, with a freely elected government and a free press, on a par with a theocratic state, ruled by a military dictator, and with a controlled press . . . The aim of the responsible Indian leaders, in which they have the broad backing of their people, has been and is to preserve the unity and integrity of their nation with its free institutions and its commitment to secularism". While not committing ourselves to all Mr. Grigg's ideas, we do think he has said something that is important.

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POPE PAUL might prevaricate over some things (contraception and Jewish decide, for instance) but not over the eucharist. An encyclical letter published on the eve of

the fourth session of the Vatican Council reaffirmed that the body and blood of Jesus Christ "are truly and substantially present" in the bread and wine during mass. Whilst not wishing to deny scholars investigating the mysteries of Catholicism, the Pope was speaking out against opinions "which disturb the minds of the faithful and produce in them no little confusion concerning the truths of the faith" (*The Observer*, 12/9/65). The encyclical is "seen as" or "believed to be" a reply to a group of West European theologians who suggested earlier this year that the bread and wine of the eucharist were purely symbols. The Pope hoped that Catholics would not be "frustrated by this spread of false opinions". Rationalisation, he pointed out, had been condemned many times by the Church.

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IF THE Pope has not yet made up his mind—or at any rate spoken it—on birth control, many Roman Catholic doctors, as well as laymen and women, have done so. Even the ultra-conservative Guild of St. Luke, St. Cosmas and St. Damian has reported to the Vatican that a majority of its members no longer favour their Church's teaching. A questionnaire sent to 1,300 Catholic doctors was answered by 654 within the required three weeks. Only 242 considered the rhythm method satisfactory, compared with 325 who did not; 246 regarded contraception within marriage as "against the natural law", opposed to 381 who did not. Most significant, however, were the replies to the question "Do you in your own conscience think that contraception, within the bonds of marriage, should be permitted in circumstances such as (a) to prevent the break-up of a marriage, (b) for medical reasons, (c) for economic reasons"; to which 440, 487 and 415 affirmative answers were received, respectively, against 197, 150 and 219 in the negative.

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THE report had been kept secret since it was written four months ago. No reference to it had appeared in the Guild's journal, but it was somehow leaked to the press just before the final session of the Vatican Council. It demonstrates, as the *Guardian* (10/9/65) remarked, "the unwillingness of Roman Catholic doctors in this country to accept without question the views of priestly authority on matters affecting the health of their patients". And, the *Guardian* pointed out that a great many of the doctors were distressed at the way Dr. John Marshall, "a neurologist and a churchman of completely orthodox views", had been appointed to the Papal commission of family planning "without reference to informed Catholic medical opinion in this country".

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DISTRESS was also reported from the Jewish community in Britain. Dr. Jacob Herzog, the Israeli diplomat, is too ill to take up the post of Chief Rabbi to which he was appointed last May. The community "which is seriously split by doctrinal beliefs" had hoped that Dr. Herzog, who was born in Dublin and educated in London, would help to restore unity (*Daily Telegraph*, 8/9/65). "This obviously means that we will have to start the search all over again", said Alfred H. Silverman, secretary to the Chief Rabbinate Council.

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THOSE two dependables Josephus and Jesus are the centre of our controversial issue this week. F. A. Ridley criticises H. Cutner, who in turn criticises George R. Goodman. But Mr. Goodman compliments Mr. Cutner! Our other article, "Is Religious Education a Cause of Delinquency?" is reprinted by kind permission of the editor of the *Scottish Educational Journal* and of the author Alex Stewart.

## Their Faith is Vain

By GEORGE R. GOODMAN

H. CUTNER'S vigorous article on the Josephus passage forgery was very timely. Here are a few more nails for the coffin of that more than dead faith.

As Origen (185-254) did not know anything at all about Josephus mentioning a Jesus who was "The" Christ who was condemned to die "on the cross" by Pilate, but Eusebius (264-340) did, it is obvious that when the Church dogmas (there were many versions, each one crazier than the other!) were gradually formulated, the various bishops who contested each other, searched desperately for some "confirmation", not only for their ridiculous creeds, but more important still, for their mythical Jesus figure.

Alas, as no Jesus ever existed, they could not find anything; so they resorted to fraud. The Josephus passage was fabricated and inserted, rather clumsily, (because the preceding paragraph and the one following belong together) in the decade between 310 and 320. It was a time when forgery was not a crime, but a "holy act", receiving full ecclesiastical approval, providing it was done for the edification and glorification of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and her doctrines.

Likewise, all the Epistles of Paul were doctored and inoculated with pages and pages of dogmatical gibberish, with an utter disregard to truth and historicity. Considering that Paul never knew a man called "Jesus Christ" or had ever heard of him, (because he had not yet been invented) the entire insertions of which there are hundreds, are the acme of priestly overbearance and arrogance and are unsurpassed for sheer insolence and shameless intimidation.

A good example are the first 32 verses of I. Cor. 15. They even had the nerve to say in verse 14, "And if Christ be not risen then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain; . . . ye are yet in your sins". Well, their faith *is* vain!

Christian apologists often say that Josephus mentions "Jacobus, the brother of Jesus called Christ". It was a comparatively easy matter for the papal scribes to put in a little sentence like that; it does not prove anything at all.

Josephus was at Rome when the Christiani were supposed to have been singled out for special persecution and cruel martyrdom by imperial tyrants, yet he knows nothing at all about such happenings. He did not mention the so-called "twelve Apostles"—because they never existed. They were taken over from Egyptian mythology, where they were the "Twelve Saviours of the Treasure of Light".

Their corollary can be found in the twelve signs of the Zodiac through which the Sun had to pass, and as the "Christ" figure was, without a doubt, a solar deity—taken over from Egyptian and other sources—it is only natural that he, as the Sungod, should be surrounded by his twelve zodiacal satellites or assistants.

The twelve in Egypt were: Sut, Horus, Shu, Hapi, Ap-uat, Kabhsenuf, Amsta, Anup, Ptah, Atum, Sau, and Hu. They rowed the solar bark for Ra, with Horus at the prow. They appear again in our own Arthurian legends as the twelve knights around the table (which was round, like the path of the Sun!) They were also the twelve gods with Odin in their midst (Scandinavian myths) holding court in Valhalla; they appear again in the Icelandic sagas (the two Eddas); and they are already in the

Old Testament as the twelve sons of Jacob; all the solar heroes were saved in a basket of reeds, Moses being no exception.

The Egyptian "Christos" says in the *Ritual*: "Ra maketh his appearance at the Mount of Glory, with the cycle of the gods about him". In the *Pistis Sophia* the Gnostic Jesus becomes the teacher of the twelve on the Mount of Olives (the mount of the Olive Tree of Dawn) and says; "When I first came into the world, I brought with me twelve powers, I took them from the twelve saviours of the treasure of light". Here is incontestable evidence that the twelve disciples represent twelve solar gods not men in Judaea!

All the solar gods ended their childhood, or subjection to Mother Nature's laws, at twelve and entered the period of spiritual maturity, consummating it at the age of thirty! Even today, a Jewish boy becomes, on his thirteenth birthday, a "man" and a "son of Duties" (Bar Mitzvah) and as such an active and responsible member of the congregation.

If an ancient Egyptian could today enter a Roman Catholic Church, he would find himself very much at home, for there he would see a statue of his beloved goddess Isis with the Infant Horus in her arms, taken over from pre-Christian Egypt, without the alteration of even a single stroke!

Looking at the stained glass windows (incidentally an Egyptian invention), he would behold Osiris, the head of the Trinity, duly taken over into Christianity as Joseph. In a niche, he would detect another statue of the Virgin Mother with a Crown on her head and standing on a blue-painted moon which was *her* particular symbol and holding in her hand an orb.

Then perchance, he would see Horus the Elder (now called Jesus) with the Sun-disc (not an Aura) behind his head, in Egyptian fashion clearly denoting, that he was the Sungod.

Then he would hear, if he understood English a priest telling the unenlightened people that yellow was the colour of Roman Catholicism (he would carefully avoid telling them it was the *colour of the Sungod*) and urging the highly superstitious women always to buy yellow pullovers and caps for their babies, to tie their teenage girls' hair with yellow ribbons and for adult wear, yellow cardigans and blouses. By doing so, they would be under the "special protection" of the "Mother of God" and her Son the holy Jesus himself.

That visitor from ancient Egypt attending another service in a Roman Catholic church, would be amazed to see the officiating priest holding up a gilded monstrance (containing the "consecrated host", actually a thin wafer-like piece of unleavened bread, relic of a Jewish custom), for the adoration of the people.

The ancient Egyptian would immediately recognise in that ritualistic utensil his sungod's emblem, a glorious Sun with 28 (4 weeks) extending flame-like rays (!); and he would marvel at the sight of the people falling on their knees,—thereby clearly demonstrating that after three to five thousand years, they still owed allegiance to his beloved Osiris!

But to come back to the interpolation in the text of Josephus's *Antiquities*.

The situation round about the year 310 when, it is assumed the above interpolation was made, was very

similar to one that happened only a few years ago, within the memory of all of us.

It was in 1947 when some jars containing biblical manuscripts were discovered in almost inaccessible rock caves in the Palestinian desert near the Dead Sea, followed by further discoveries in 1949, 1952 and 1956. The sensational press, together with its radio and TV allies, sprang into action, for they sensed a rich harvest by supplying fanciful accounts about events that would interest the pious—and the not-so-pious—readers and listeners. Nothing was spared to whip up the fervid imaginations, not only of devout church-people, but also of millions of pseudo-Christians, to fever heat.

Was not this a golden opportunity to prove to the world that those wicked detractors of the faith, those pestiferous Freethinkers and their ilk, were utterly wrong, and that the "Saviour of Mankind" and the alleged "founder" of the 167 varieties (110 more than Heinz's) of Christianity really existed? Alas for their childish expectations, the ecclesiastical fireworks display didn't go off. For the devil of truth (who always helps the Freethinkers!) had gone round with a watering can and had sprinkled the beautiful Roman Candles and Catherine wheels with unholy water, with the sad result that all failed to explode.

In their desperate eagerness to prove that their incarnated God was not a myth, but a historical figure who had actually lived in a kind of monastery (probably belonging, at one time, to the Essene Brotherhood) these defenders of the faith performed some strange contortions. Especially when they found out that, far from confirming their shaky dogmatism, those disappointing manuscripts threatened still further to undermine an already untenable position!

Various Church assemblies were convened to which only clergymen were admitted, as advertised in the daily press.

Why the secrecy? Because the ecclesiastical authorities feared that some nosy parishioners might ask awkward questions and the clergy must be given some "guiding lines" on how to counter such attacks. Moreover, their nonplussed and most disappointed ministers (they might even waver, who knows?) had to be confidentially informed that, as far as their "Christ Jesus" was concerned, not a single item of the existence of such a figure had been discovered. Not so much as a word!

They were told that the only fact that had transpired was that in the discovered monastery at Qumram was a Superior whom his subordinates called "*Moreh Zadik*" which is Hebrew and means: pious or righteous Teacher. And that in the outside world was a "wicked priest" who opposed him.

They could make out of that as much as they liked (and they did!), implying that the "Teacher of righteousness" (note the subtle alteration from adjective to qualifying noun) was none other than—guess who?

As the discovered manuscripts covered a period from 167 BC to the year 68 of our era, and as they did not confirm anything appertaining to Christian dogmatism, they were in fact the greatest and most dangerous challenge to present day Christianity!

The position today is that the Church keeps pretty quiet about the Dead Sea Scrolls, because it has nothing to shout about and the less said, the better. However, an enormous amount of literature has sprung up in English, German, Dutch and French.

The position in Britain resolved itself into a simple stratagem. Those authors who indulged in the greatest flights of fantasies and whose writings would be of inestim-

able advantage to the established church by supplying the right kind of opiate for her ignorant and untutored "faithfuls", received the greatest publicity in press, radio and TV.

The books of these authors were issued in cheap editions, so as to make them available to the greatest number of people who, in most cases, were quite unable to discriminate whether the author was a devout churchman or not.

But the most important outcome of the whole matter is this. If the decade 1947-1957 had been like the decade 310-320 (when the Josephus passage was most likely manufactured and the masses could neither read nor write, but were completely dominated by the clergy), then I have not the slightest doubt that somebody would have inserted into the Dead Sea Scrolls a suitable reference to their "Christ Jesus" and thus repeated the same kind of forgery enacted 1640 years ago!

To take over a trinity of gods from paganism and miraculously turn the three into one and the one into three was not just a matter of mere theological juggling, but a crude combination of sacerdotal magic with ecclesiastical despotism. Reasoning was not allowed to penetrate this triple screen of obscurantism. The dupes and devotees were simply bludgeoned into believing.

The Church-history of the first millenium of our era contains ample proof that to raise a man, who had never existed, to the status of a trinitarian god presented a host of unanticipated difficulties. In the third, fourth and fifth centuries, any number of pompous prelates, bishops, presbyters, deacons and theologians wanted to exhibit their cleverness and erudition by expounding theories about the "true nature" of their saviour-god and his family.

Fatuous arguments went on for centuries about such idiocies: whether Jesus was divine or not, whether he was of the *same* nature as God or of a *like* nature, whether he was conceived in an earthly manner and born of a woman, or immaculately conceived without the assistance of a male, whether his mother should be called "Mother of God" or Mother of Christ, and whether Jesus possessed two natures, one human and one divine (or vice versa) *ad infinitum*.

Anyhow, at the very stormy Church Council of Chalcedon (451) Jesus was declared a "God-man", but this was surpassed as far as sheer stupidity was concerned, at the synod of Toledo (589) when it was declared that the "Holy Spirit" proceeded from the Father *and* the Son (*filioque*). This declaration caused a split between West and East, as the latter declared that the Spirit proceeded only from the Father.

Ever since Nicaea (325), when the maddest of all creeds was manufactured, declaring that Jesus was "begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father" i.e. "consubstantial", the differences between the various emperors and their bishops, became so marked that the many factions called each other "heretics" and began to murder each other on a wholesale scale. It was the birth of the proverbial Christian intolerance!

In those days, and right throughout the Middle Ages, to incur the epithet "heretic" was equal to being accused of murder and treason; it warranted not only incarnation in vile dungeons, but also tortures of the most horrible kind and even burnings at the stake, whilst priests chanted hymns in praise of their "saviour and redeemer".

The whole edifice of Christianity is based on shifting sands and is bound to disintegrate. The creeds are archaic and were made for an age that has long passed. In those days, only a small percentage of the people could read or write and they believed all the invented miracles and never

questioned the veracity of their "holy" book.

But antiquity does not sanctify the absurd. Today, knowledge and reasoning displace ignorance and superstition. Nowadays, people laugh at the empty threats of blackmailing priests and do not wait to be excommunicated, but have the courage and sagacity to expel themselves!

Crafty priestcraft has had its day. For a long time, the hierarchy of the Church has known that the New Testament was a pious fraud and the figure of a Christ a complete myth. When Pope Leo X (1513-21) a contemporary of Martin Luther was approached about the improbability of the entire Jesus story being true, his

jesuitical answer was, "What profit hath not that fable of Christ brought us!"

This shattering remark should be displayed on every wayside-pulpit and printed at the head of every church-magazine.

The mental liberation of mankind can only come through being more critical of the many religious fairy tales that the men in black cassocks peddle to the ignorant masses. The remedy lies in instilling a thirst for knowledge, adult education; telling people that they have nothing to fear, that they can only lose their chains, for the truth shall make them free. Then they will realise that their ecclesiastical faith was vain!

## Lord Soper on the Defensive

The usually assertive Lord Soper was distinctly on the defensive in his discussion with F. H. Amphlett Micklewright in the ITV programme *Sunday Break* on September 12th. As in Lord Soper's earlier discussion with National Secular Society president D. H. Tribe, the two disputants were allowed to confront each other without a chairman, and once again the experiment was successful.

Challenged at the bar of history, Mr. Micklewright led off, the Christian Church cannot be exonerated. Lord Soper conceded that there were many things that Christianity should be ashamed of, but he distinguished between the Christianity of Christ and what he called "perversions" of it. The two should not be confused.

But what did we know of Christ? A few fragments taken from a lifetime and recalled some 30 or 40 years after, said Mr. Micklewright. We cannot know the historical Jesus, the life of the historical Jesus could never be written. On the contrary, argued Lord Soper, it is not difficult to see the picture of Jesus, the man emerges "as a whole".

If this was so, Mr. Micklewright countered, why did Paul not see the picture? He knew nothing of the empty tomb; if he had he would have used it. No, the resurrection had no basis in history. There was, Lord Soper said, a recognisable pattern of life among the early Christians, and the fact of Jesus was real to them.

The early Church came to terms with life, Mr. Micklewright agreed, but the "pattern" of Tertullian, for instance, was very different from that of Clement of Alexandria. But Lord Soper was not to be drawn into particularities. The early Christians set up a socialist community he declared.

If so, said Mr. Micklewright, there were plenty of parallels in oriental communities to a pentecostal community. But Lord Soper had to face the fact that it was the Pauline pattern of life that had conquered Europe—and incidentally lost Asia. Prior to Paul we were on uncertain, boggy, historical ground. We could only talk about what did happen, not what should or might have done. And he gave some concrete cases of Roman Catholic, Church of England and Free Church teachings on marriage and divorce.

Nobody doubts that the Christian Church is a fallible organisation, said Lord Soper. But, said Mr. Micklewright, the Church tells me that I should accept a revelation. Yet, "where reason has got to play, supernaturalism has gone out of the window".

"It isn't a rational world", said Lord Soper, "but I believe it is a reasonable one". And he asked us to look at what Jesus said about war. "I take my pacifism from Jesus", he added. Mr. Micklewright doubted this.

Both Lord Soper and he regarded war as a disaster, and he thought Lord Soper's pacifism was the result of thinking about the world today. Anyway, other people came to a diametrically opposed view from reading the New Testament.

Lord Soper insisted, however, that there was "Somebody who speaks out of the first century to me now". And he instanced the Sermon on the Mount. That, said Mr. Micklewright, had to be seen against the eschatological belief of the imminent end of the world: one would have no use for one's cloak etc., if the end of the world was nigh.

Well, concluded Lord Soper, "it has brought happiness to me".

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### A COMMENT FROM WEST GERMANY

I should like to comment on your note on Dibelius and Bonhoeffer in *THE FREETHINKER* (13/8/65), when you cited *New Statesman* reviews on two books recently translated into English. Geoffrey Barraclough had remarked that "the German Church struggle was not a political but a theological one of which the historians of the German Resistance have commonly taken too little account".

The Churches' return to power in 1945 was based on their falsifying history and especially their role within the previous 12 years and the immediately preceding decades. They camouflaged themselves behind a handful of martyrs who as individuals had opposed their Church when opposing National Socialism. As a masterpiece of falsification the Churches used their international connections to make the world believe that they, and they alone, had resisted National Socialism; and that the Hitler regime had been basically atheistic. None of this was true. But the Church organisation was intact, and was in a position to lay the foundation for this anti-communist, anti-atheistic state against Russia. Hitler had opposed the Jewish-Bolshevik state. Hitler and the top men of his party never left their Church. Small wonder that National Socialists in this country, efficient in anti-communism, are holding key positions in this "representative democracy" of Western Germany.

Germany was ripe for socialism in 1918. True the ferocities in Russia caused many to hesitate, but it was the West's interest—Treaty of Versailles—not to let this country become socialist. The American-Norwegian sociologist Thorsten Veeblen was right when he said in 1921 that Keynes's book on the Treaty only told half the truth. The "Parchment of the Treaty", Veeblen wrote, "is anti-communism. Europe must start anew to quarrel with no problem solved by the treaty. The result will be another world war".

Barraclough is right when stating that the opposition of the Churches to National Socialism was merely a quarrel on theological problems. National Socialist directives urged the teachers back into the Churches, demanded crosses in each classroom. It was the many groups that National Socialists had to get together. Now and then one or the other tried to evade the strict orders this country had to observe by signing the concordat.

As long as the same personalities who supported Hitler continue this present anti-communist state, there is small wonder that historians avoid the truth. It is not the wording of the constitution (*Grundgesetz*) that makes one tremble, but the present interpretation. As article 21 makes the parties the pillars of this state, all three of them will combine in a big coalition after election on the 19th. All three of them will guarantee the continuation of anti-communism.

GERDA GUTTENBERG (Nürnberg).

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