

THE TRUTH SEEKER

FOUNDED 1873

A JOURNAL FOR THINKERS AND LIBERTARIANS

OUR PLATFORM: Free Thought, Free Speech, Democracy, Equal Rights, and Impartial Liberty.

OUR PROGRAM: Repeal of All Laws Based upon Religious Beliefs and Restricting Individual Freedom.

Volume 71, No. 1

PUBLISHED MONTHLY—JANUARY, 1944

\$1.50 a year; single copy, 15c.

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The Non-Historicity of Jesus Christ

HISTORICUS

(A reaffirmation of position, with a reply to certain recent strictures by Mr. Joseph McCabe).

IT is rather surprising that after all the erudite work done on the Jesus myth there should be any need, especially in Freethought circles, to discuss the subject again. Considering what has been accomplished by the thorough-going investigations of John M. Robertson, T. Whitaker, W. Smith, Drews, Dupuis, Volney, L. G. Rylands, Albert Kalthoff, Robert Taylor, and a veritable host of other students, one can rightly say that today the mythicist position is unassailable. The theologic defense has been unable to bring forth any credible evidence to substantiate its contention of historicity. Position after position had to be abandoned by the church. To each, however, the apologists clung with desperate anxiety, only to be compelled to relinquish it as the studies of comparative mythology and hierology advanced. Being unable to present a Jesus established by unbiased historic investigation, the religious world, at last, was compelled to resort to her usual adulation of "faith" and "spiritual" insight as elements which, she hoped, would enable her to establish a basis for the historic Jesus. Whatever merit those two factors may have within the confines of a church, they cannot add anything to the analytic apparatus utilized by an objective historian.

Those who attack the mythicist position are usually driven to pose the question: how could Christianity have arisen without a personal founder? They find

that it is better to ask this query than to attempt to demolish the accomplishment of the mythicist school. Or, they attempt to break down some particular point, and assume that if that is accomplished, the historic Jesus arises.¹

There is, therefore, nothing left for the believer, either lay or academic, but to accept the historicity of Jesus as he accepts the existence of god—on faith!

As P. L. Couchoud sums up the results of the battle between the mythicists and the "historic" school, one readily can see the utter bankruptcy of the latter. Writes Couchoud:

"The historicity of Jesus is an article of faith."²

Recently, Mr. Joseph McCabe came out with renewed contention for the historical Jesus.³ In a booklet of 32 pages which purports, according to its subcaption, to give the "real" origin of the Christian religion, he sees fit to make an attack on the mythicist

1. "The assertion that Jesus cannot have been invented is usually the last desperate attempt by those who have abandoned belief in the historical truth of the Gospels as a whole to save the central figure." *Did Jesus Ever Live?* by L. G. Rylands, Watts & Co., London, p. 2.

2. *The Creation of Christ*, by P. L. Couchoud, Watts & Co., 1939, vol. 2, p. 447. I am pleased to note that this learned and scholarly book is dedicated to John M. Robertson.

3. *How Christianity Grew out of Paganism—The Real Origin of the Christian Religion*. Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas. Little Blue Book No. 1775.

school, and particularly on the late John M. Robertson. Why such an attack was not made by Mr. McCabe during Mr. Robertson's lifetime, and why it is being made in a booklet that deals with the origin of Christianity, may best be left in silence.

Mr. McCabe introduces his attack on John M. Robertson as follows (italics mine in all the quotations given):

"For 30 years I have been censored by Freethinkers because I never endorsed this theory [the mythicist]. Today I doubt if it has a single representative in what you may broadly call the world of scholarship. It first became widely known to Freethinkers by the writings of the late J. M. Robertson in the days when he used to talk about 'Jesusism' and 'Godism' instead of Christianity and Theism.⁴ Robertson had, as a matter of fact, borrowed the idea though he never acknowledged this, from an earlier Freethinker, Robert Taylor a man of very extensive if peculiar learning, and Taylor may have taken it from Dupuis. However, Robertson who was tireless in research though not very critical when he found something that seemed to suit his theory, supported the negative view with such an impressive apparatus of comparative mythology that even his dullest and most ponderous works on the subject had a large circulation."⁵

A difference of opinion regarding the myth theory does not necessarily entail rationalistic opprobrium, and it is to be regretted that a scholar otherwise so logical and generally objective in his disputes, as Mr. McCabe is, should have harbored that thought for thirty years. It would be interesting to ascertain by what process of analysis Mr. McCabe discovered that J. M. Robertson had, "as a matter of fact, borrowed the idea, though he had never acknowledged this, from an earlier Freethinker, Robert Taylor", the latter having been, according to Mr. McCabe, a man of "extensive if peculiar learning", and, it would certainly not be amiss to have elucidated how Mr. McCabe was led to the opinion that Taylor, despite his extensive if peculiar learning, "may" have taken it from Dupuis.

Mr. McCabe, who charges J. M. Robertson with being "not very critical when he found something that seemed to suit his theory", offers, regarding the passage in Josephus, the following glaring example of uncritical theorizing:

"The passage in the Jewish historian Josephus is, of course, forged, but *who can say whether the forged passage was not inserted instead of a reference that did not satisfy Christians?*"⁶

4. When J. M. Robertson was talking of "Jesusism" and "Godism," Mr. McCabe was accepting the agnostic position. He wrote: "I prefer the term 'Agnostic' to 'Atheist,' because there is a common tendency to conceive the Atheist as one who believes he can disprove the existence of God, and there are men who hold that position." *The Existence of God*, by Joseph McCabe, Watts & Co., 1913, p. 144. It is with hearty satisfaction that I note that Mr. McCabe evidently learned that the existence "can be disproved", and, in his revised edition of *The Existence of God*, he makes mention of the fact that he now considers himself an atheist. We atheists are glad to have him in our midst. Perhaps Mr. McCabe may yet revise his position as to the historicity of Jesus. Anyway, I hope so.

5. *How Christianity Grew out of Paganism*, p. 11.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

This is rather a startling defense of a position, especially when adopted by a scholar who is apt to develop a penchant for the word "may". Incidentally, this passage in Josephus has been given up even by conservative church scholars. Mr. McCabe's trying to make the admittedly forged Josephian passage serve as evidence of that for which it was forged is certainly "accepting things that suit a theory", without any kind of analysis, critical or otherwise.

It is interesting to observe that Mr. McCabe's attack on the mythicist school, especially on such titans of Freethought scholarship as J. M. Robertson and others. Scholars renowned the world over for their investigations of the Jesus myth are impugned at the very start because they are not "professional historians", and, I suppose, we are to assume that their studies are, therefore, invalid. As though "what you may broadly call the world of scholarship" was ever anything but an out-and-out enemy of Freethought!

After taking Professor Benjamin Smith to task as to the merit of his studies because he was not "an historian but a mathematician", and, Dujardin by the ear because he was "a fine literary man but, although he read very extensively on this subject and, I think, traveled in the East, he had not the right type of mind for historical work"—and Professor Arthur Drews is put into his proper place because "he was a teacher of philosophy in a high school" and, the late L. G. Rylands is given a lower niche in the hall of scholarly Freethinkers because "he was not an historian but a cashier to a college" (as to this sad fate, Mr. McCabe is not quite certain, so he captiously appends the qualifying clause: "I think") — and, as we are on the question of L. G. Rylands's scholarship, Mr. McCabe sums up, quite tersely, the merit of his investigations by offering the following startling evaluation—which sets a new standard for academic criticism:

"*He (Rylands) died recently so that the theory is out-dated in literature.*"⁸

Upon that basis, Newton, Darwin, Copernicus, et al.,

7. As to how he came to accept the mythicist position, J. M. Robertson writes: "It was by reason of a similar failure to find a historic footing where he had at first taken it for granted that the present writer was gradually led, on lines of comparative hierology and comparative mythology and anthropology, to the conception of the evolution of the Jesus-cult from the roots of a 'pre-Christian' one. *The fact that this view has been independently reached by such a student as Professor W. B. Smith, who approached the problem from within rather than by the way of the comparative method, seems in itself a very important confirmation.*" *The Jesus Problem*, Watts & Co., 1917, p. 3. Also, the following passage from the same work: "As I have repeatedly stated, I began without misgivings by assuming a historical Jesus, and sought historically to trace him, regarding the birth myth and the others as mere accretions" (p. 14). It need not be said that those who are familiar with Robertson's work know that he was scrupulous about acknowledging scholarly sources.

8. *How Christianity Grew out of Paganism*, p. 13.

are in the same boat, and, I suppose, we should ditch their theories, immediately, also.

Mr. McCabe has criticized the work of scholarly Freethinkers who have proved the mythicist theory, despite the fact that they were not "professional historians". He evidently temporarily forgot in criticizing them that the so-called "professional historian" is not quite sacrosanct. Mr. McCabe, however, suddenly lets the feline out of the bag by writing thus:

"I do not stress the fact that no historian ever countenanced it [the myth theory], because our historians today, being professors, are not in a position to be candid on such a point."⁹

And, when, Mr. McCabe, were the "historians" or the "professors" in a position to be candid on such a point?

Mr. McCabe also claims that Sir J. G. Frazer is among the rationalist "professional" historians who "have emphatically rejected the myth theory". Without pausing to argue the point as to whether Sir J. G. Frazer was an historian or an anthropologist, I would like, since Mr. McCabe places so much value upon "professional" historians, to bring to Mr. McCabe's attention the fact that Sir James Frazer had reason to change from his original dogmatic denial to a very pronounced modification of it, as expressed in his introduction to P. L. Couchoud's "The Enigma of Jesus" and it is, therefore, not quite fair to represent him as "emphatically" rejecting the myth theory.

So far as the question of the historicity of Jesus is concerned, it is conclusively summed up in the following:

"The real question of the historicity of Jesus is not merely whether there ever was a Jesus among the numerous claimants of a Messiahship in Judea, but whether we are to recognize the historical character of this Jesus in the Gospels, and whether he is to be regarded as the founder of Christianity. *If the whole of the older Church, including the New Testament literature, entirely rejects the notion of a human founder of the religion*, how can our theologians venture to suggest that this literature really wanted to describe such a human founder to its readers, though it did so very clumsily and ineffectively?"¹⁰

Like God, Jesus is a myth.

9. Ibid, p. 13.

10. *The Rise of Christianity*, by Albert Kalthoff, Watts & Co., 1907, p. 28.

"THIS can't go on," said the police as they disturbed a religious meeting of the Holiness Faith Healers at Stone Creek, near St. Charles, Va., at the end of last Summer. Fifteen hundred spectators watched Evangelist Lee Valentine of Pineville, Ky., take off his shoes and kick some copperhead snakes around. One of the reptiles bit him. At which point the police stopped the show. No further details are available.

SOME of the Italians are not so dumb. The Pope is Italian and thirty of the fifty cardinals are of the same race. These thirty all agree that their fellow countryman cannot err concerning faith and morals and hundreds of millions of non-Italians believe them.

DID WINSTON CHURCHILL SAY IT?

IT is common knowledge among scholars that the Jews were never in Egypt and that Moses is just as fictitious as are Noah and Jesus Christ. And yet England's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, according to the April issue of Dawn, which quotes from "The Jewish Struggle" by Jeremiah Ben-Jacob (1942), has declared:

"We reject with scorn all those learned and labored myths that Moses was but a legendary figure upon whom the priesthood and the people hung their essential social, moral and religious ordinances. We believe that the most scientific views, the most up-to-date and rationalistic conception, will find its fuller satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally, and in identifying one of the greatest human beings with the most decisive leap forward ever discernible in the human story.

"We remain unmoved by the tomes of Professor Gradgrind and Dr. Dryasdust. We may be sure that all these things happened just as they are set out according to Holy Writ. We may believe that they happened to people not so very different from ourselves, and that the impressions those people received were faithfully recorded and have been transmitted across the centuries with far more accuracy than many of the telegraphed accounts we read of the goings-on today.

"In the words of a forgotten work of Mr. Gladstone, we rest with assurance upon 'the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture.'"

As is necessary for any one with political ambitions, President Roosevelt has catered in a general way to religion and the Bible, but, so far as our knowledge extends, he has never sunk so low intellectually as to accept literally the mythological tales of the Old Testament. Perhaps our English co-workers can advise us whether or not Churchill is guilty of such hillbilly talk.

A READER advises that he has never been able to answer the question: When does the soul come into existence? Does it enter the body at the moment of conception, or when life is first felt, or at birth, or when the offspring begins to take notice of its surroundings?

If any agent of the Lord has the answer, we shall be pleased to have him submit it for publication, together with a brief summary of the supporting evidence.

The censorship case in the Federal Courts has been appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, where it is now pending. As previously reported, the custom authorities delivered the seized books.

The "Kosher" case of the People vs. Schwarz, is still pending in the magistrate's court, where it has been postponed three times, the last two times at the request of the prosecuting attorney and over the protest of our lawyers. It is now scheduled to be heard in Jefferson Market Court Jan. 7, 1944. Through this controversy we have learned that many Jews scorn all that silly Kosher business.

A DINNER in honor of the 207th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Paine will be held by the freethinkers and rationalists in the Twin Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis on Saturday, January 29, 1944. All are invited. For reservations call or write Merrill R. Holste, 1903 Walnut St., St. Paul 8. NEstor 3783.

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OLDEST FREETHOUGHT PAPER IN THE WORLD

Founded 1873

GEORGE E. MACDONALD Editor Emeritus
CHARLES SMITH Editor
WOOLSEY TELLER Associate Editor

VOLUME 71, No. 1

JANUARY, 1944

Published monthly by The Truth Seeker Company, Inc. President, Charles Smith; Secretary, Woolsey Teller, 38 Park Row, N. Y.

Re-entered as second-class matter November 4, 1938, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.
Subscription rate: One year, \$1.50; eight months, \$1.00.

Make drafts, checks, and money orders payable to The Truth Seeker Co., Inc., 38 Park Row, New York 8, N. Y.

The Power of Prayer

AN evangelistic publication states: "You can keep on your feet if you keep on your knees." If you like that sort of thing, read the Hillbilly religious sheets or take a course under Prof. J. B. Rhine of Duke University, who contends that "when the dice thrower wishes hard for certain numbers to turn up he obtains results better than the theory of probabilities leads us to expect."

Our opinion is that prayers and wishes are equally futile. If one of these praying or wishing gamblers were to roll the same number 100 times in succession, would that prove the power of mind over matter? There are a number of throws in which the same number in the roll of dice would occur once 100 times in succession. The 100 rolled by the supposed pious craps-shooter might be just the series required by the law of probabilities.

"Chaplain Tells Example of Prayer Power," is the headline in a New York paper over the report by the Catholic priest who survived the sinking last July in the Pacific of the cruiser Helena. Details omitted, the story is that prayer was offered and some were saved. "After this, because of this", is the logic of the savage and the barbarian. Nothing is said in the report concerning those who went down with the ship. Why bring that up?

Something of the priest's real belief may be read between the lines in the following from the news item: "You weren't skeptical, were you, Father?" he was asked.

"No, not on the power of prayer", the Chaplain replied, "but on whether or not we'd make that island."

"God with Us" is the title of a pious editorial in the Boston Herald, Oct. 18, 1943, in praise of prayer as an efficient military weapon.

Quoting General Douglas MacArthur as saying, "If

God stays with me, I will get some remarkable results", the Herald editorial writer continues: "He did! The huge force of American planes wrought immense damage upon land and sea installations. 'Almighty God blessed our arms', then reported the General in triumph."

For a General, in our humble opinion, MacArthur talks too much like a politician. What office is he running for? It was he who said at Bataan so bravely, "We shall fight until death"—the day before he fled to Australia, leaving his men to die or surrender.

Many a criminal has said, "If Luck is with me, I will get away with this". The success of some of them proves just as much in favor of Luck as MacArthur's success proves concerning God. It may be that Luck and God is the same fellow with two names.

GOD REJECTS RECIPROCITY

THE GOLDEN RULE, which is godless and which was old before the Jews were ever heard of in the ancient civilizations, is rejected by the Catholic Church as applying to God Almighty.

The syndicated "Catholic Information" column, supplied by the Catholic Information Society of New York, as published in The Yonkers (N. Y.) Herald Statesman, Nov. 15, 1943, under the heading "All That Glitters Is Not Gold", says:

If we would but unravel the gay trappings of this Rule we would discover that all that glitters is not golden. What we actually find is a hard core of moral licentiousness. For in substance it means that you are free to cast aside one by one God's eternal truths, to dictate the terms of your soul's contract, to make your own rules for the game of life. Such a code would not work with your business associates and friends. You can be pretty sure it won't work with God either!

That is why the Catholic Church has no place for the Golden Rule in her scheme of things. The business of saving souls is serious. God has set down all the rules and requirements. And the Church is not going to run a black market. Her beliefs are "dogmatic." Her morals "rigid." She is the strict landlord who demands our monthly payment. But in return she guarantees that you sit at the table in the Kingdom of Christ (Lk. 22:30). That's the way everyone wants the Church to be. For after all, the Golden Rule is not so much a guide of behavior as a justification of misbehavior.

Holding that God does not exist, I prefer the Golden Rule as the best general guide in social behavior to the "Thus sayeth the Lord God" pronouncements of the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant leaders. That Pope in Rome is not going to be listened to by me as to what I ought to do. Let him talk to himself. If there be a god and if he refuses to do as he would be done by, I have no use for him.

When I look up at the starry heavens at night and reflect upon what it is that I really see there, I am constrained to say, "There is no God." . . . It is not the works of some God that I see there . . . I see no lineaments of personality, no human traits, but an energy upon whose currents solar systems are but bubbles.

—JOHN BURROUGHS.

Observations

CALL it thirty years ago; I read in the papers that a Colonel Church had laid before a meeting of ministers in Philadelphia his discovery that patriarchal, pre-deluge, or Biblical "years" are but months reckoned in our time. In 1920 a Truth Seeker reader wrote that his daughter attending a Baptist Sunday school brought home a paper named Young People, in which he read that Bible "years" were "lunar" ones of twenty-nine days each, thus reducing Methuselah's nine hundred and sixty-nine solar years to about seventy-seven. But, the reader noted, if the harmonizing of the Bible worked in the case of Methuselah, it failed in that of Mahalaleel, who "lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared"—when but little more than five of our years old. And in 1924, again, a Professor Crawford of the University of California submitted the proposition that "doubtless the age of Methuselah was computed by the moon instead of solar cycles." A correspondent of a San Francisco daily quoted scriptures that disposed of Professor Crawford as a textual critic.

So Colonel Church's theory was left to the Sunday schools, and its author or exponent came not to my notice thereafter until about a month ago, when I read in the obituary news that the colonel had passed away. The subject is now revived by my reading in the same month a borrowed copy of "The Outline of History" (1920), by H. G. Wells, vol. 1, p. 129, the following:

"The earliest recorded reckoning (of time) is by moons and by generations of men. The former seems to be the case in the Book of Genesis, where, if one reads the great ages of the patriarchs who lived before the flood as lunar months instead of years, Methuselah and the others are reduced to a credible length of life."

The author of forty books, Mr. Wells is one of the most read and perhaps admired and trusted writing men England has had. If in writing his "Outline" he had consulted statistics in Genesis, he would have seen that by the year-equals-a-month system Methuselah was begotten by his father Enoch (Gen. 5:21) in the sixth year of Enoch's age. Also that the author of Genesis recorded history in both years and months—as (8:13), "it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month," and so on; while the words "in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month" show the month had twenty-seven days at least. In the Introduction to his superb "Outline" Mr. Wells named upwards of fifty sources, assistants and editorial critics and advisers who examined and carefully revised his work. And apparently not one of them had carefully read the chapter of begets in God's own Outline of History.

Author Wells approves of Christ and his populism but not of the church. Against that institution one of his editors accuses him of being as prejudiced as Gib-

bon, who wrote under the influence of Voltaire. Yet we do not find him other than a friendly critic of the scriptures except when he falls upon the "ancient Babylonian story" of the special creation of the world and of Adam and Eve and the serpent. That primitive "heliolithic" serpent legend, he affirms, entered Christianity through the Jewish sacred books, and wherever official Christianity has gone it has taken that story with it as fundamental; hence the religious life of the leading nations has gone on "in a house of history built upon sand." And so, "upon the belief in that Fall as a fact, and not upon the personality of Jesus of Nazareth and his injunctions, doctrinal Christianity built itself." It is not clear how this indictment of Christianity as fundamentally a fraud is modified to any large extent by turning the years of the patriarchs into months.

HAD William Floyd, editor of The Arbitrator, who died, aged 72, at his home in New York the 26th of November last, lived a little longer, he might have written a book on Forty Years of Freethought, for he made the acquaintance of The Truth Seeker in 1904. His relation to this paper then and for the next seventeen years was that of landlord, which at his earlier calls he did not disclose, to my knowledge. It happened to be myself who selected Paine's "Age of Reason" for his first reading. In his last book, "Humanizing Biblical Religion," 1943, he states that Paine's work "drove the author," that is himself, "into the heretical field," and after this observer's name on the flyleaf of a presentation copy, wrote "my savior." In the personal sketch under his picture (same book) he remarks that he "served for ten years as a vestryman of the Church of the Ascension"—Episcopal—but I don't remember his ever trusting to print the fact, as he told it, that on an Easter morning, the while, when another vestryman met him with the prescribed salutation, "The Lord is risen," expecting the response, "He is risen indeed," the heretic replied, "Don't you believe it!" and went on his way rejoicing.

Once started as writer, under the pen name of John Doe and later "Atwood Manville," Mr. Floyd sent to The Truth Seeker articles on religion, evolution, and, with growing skepticism as to the righteousness of our institutions, a radical one on "The Conjugal Relation." After that he "went off the deep end" into Socialism. Being a man of wealth by inheritance who could do what he willed with his money, he began publishing. "Social Progress" and "People Vs. Wall Street" were his earlier books, and I believe he was arrested once or summoned to court as a Red, or on suspicion of being subversive; which amused him as the great-great-grandson of that William Floyd who for the colony of New York signed the Declaration of Independence. In 1918 he began the Humanist monthly Arbitrator to liberate his views on all subjects, his competent assist-

ant of late years being the studious Sherman D. Wakefield, the grandson of Ingersoll by marriage. On the whole, he lived the good life and his monumental works are those he wrote and published on Christianity and the Biblical religion.

THE first Christmas cards for the humbug season of '43, in circulation about the middle of November, were offered in bunches of twenty as a subscription premium by the Atlantic Monthly magazine, published in Boston. One picture was the "Nativity," the other the "Holy Family"; central in both the girl mother Mary and her boy baby Jesus; and she is looking at him in both scenes with the appropriate "rapt" expression. Obviously the angel who came in unto her in the first of Luke and left her an expectant mother forbore to say that the son she was to bear would disown and repudiate her when he was old enough to talk. And how many who look at these pictures of the nativity and the holy family will recall that at the age of twelve, when she found him a run-away in Jerusalem, after having sought him sorrowing, he snarled, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and, by implication, "you about yours?" Mary exposed herself to another rebuff some eighteen years later, when Jesus was holding forth to "the people" and she—his mother and his brethren—"stood without, desiring to speak with him." And his answer was a contemptuous "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" See Matt. 12:48. He had caught the crowd and was inebriated with his own verbosity. She made a third bid for recognition by speaking to him at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, and he "saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?"

A man the son of Mary met asked him to repeat the commandments, which he did, omitting the sabbath law but including (Matt. 19:19), "Honor thy father and thy mother." There have been better exemplars of filial piety. Buck Fanshaw never shook his mother.

It was not because he was a misogynist that this son of a virgin living in "a city of Galilee, named Nazareth," where Gabriel found her, grew up to avoid her society, for other members of the sex found him companionable. On page 417 of Remsburg's "The Christ" the question is asked, "Who was his favorite female attendant?" and the answer given: "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom [says Luke] went seven devils." And there were others of the same character. Heredity may have influenced him in his choice of female associates, since the four—and only four—women mentioned in his genealogy according to Matthew were of the same character or not so good. But neither Matthew's genealogy of Jesus nor Luke's can be right, for both of them leave out his grandmother Anne, who, though nowhere mentioned in the gospels, conceived of this, her daughter, without committing the original sin, according to Catholic theology, and so was the

originator of immaculate conception. She is now a saint; a church in Twelfth Street, New York, has one of her bones, or borrows the relic from Quebec, and holds a "novena" over it every little while. What kind of a genealogy of a man is it, I ask, that leaves out his grandmother, a woman of perfect purity, while including four such delinquents as "Thamar, who seduced the father of her late husband; Rachab, a common prostitute; Ruth, who, instead of marrying one of her cousins, went to bed with another of them; and Bathsheba, an adulteress, who espoused David, the murderer of her first husband"? Compare Remsburg's "The Christ" and the four gospels. At the tomb of the Christ there appear to have been three Marys, none of them the mother, to whom his last word was, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" The female showing most interest was the Magdalene, who, as did Sarah her husband Abraham, called him "my lord," as if she had been the widow—his relict if he left one. And that is the moral of the Atlantic's premium Christmas cards.

ONCE in a while some "arresting" piece comes out in my local weekly paper. The last week in November this heading, "Giving Thanks a Challenge," in the column where was reported the Thanksgiving sermon of the Rev. Archibald Black, Orthodox, on the day appointed for such discourse. "It is evident," said Mr. Black, "that we cannot expect to come to our Thanksgiving season this year in easy and happy fashion and readily give thanks to God for his mercies. Any real thanks we can give today will have to be reached through honest consideration of circumstances. . . . Too plainly we are living in bitter times when thanks come hard." There was piety further along in the discourse, but the seeds of doubt were planted.

Second quotation from the paper cited: "America is a pagan nation with 75 million of its citizens unaffiliated with any church, Frederick Snyder, a radio commentator and world traveler, said Tuesday, speaking before the Optimist Club." In the event of Germany's further improving its methods of assault, the commentator asserted, "the only weapon of the Allies would be prayer."

Thanks to God are an expression of the kind of gratitude manifested in the hope of favors to come. Prayer is an itemized statement of favors preferred. They are addressed to the God of the Bible, to whom no good deeds are traceable, who was never known to answer a prayer, nor to do a good deed, but invented hell with the foundation of the world and endowed man with the capacity to sin and get there, with no way out. The day before I write this Bishop Manning of New York said in his sermon that "full belief in God is the only sufficient basis for a just and durable peace." That is the peace of God, historically, literally and piously known as the peace of death. It is sometimes just and always durable. G. E. M.

“Fictional Biography” and Thomas Paine

THE book world is exuberant over what it is pleased to hail as a new form of literary composition: “fictional biography”.

Fictional biography, like fictional history, is nothing new. It is ages older than Methuselah's beard, and dates from the time when the first inventive cave-man gave an imaginary account of another cave-man's life. *Pithecanthropus erectus* probably knew something about it, though he couldn't write. Lying is as old as Man.

History, as commonly understood, is the truthful presentation of past events in the life of a nation or a people; biography is the truthful account of an individual's life. Neither can be “fictionalized” without a distortion of facts or a pollution of the record. One might as well try to justify the writing of “fictional” biology, or “fictional” geology as “fictional” biography.

Yet fictional biography is popular today, and is furnishing a lucrative return for those who have “creative imagination”. No demand is made for veracity of statement, nor is the author concerned as to whether or not his portrait is true. In writing fictional biography you can exaggerate, distort, twist, suppress, and falsify the record as much as you wish. What does it matter if the man whose life you write was really as you describe or did the things you say? It is enough that you are contributing to literature by showing your inventive faculty for making statements which aren't so.

Fictional biography, therefore, gives one the license to vilify a man under the guise of writing fiction. We find this, to a remarkable degree, in Howard Fast's widely publicized “Citizen Tom Paine”, wherein the hero of the story is presented as a bedraggled and brandy-besotted scamp who had to be given baths by his soap-using associates, and whose general character was that of a glorified roustabout crashing high places. It is a picture that not even Oldys and Cheetham of unsavory memory would have recognized as Paine's.

Fictional history, in the writing of which the ancient Jews excelled, reached its classical peak and all-time perfection in the Bible. Here were recounted all the make-believe events and airy concoctions of an ignorant and semi-barbaric tribe. Things that never happened and could not have happened under the laws of nature were related as solemn truths. Fictional biography was common among the Jews, though, in its more glamorous form, developed later, with Catholic authors vying with one another in writing their “Lives” of the saints. This was a specialized branch of lying, built up through centuries of practice and an art in itself.

It was the procedure among Catholics, in writing their “Lives” of the saints, to take a bum and make a “saint” of him. Modern fictional biographers have somewhat reversed the process, by taking those who were neither “saints” nor “sinners” and making bums

out of them. Paine, in Fast's book, is the kind of individual you wouldn't care to sit beside in a train, much less invite to your table or introduce to your wife. He was filthy in his habits, coarse of tongue, dirty in his attire, and habitually drunk. It is the kind of portrait a man would draw of another whom he wished to revile. Fast, in his “fictionalized” version of Paine, has succeeded in making of him what he was not: a drunkard.

If a non-Jewish author were to write a “fictional” biography of a distinguished Jewish personage (Israel Zangwill, for example) and make a dirty sot of him, as Fast does of the freethinker, Thomas Paine, you would hear no end of blubbing by the children of Israel over his “anti-Semitic” viciousness. A hue and cry would be raised that Mr. Zangwill had been foully besmeared by “anti-Semitic” bigotry. But it is quite all right, and strictly within Kosher ethics, for one who proclaims himself a Jew, to libel Thomas Paine. Literary license is then permissible, and no objection is raised that the author is “anti-Goy” or writing with “Semitic” bias.

From a literary point of view, Fast's book has all the crudity of a prison hair-cut. It is shorn of those artistic qualities that make a book endure. Whatever distinction it has is that achieved by exaggeration and distortion. Its redundancies, at times, are amusing. Paine is described as one who “was not tall nor short, but of medium height”—as if one who was neither “tall nor short” could be other than “medium”. His big, “meaty” hands and his “twisted” eyes (Paine had remarkably fine eyes) are dwelt on with tiresome reiteration, as if the author were not quite sure he had said so before. Language is imputed to Paine that is wholly out of tone with the tenor of his life. And he had “the powerful, sloping shoulders of a workman who had put in long hours at a bench”—as if working at “a bench” would strengthen one's shoulders. Paine, according to Mr. Fast, was a corset maker, and if sitting at a bench and making corsets develops one's shoulder muscles, our Army should know about it.

Reviewers who have gushed over Fast's book are the usual run of literary back-scratchers, who must puff each other's books as a matter of expediency, and who couldn't, offhand, give you a decent account of Paine's life if called on to do so. Their ignorance of the man is shown by their acclaiming Fast's book, and their fanfare of praise is the kind of stuff that can be run off five minutes before breakfast, without a semblance of research or an honest attempt to understand the subject. If any of them had studied Paine's writings, or Conway's magnificent “Life”, or the cross-sectional material dealing with Paine, or examined the records and correspondence of responsible persons who knew Paine intimately in life, they would gag over the mess of “fictional” swill that Fast dishes out.

“Citizen Tom Paine” is said to be scheduled for the

movies. What Hollywood will do with a picture version of the book is anybody's guess. But if you do not see Paine reeling across the screen, or "canned" under a table with a bottle of brandy in one hand while trying to write the "Age of Reason" with the other, it will not be Mr. Fast's fault. He is giving Paine wide "publicity", and thinks that this in itself entitles him to public gratitude. When criticised by scholars for picturing Paine as the chronically-unwashed patron saint of booze, he admonished them with the remark: "Here I'm making their hero known to hundreds of thousands, and all they do is find fault."

Amazing, isn't it, the way these admirers of Paine display their ingratitude? Isn't there someone among our readers who will show his appreciation of Mr. Fast by sending him a bouquet of orange blossoms?

Paine, the freethinker, has been vilified before and will be vilified again, but we will stake our guess that his works will be read and his memory honored in the higher councils of men long after Fast's diatribe is forgotten, and when Fast himself has become a memory as vague as the discredited Parson Weems. As for "Citizen Tom Paine", it is headed for the literary scrap heap, along with the books which live for a season and die with the Autumn leaves.

W. T.

Briefer Mention

HALF a dozen spiritual utilities are prospering in such a manner as may require governmental regulation. These concerns, known variously as "institutes" and "churches", sell "spiritual power", of which they profess to have an unlimited supply through their direct contacts with the Divine Generator. The Puritan Church, La Grange, Ill., in a full-page advertisement in periodicals, proclaims, after the manner of the Rosicrucians, the Psychianites, the Master Metaphysicians, and similar spiritual utilities, "You can now use God's full power to gain health, wealth, happiness and leadership." Apparently one plugs in on the inexhaustible current of divine power through the use of words. No metal attachments or sockets are required. The heads of these big utilities tell you what words to use to make the necessary connections with God.

Such swindling of the public with jargon is no worse than the Judaic-Christian spiritual utility system.

APOLOGISTS for God are invited to read the following from the Agricultural Research Bulletin No. 23 issued by Swift & Company, meat packers, Chicago:

"Many thousands of lambs marketed each year are infested with spear-pointed seeds of a number of troublesome weeds. Most common of these weeds are needle-grass, wild oats, and poverty, fox tail, and spear grasses. . . . After becoming caught in the wool, the stickers begin working their way through it until they have penetrated the skin and deep into the flesh of the lamb. In severe cases, the 'weedy barbs' penetrate even into the abdominal cavity. . . . Probably the greatest damage is done in the region between

the skin and body, often destroying the usefulness of the skins and necessitating considerable trimming of the carcass."

The justifiers of God to man should tell us who benefits by these evils? Perhaps the first sheep ate a forbidden blade of grass and God is getting even by torturing their remote offspring.

TOM M. OLSON, the prolific writer of pious tracts, has concocted what, if we may stoop to his horrible figurative way of speaking, a blood pudding, entitled "If the Blood Had Not Been Shed?" (printed in red ink), wherein the word "blood" is repeated forty times in about 150 lines.

"In these extremely modern days", he begins, "when the doctrine of redemption by blood is unblushingly called a 'gospel of gore' and a 'doctrine of the shambles'" and closes with the awful promise—

"And still in heav'n my song shall be

The precious, precious blood."

Heaven must be a sort of insane asylum to which happy fools are committed by the laws of nature.

A TRACT issued by the Pilgrim Tract Society, Randleman, N. C., has a cartoon showing a crowd of men (only two women) bearing banners with the words "atheists" and "infidels" falling over into a black pit labelled "Hell", exclaiming, "Oh, if we only had repented and turned to God in time". The pious scribbler comments, "Too late!"

The tractman justifies eternal torture. Quoting an infidel as saying, "But I couldn't worship a God who could see His children burn forever", he replies, "God's children do not burn".

PSYCHISTS, INC., is the name of a new group of high class believers in spirits. George Gordon Battle, Nandor Fodor, Edward Bodin, Gertrude Tubby, and Arthur Ford are among the incorporators. What is Battle doing in that crowd?

A NEW book is entitled "Behind the Universe". It is by Louis Berman, M. D. We have not read the book nor investigated the subject. It is possible that that which is behind the universe does not differ greatly from that which is in front of the universe.

EX-BROTHER LUCIAN

JOHN KANALEY, the former Christian Brother who during the last decade and a half in New York had been active in opposing every form of religion, died Nov. 21st. He did excellent work for the Best of Causes through numerous open-air lectures at Columbus Circle, where his former co-religionists gave him bitter opposition and where his leading the singing of atheist songs was a special attraction, and through his addresses at the Ingersoll Forum, before which he was scheduled to lecture the first Sunday in March. A chance reading of Joseph McCabe's "Twelve Years in a Monastery" started him on the road to Freethought and Atheism. Besides being a man of an honest and a generous nature, he had unusual talents, especially in the dramatic line; and but for the years wasted in memorizing religious jargon and practicing silly piety and but for the ill health of his later years, he might well have gained wide fame.

Rougher Notes

SHOULD you ever be shipwrecked, you can count yourself fortunate if you find yourself afloat on a new "luxury" raft. The recently devised arc-welded steel life-saving apparatus is equipped with many of the comforts of home, with nothing overlooked that will contribute to the "spiritual and recreational" comfort of the survivors. Everything from a deck of cards to a Bible is provided.

With each Holy Book is a carefully compiled list headed "Where to Look in the Bible", giving nineteen passages suitable for reading under specific circumstances. You will find a text to fit almost any mood.

We haven't seen the official list, but offer a few suggestions of our own for those who wish to read the Bible when lost at sea:

1. If you would like to walk on water, consult Jesus.
2. If you wish to reach land in a hurry, hail a passing whale and taxi home in its belly.
3. If you are a bit discouraged and down in the dumps, read Eccl. vii, 3: "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."
4. If your thoughts turn to your loved ones at home, consult Matt. x, 37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
5. If lonely, consider King Solomon, who had "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines".
6. If tired of your "luxury" raft menu, consult Ezek. iv, 12.
7. If there are any children on the raft, read Psalm cxxxvii, 9: "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." (If there are no stones handy, the steel deck will do.)
8. If you are tired of looking at the waves, think of Elijah's chariot and his flight to Heaven.
9. If you think God is a bit slow in getting you rescued, remember his words: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."

DEATH, in the last few weeks, has taken its toll of three freethinkers well known to the readers of this paper: H. W. Mitchell, William Floyd, and John Kanaley. All had a hand in fighting superstition.

Mr. Mitchell, age 80, whose death was recorded in the December issue, was a former Methodist preacher who "turned state evidence". He rejected the Bible completely, became an atheist, and went out on the streets of New York to deliver his message. His specialty was exposing the absurdities and cruelties in the Bible. His venerable appearance, I believe, often saved him from the hands of ruffians. The last time I saw

him at the office, he said: "I know the end is near; you boys have got to carry on." It was a veteran's benediction.

Mr. Floyd also rejected the Bible, wrote books against it, and brought Harry Rimmer to trial in an endeavor to collect the \$1,000 which the Rimmer evangelical crowd had offered for proofs of Bible "errors". The proceedings were recorded in the Truth Seeker. Among my books is one by William Floyd, with a fly-leaf inscription in it, giving me his opinion of the Christian God and Harry Rimmer. Neither would feel flattered by what Floyd wrote.

John Kanaley (ex-Brother Lucian, F.S.C.) was among the closest of my friends. He despised Catholicism and loathed his former connection with the Church. He was a frequent speaker at the Ingersoll Forum and at Columbus Circle. In poor health for a long time, he carried on with increasing difficulty. I have a picture of John, dressed in the clerical garb of a Christian Brother, on which is written: "Taken at Peru, Ill., about 1916, after my exit from the Christian Brothers. An atheist to the end."

ARCHBISHOP SPELLMAN of New York works himself into a fine lather over "The Meaning of Christmas", ending with the words:

"Christmas is the Birthday of freedom, for it is only the following of Christ that makes men free."

Following Christ means for most men only that they are "free" to make nuisances of themselves, practice intolerance, swallow superstition, and, like the peons of Mexico, become serfs of the Church. Catholic Italy has been following Christ for centuries and finds herself in a jam. Russia gave Jesus the gate and is doing quite well for herself as an ally of Britain and America. China, which doesn't follow Christ, is hailed as a friend who is going to be set "free".

How can any Catholic be "free" when he is not allowed to read books of his own choice, is a slave of the Vatican, and follows the mumbo-jumbo of priests like Spellman?

A footnote to Spellman's gushy little sermon reads: "Remuneration for this Christmas Essay was donated at Archbishop Spellman's request to the New York Foundling Hospital."

As the essay is written for mental infants, it is appropriate that the proceeds should be donated to babies in cribs.

W. T.

DR. QUACKENGUSH'S MIND TRUST

Q. Can an omnipotent being commit suicide?

A. Theoretically, yes. All power obviously includes the power to end one's existence; and there are wicked men who assert that Almighty God destroyed himself out of disgust with the human race. According to these blasphemers, the world is now on its own, without any supernatural guidance, which is why, so they say, it is in such a horrible mess. But the heart of man proclaims the eternal truth that God is in his Heaven and all is right with the world.

Where Are Your Hospitals?

INGERSOLL'S ANSWER

ONE hundred years after Christ had died suppose some one had asked a Christian: "What hospitals have you built? What asylums have you founded?" They would have said "None".

Suppose three hundred years afterwards the same question had been asked the Christian, he would have said: "None, not one". Two hundred years more and the answer would have been the same. And at that time the Christian could have told the questioner that the Mohammedans had built asylums before the Christians. He could also have told him that there had been orphan asylums in China for hundreds and hundreds of years, hospitals in India and hospitals for the sick at Athens.

Here it may be well enough to say that all hospitals and asylums are not built for charity. They are built because people do not want to be annoyed by the sick and the insane. If a sick man should come down the street and sit upon your doorstep, what would you do with him? You would have to take him into your house or leave him to suffer. Private families do not wish to take the burden of the sick. Consequently in self-defence, hospitals are built so that any wanderer coming to a house, dying, or suffering from any disease, may immediately be packed off to a hospital and not become a burden upon private charity. The fact that many diseases are contagious rendered hospitals necessary for the preservation of the lives of the citizens. The same thing is true of the asylums. . . .

The greatest charity ever established in the United States by a man—not by a community to get rid of a nuisance, but by a man who wished to do good and wished that good to last after his death—is the Girard College in the City of Philadelphia. Girard was an Infidel. He gained his first publicity by going like a common person into the hospitals and taking care of those suffering from contagious diseases—from cholera and smallpox. So there is a man by the name of James Lick, an Infidel, who has given the finest observatory ever given to the world. And it is a good thing for an Infidel to increase the sight of men. The reason people are theologians is because they cannot see. Mr. Lick has increased human vision, and I can say right here that nothing has been seen through the telescope calculated to prove the astronomy of Joshua. Neither can you see with that telescope a star that bears a Christian name. . . . The reason is that Christianity was opposed to astronomy. So astronomers took their revenge, and now there is not one star that glitters in all the vast firmament of the boundless heavens that has a Christian name. . . .

Infidels, however, have done much better even than that. They have increased the sum of human knowledge. John W. Draper, in his work on "The Intellectual Development of Europe," has done more good to

the American people and to the civilized world than all the priests in it. He was an Infidel. Buckle is another who has added to the sum of human knowledge. Thomas Paine, an Infidel, did more for this country than any other man who ever lived in it. . . .

But whether Christians gave or Infidels gave has nothing to do with the probability of the Jonah story or with the probability that the mark on the dial went back ten degrees to prove that a little Jewish king was not going to die of a boil. And if the Infidels are all stingy and the Christians are all generous it does not even tend to prove that three men were in a fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than was its wont without even scorching their clothes.

The best college in this country—or, at least, for a long time the best—was the institution founded by Ezra Cornell. That is a school where people try to teach what they know instead of what they guess. Yet Cornell University was attacked by every orthodox college in the United States at the time it was founded, because they said it was without religion. . . .

Again the Christians, although they have built colleges, have built them for the purpose of spreading their superstitions, and have poisoned the minds of the world, while the Infidel teachers have filled the world with light. Darwin did more for mankind than if he had built a thousand hospitals. Voltaire did more than if he had built a thousand asylums for the insane. He will prevent thousands from going insane that otherwise might be driven into insanity by the "glad tidings of great joy".

I am perfectly willing that the results of the labours of Christians and the labours of Infidels should be compared. Then let it be understood that Infidels have been in this world but a very short time. A few years ago there were hardly any. I can remember when I was the only Infidel in the town where I lived. Give us time and we will build colleges in which something will be taught that is of use. We hope to build temples that will be dedicated to reason and common sense, and where every effort will be made to reform mankind and make them better and better in this world.

I am saying nothing against the charity of Christians; nothing against any kindness or goodness.

But I say the Christians, in my judgment, have done more harm than they have done good. They may talk of the asylums they have built, but they have not built asylums enough to hold the people who have been driven insane by their teachings. Orthodox religion has opposed liberty. It has opposed investigation and free thought. If all the churches in Europe had been observatories, if the cathedrals had been universities where facts were taught and where nature was studied, if all the priests had been real teachers, this world would have been far, far beyond what it is to-day.

A War Sermon

(Self-explanatory advice to a critic by Pope Frank I)

The Leamington, Minneapolis.

1 November 1943.

Dear X:

Glad to get your letter of October 23rd. Forty years' singing in a Congregational choir have not entirely destroyed your reasoning faculties.

Your chief complaint against my philosophy is that I have not offered something to replace the Christian heaven. If my object was to fleece suckers, surely I could invent a more attractive hereafter. Two things I would add: 1. I would allow every man who would contribute to my cause as many wives in heaven as God permitted Solomon to have and I would not limit his concubines to three hundred (I Kings 11:3). 2. I would assure my converts that in my heaven there would be no income tax—even a pay-as-you-fly tax.

You have made up your mind to believe in the Christian heaven regardless. Your mind is closed. Thus you become a typical Christian in the head, but I know you so well that I know you are a far better man than your religion, strictly followed, would permit you to be.

Since you have decided to reject reason, science and common sense, possibly I can help to strengthen your faith. I am going to pretend that I am the Rev. Mr. Frank C. Hughes, D.D., Pastor of the Hotel Leamington Congregational Church, and I will pick out at random highly devotional, inspiring, uplifting, soul-saving verses of the Bible and preach a short sermon on each. I will, as all other preachers do, skip the abundant smutty sex-stories and deal only with highly intellectual topics so that you can leave the service with the thought that your sins have been lifted and henceforth and forever you will be a better man and lead a nobler life because you attended my services.

It is now 11 A.M. The organist is at her post. The choir of two women and one man have cleared their throats. The seats are about one-third filled, as many women have not purchased new fall hats. The bell has just stopped ringing. Dressed in my long-tail coat, I arise from my high-backed chair directly behind the pulpit and I say:

"I am the resurrection and the life."

"We will now sing hymn No. 308, the 1st, 5th, and 11th verses.

"We will now listen reverently to a vocal solo by Brother X, who has a voice gifted only by the Lord."

Sermon

"We are at war. God brought this war upon us because of the wickedness of the Methodists, Catholics, Baptists, Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Allies are not fighting according to prescribed Christian teachings. In I Samuel 18 we find how many David killed and in Chapter 17 it is related that his deadly weapon was a sling-shot, with stones for bullets. Sling-shots are cheaper than machine guns and stones can be picked up free everywhere. God distributed these munitions. And if you will read the fifteenth chapter of Judges you will see that Samson killed a thousand with the jawbone of an ass. God has distributed asses everywhere, too, and see how cheaply we could kill our enemies by the jaw-bone method.

"Killings by the Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin method cost over \$5000 apiece. The jaw-bone of an ass can be purchased for ten cents. By using God's method we could kill for \$.0001 and still have a good jaw-bone of an ass left. I say that this war is costing too much. It is taking too much money from the people, and God must get all the money he needs to fight Satan.

"By reading the 16th chapter of Judges we see how the Wacs, Waves, and Spars could help to win the war by using God's methods. Let each one of them get a German and hold him on her lap until he goes to sleep and then cut his hair. Remember how Samson lost all his strength by the hair-cut method? You will recall that this is what Delilah did, as recorded in this 16th

chapter. We could win the war in no time if we would only stick to Bible methods. And we should not let any of our soldiers have a hair-cut or a shave 'as long as the duration lasts.'

"We should also use cockatrices, fiery serpents and dragons against the enemy. These may be found in abundance in Jeremiah and Isaiah.

"Another thing. According to I Samuel 17:35, David caught a lion and a bear by the beard and slew them. That's the way to fight. If I could only catch Satan by the beard I'd fix him too. With your financial help I'll get him yet.

"Just before his take-off for heaven, where all of my contributors are going, Jesus said, according to Mark 16:12, 'They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them . . .' Accordingly I ask that each family take in a few snakes and take a good dose of carbolic acid or potassium cyanide and report results before the official meeting of our church Board of Deacons. If you believe in Jesus and in his promise that the world is coming to an end 1900 years ago and if you believe that poison will not harm you, what excuse have you for not believing the life hereafter in heaven?

"While the choir softly sings, 'Onward Christian Soldiers' will the ushers kindly bring forth the pans of water, towels and soap. The women will wash the men's feet first and then the men will do their part. This is an important religious ceremony and it was commanded by the Lord in St. John 14:5 to 15 inclusive.

"Has everybody's feet been washed? If so, I declare the foot-wash Sacrament ended for this Sunday.

"From a study of that book of the Bible called 'Acts' I have decided that Jesus intended to establish Communism on earth. In Acts 4:32-37 all sold their land and houses and brought the money, without income tax deductions, to the preacher, for everything was to be owned in common. The fifth chapter of Acts tells how Ananias and his wife Sapphira held out on the clergy, and as a just punishment the Lord put them to death instantly.

"I want you all to sell everything you have and turn every cent over to me. Don't forget what happened to Mr. and Mrs. Ananias, as I do not want to have to preach any premature funeral sermons.

"According to Matthew 24:34 Jesus predicted that the end of the world would come in his generation. I hope that he will not be as far off on the life-hereafter promise.

"According to I Corinthians 7:29, St. Paul commanded married men to be as though they had no wives. Several of our church deacons are now following this injunction. Praise the Lord.

"I wish to announce that you will have no further need of telling God in public what to do, and there will be no prayers offered up in our services for according to Matthew 6:6 and 7 the Lord cares not for vain repetition and he says that we must do our praying in the closet with the door closed.

"I notice that several of our members have formed a habit of coming in after the usual morning offering. For the benefit of those who came in late and for the benefit of others who want special favors of the Lord, will the ushers kindly pass the collection plates again while we all join in singing 'There is a Happy Land, Far, Far Away.'

"In closing let me quote one more inspiring verse—Job 30:20: 'I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.'

I make a quick get-away to the front door to shake hands with the brethren and sistern and to receive their commendations, some of which are: "Fine sermon, Pastor," "Wonderful, Pastor Hughes," "I feel so inspired," "My sins are washed away," "I got so much out of your splendid sermon," "I enjoy hearing a pastor who sticks to the Bible," "Best sermon I've heard in years."

I hope, X, that I have, by giving you the real stuff, strengthened your faith in a future life in the skies.

If any such person as Jesus ever lived, he was not like the old type of Montana "kidder," but one who took himself very seriously. If you can believe that the world came to an end 1900 years ago, if you believe that you can drink any kind of poison and

get away with it, if you believe it your Christian duty to take up snakes, then I agree with you that you should spend eternity in that "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." Sincerely yours, FRANK C. HUGHES.

TELLS HOTEL MANAGER HOW TO OUST AN INFIDEL

December 7, 1943.

Mr. T. C. Knapp,
Leamington Hotel,
Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Sir: You have earned my deepest sympathy in your so far unsuccessful efforts to rid your hotel of the presence of Frank C. Hughes. It seems to me that the cause of your failure lies in the fact that you have failed to call upon God for His help in the matter. You should remember that man's extremity is God's opportunity and that He is but awaiting the time when you and the God-fearing citizens of your community will fall upon your knees and humbly beseech Him to come to your aid. Then, I am sure, God for His greater glory will find a means of taking this blasphemer in hand and meting out his long over-due punishment.

As a Christian, you are aware that God will hold you accountable for any harm that may result to His kingdom from the teachings of this wicked Infidel. From your own experience in life, you have proved on numerous occasions the never failing power of prayer, as has everyone else who has tried that method of obtaining results after every other method has failed. "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" is just as true today as it was when uttered by Jesus some two thousand years ago. The only thing required of us, that our prayers may be answered, is that we have faith. Let me cite a few examples: When a mother prays God to direct her soldier-boy's feet to a fox hole so that he may escape the enemy's fire, she must believe that the fox hole she has in mind is not already occupied by an atheist. Captain Rickenbacker and his men on the raft might have had milk to quench their thirst if they had had the faith in God's ability to equip a cow with wings. (It should here be remembered that God only answers our prayers according to our faith; it must also be understood that, with God, all things are possible which, of course, includes the things that we with our limited knowledge consider impossible).

Some years ago, in California, I became acquainted with a Christian gentleman whose faith gained him many wonderful answers to prayer. On one occasion, he found himself six weeks in arrears on his hotel rent and, after being warned by the management that he would have to pay up without further delay, he spent the entire night in prayer asking God to show him a way out of his difficulty. In the morning, he arose from his knees and proceeded downstairs fully confident that God, in his own good way, would take care of his debt. Upon reaching the lobby, to his amazement, he found the desk clerk dead in his chair, having succumbed to a heart attack. With a feeling of thankfulness to God for having performed this miracle for his sole benefit, he reached for the rubber stamp and stamped his bill paid. All might have gone well if the hotel manager had not unexpectedly happened on the scene and caught him in the act. My friend went to jail where he was instrumental in leading ten of his fellow prisoners to the feet of Jesus. Thus we see that God's ways are not always our ways, and that the one thing required of us is faith. In this instance it was God's will that this man go to jail, that His works might be glorified.

I am convinced that the safest and surest way to rid your hotel of this unwanted guest is through the agency of prayer. To accomplish the best results, I would suggest that the clergymen of your city inaugurate a prayer-marathon. Have loud speakers placed throughout your hotel and let their prayers continue until this Godless creature is forced to leave like a rodent deserting a sinking ship. Of course, this incessant din of praying may force your other guests to flee in order to retain their sanity,

but you should not lose sight of the fact that it is far better to enter Heaven with an empty hotel than to be cast into Hell with a house full of paying guests. Yours for a victorious finish, ALAN DOUGLASS.

CONSOLES A PERSECUTED CLERGYMAN

December 9, 1943.

Rev. Leland L. Marion,
Christian Temple,
Pontiac, Michigan.
Reverend Sir:

I was shocked to read the following news item: "The hearing panel of the Pontiac rationing board today ordered a 90-day suspension of the gasoline ration books of the Rev. Leland L. Marion, pastor of the Christian Temple here, for using coupons which he said he found on his desk after praying for gasoline."

I find myself becoming quite indignant over the fact that you have been deprived the use of your automobile for no other reason than that God saw fit to answer your prayer for gasoline. Who are the members of this board to mete out punishment to you just because God in His justice decided you needed a few extra gallons of gasoline? It is certainly no business of theirs where or how He obtained these coupons you so innocently found on your desk. This board should remember that without God there would be no gasoline in the first place, that only through His mercy is undeserving mankind permitted to use the oil that He causes to gush forth from the ground in such abundance.

Those who have pretended to find you guilty of the possession and use of gasoline coupons to which (in their opinion) you were not entitled, are evidently unbelievers or men of another faith, for they have failed to realize that God will hold them accountable for coming between Him and His answer to your prayer.

I trust that your feet are not hurting too badly and pray that you will find time to write me a few lines. Very sincerely yours, ALAN DOUGLASS.

IN THE NAME OF COMMON SENSE

TO THE EDITOR: One Dr. Pugh repeated the statement recently that there are no atheists in foxholes. A letter in the Miami Herald by Paul J. Gruber, commenting on this unwarranted statement, says in part:

"It is high time, in the name of common sense, for the press to cease spreading this silly phraseology and the circulation of these cleverly worded tales of miraculous intervention which is so highly improbable.

"The facts are that the disabled planes do not get back to their bases on a wing . . . that missing a train that is wrecked is not a miracle.

"Newspaper editors, by the way seem mostly in foxholes. They have, apparently, been forced there by the religious syndicates whose absurd utterances they fear to come out and challenge with something even resembling the truth lest they, too, incur the hatred and malice of those who love their neighbors as themselves."

Another letter has been mailed to the Herald on the same topic and may, possibly, appear in the Reader's column. I quote from a copy:

"It is quite possible that some persons, when in great danger, turn again to beliefs that were drilled into them in babyhood, but discarded on reaching mature reasoning. Yet I doubt if any considerable number do.

"Dr. Pugh may doubt that there are any atheists in foxholes, but will probably admit that there are quite a few atheists giving the Germans a run westward over Russia's plains.

"In time of stress Christians turn to Jesus, Jews to Jehovah, Mohammedans to Allah, Taoists to the Exalted Monarch, Shin-toists to Amateresa; yet, one and all, the gods have ever been on the side with the biggest guns."—J. C. COONS.

Flood Control

RELIGION was founded by lies and is maintained by them. That truth is generally acknowledged by informed clear thinkers who are free to express their opinions. Error is a factor, but the deliberate perpetuating of error in the minds of the masses is a greater factor.

In war times the Mississippi of fraud overflows its accustomed banks and backs up into every little valley of popular appeal. The streams of information of the press, the radio, and the platform now flow in reverse, driving honest thinkers to the hills or to the tree-tops. The windows of heaven (that is to say, the mouths of pious liars) are opened and the flood is on.

Against this overwhelming torrent of known falsehood the anti-religionists build levees, some of which do not hold, but others withstand the onrushing ocean and in this way preserve crops sufficient for seed for re-sowing in more favorable years. Or, if we may borrow from that old book of holy fables, the freethinkers and rationalists have built and maintain The Truth Seeker as another Ark (the dimensions being somewhat correspondingly proportionate for the purpose required), with the editor as a sort of second Noah, trying to preserve a sample of truth of every kind concerning the origin, nature, and destiny of man, wherewith to replenish the intellectual world when the waters shall have subsided.

In this effort to save something out of the devastating deluge, services exceeding the call of duty are rendered by contributors to the Sustaining Fund of The Truth Seeker. Added to the amounts previously acknowledged, the donations by the heroes named below enable the modern Ark of Truth to ride out the 1943 flood without any leaks ("with all bills paid"). To these generous friends the captain is indebted beyond ability at present to repay; but he will do the best he can and meantime extends his gratitude to all who have been named in this column during the past year and his best wishes for their success during the year 1944 after nothing special happened in Palestine—personally in health, wealth, and happiness, and in propagating freethought and rationalism.

O. W. Brown, \$5; Wm. F. Marshall, \$2.40; Louis Swikert, 50 cents; John A. McKay, \$1.50; George Kaiser, \$1; Art C. O'Brien, \$5; Jayemsee, \$1; Mrs. L. H. Moss, \$1; O. M. Morris, \$1; A. de Boer, \$8.50; Stephen S. Airel, \$1.50; George Lavezzi, \$2.50; Frank Cinque, \$3; "A Minister's Son, 16 years old," \$1; E. J. Craven, \$1.50; Robert Fitz Simmons, \$2; Mrs. Cyril Tegner, 50 cents; A. Mathews, \$10.50; Wm. J. Reed, \$2; Ed Rydin, \$50; John G. Palmer, \$1.50; John Rutkus, \$1; Nathan Schwarz, \$3; James H. Garrison, \$1; Dewey Collett, \$2; Charles H. Jones, \$3.50; Franklin Baker, \$3.50; Paul M. Kinney, \$1; Chas. A. Lindow, \$2.50; Total, \$120.40.

There is no God, it is clear as the sun and as evident as the day that there is no God, and still more that there can be none

—LUDWIG FEUERBACH

The Lynch and Dickstein Bills Versus the Bill of Rights

GAG-LAW is always being demanded by religious bigots. The Lynch Bill (a similar bill has been introduced by Representative Dickstein), now pending before Congress, would stifle freedom of the press and liberty of opinion on a national scale by debarring from the mails all printed matter or expression of opinion "offensive" to any religious group.

The bill is appropriately named. It would "lynch" those who express any criticisms of religion, or who in any way attack religious doctrines and creeds. To laugh at the story of Adam and Eve, or to ridicule the myth that Jonah was swallowed by a whale, or that Joshua made the Sun stand still, would be a violation of law. To criticise Jewish doctrines and beliefs or the Jewish sacred writings would be tantamount to going to jail. Under the Lynch Bill anything that "offends" a religious or racial group is considered a crime.

The Postmaster General, Frank C. Walker, and Solicitor of the Postoffice Department, Vincent M. Miles, are both rightfully opposing the bill, on the ground that it would violate the principle of free speech and would be unconstitutional. The American Civil Liberties Union has voiced its opposition.

Who are behind this bill? First, politicians who are ready to scrap our American Bill of Rights and nullify our freedoms for the sake of votes. Secondly, for the most part, religious bigots, who do not want their religion criticised, and who would bar by law any discussion of "religious" or "racial" questions. They are the usual line-up of fanatics who would like to stifle opinion by inquisitorial methods and thumb-screw legislation.

No decent-minded individual, least of all the believer in liberty, wishes to see any group "persecuted" because of its religion. But there is a vast difference between "persecution" of a group and "criticism" of its religion. Criticism is not persecution, and those who confuse one with the other are obscuring the issue and striving to obtain immunity from criticism. The sponsors of the bill are deliberately plotting to penalize those who, in any way, hold up a religion to ridicule, by converting the Post Office into a modern Star Chamber.

The Lynch Bill is sponsored for the ostensible purpose of doing away with "racial" and "religious" animosities. But so long as the Jews consider themselves "the Chosen People of God" and a more "favored" race than all others on the face of the globe, they will be inviting antagonism from other religious groups. Catholics and Protestants do not consider themselves any less "favored" in the eyes of God than the Jews. On the contrary, Christians are convinced, according to their doctrine of salvation, that no one can be "saved" who does not accept "the Lord Jesus Christ". The Jews, by rejecting Jesus Christ, are considered "lost".

One would think that a people who had suffered at the hands of the Catholic Inquisition, who had been expelled from Spain by the Roman Catholic Church, and who throughout Christian Europe had been relegated to the Ghetto and the slums, would welcome their asylum in America and be the last to back legislation that penalizes opinion. But it is too much to expect that religion can engender anything else but bigotry and intolerance.

"Little need be added", writes S. Margoshes, editor of the leading Jewish New York daily newspaper, "The Day", "except to urge all those who want the Lynch Bill to emerge from the stage of mere controversy and into the phase of actual legislation, to write or wire their respective Congressmen to help in the passage of the bill. Nothing is now so important, if the bill is to be passed, as pressure from the citizens back home."

Backing of the Bill is well represented by orthodox Jews, who think they are being "persecuted" whenever their superstitions are attacked, and who are always ready to raise the hue and cry of "anti-Semitism" whenever one speaks disparagingly of Judaism. They would, if entrenched in power, enact a Spanish Inquisition in America and throttle our press by vicious legislation such as that which is embodied in the Lynch Bill.

If there is any "un-Americanism" in our midst, it is that which would penalize opinion, gag freedom of the press, and drag in the gutter the very fundamentals embodied in our Bill of Rights.

These rights cannot be suffered to be lost even in a time of war. Our Supreme Court has wisely ruled:

"The Constitution of the United States is a law for rulers and people, equally in war and in peace, and covers with the shield of its protection all classes of men, at all times, and under all circumstances. No doctrine involving more pernicious consequences was ever invented by wit of man than that any of its provisions can be suspended during any of the great exigencies of government."

And the President of the United States has stated:

"The enemy has attacked more than the soil of America. He has attacked our institutions, our freedoms, the principles on which this nation was founded and has grown to greatness. Every American must remember that the war we wage today is in defense of these principles. It, therefore, behooves us to guard them most zealously at home."

Since the war began, we have been told, over and over again, in magazines, in sermons, and in syndicated articles, that "there are no atheists in fox-holes." Atheists are not asking that anyone be put in jail for circulating this stupid lie. But let someone state that "there are no Jews in foxholes" and the Lynch Bill provisions would be instantly invoked. Bigotry and fanaticism are always ready to use the secular arm.

America is a land of free criticism, not of Oriental despotism. We criticise here and lampoon even the President of the United States. Those who can't stand criticism or who are "offended" by it, should get out and stay out until they have learned what freedom of the press means.

Under the Lynch Bill, Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" could be barred from the mails because it is "offensive" to Jews. Mark Twain's book ridiculing Christian Science could be barred, also, because it "offends" a particular religious group. Voltaire's gibes at the Roman Catholic Church "offend" Catholics. Anyone who spoke disrespectfully of Voodooism, laughed at Fundamentalists, or called Catholicism a fraud and a fake and its Purgatory a "racket" could be clapped in jail. To tell the Jews that their religious rituals are silly and their holy book a humbug, would constitute a crime. Any criticism of any superstition would be "offensive" to some particular group and automatically condemned.

"Minority" groups are no more entitled to immunity from criticism than "majority" groups. Under our basic American laws, there is no Sacred Cow in America, nor are the American people, in the manner of the Hindu, obliged to accept one and venerate its dung. Controversial questions must be decided in the free air of open discussion.

What controversial question can't be construed as "offensive" to some particular group? The Lynch Bill would reduce us to talking about the weather. When that time comes America may as well scrap its Constitution.

In the Library of Congress, one may find hundreds of books which criticise Judaic doctrines and practices and reject the "sacred" history of the Jews. It would be interesting to watch, under the Lynch Bill, how the Post Office would handle these "objectionable" books if they were committed to the mail.

It would be interesting, too, to observe how the Postmaster General would handle the Catholic prayer book now being sent to our men overseas, which, in no very complimentary language, calls the Jews "the synagogue of Satan". This book, printed at Government expense and distributed to Catholics in the military service, would be barred from the mails by the very Government that sponsors its distribution.

The Lynch Bill is a nefarious proposal to stifle freedom of opinion and freedom of the press. It will be a terrible thing for our boys fighting abroad to come back to America after Hitler has been trounced and find our liberties being sabotaged at home.

"Today", wrote the Attorney General, "we are at war with the great Axis powers, and with their little satellites. This war will test whether the free democracies can endure and whether their people can remain free."

Our "national unity" in the prosecution of the war

is not helped by flouting the Constitution or by nullifying our right to voice our domestic differences on controversial questions. No subject under the Sun is taboo in a free State. Those who would throttle the press and block the path of free expression by setting up a Postal Gestapo for the crushing of ideas hostile to their own are the real Hitlerites in America.

"Men", wrote Voltaire, "will not cease to be persecutors, until they have ceased to be absurd."

Australia Bars McCarthy

(The following news item, just received, is reprinted from the September, 1943, issue of The Rationalist, published in Melbourne, by the Rationalist Association of Australia.)

THE Truthseeker Company of New York, U. S. A., are publishers and booksellers of freethought literature. The Company also publishes a monthly journal, "The Truthseeker," which stands for "Free Thought, Free Speech, Democracy, Equal Rights and Impartial Liberty."

The most recent publication of the Truthseeker Company is a scholarly work entitled "Bible, Church and God," and the author is William McCarthy, a retired lawyer. It consists of seven hundred and thirty-six pages, and is very well illustrated. The retail price in Australia would be about thirty shillings.

An advance review copy of this book was posted to the editor of this journal, "The Rationalist." When the book was opened at the Customs Branch at the G.P.O., Spencer Street, Melbourne, an official glanced at a few pages and then announced that if the book were considered blasphemous it would not be handed over.

After a telephone conversation he returned and said that the book would not be handed over, but would be sent "higher up." We therefore claimed the right to make some examination of this book with a view to taking some action. After a few minutes the official returned and claimed the book, saying that the counter could not be held up all day. We offered to peruse the book in any place suggested so as not to interfere with the ordinary business at the counter. This was refused, and the book taken away. When we insisted on the right to properly examine the book, the officer-in-charge was sent for. He also glanced at a couple of pages in this 736 page book and agreed that it would be retained by the Customs under the Customs Act 1901-1925, Part IV, Division I, Section 52 C, which relates to blasphemous literature. He refused to allow any further examination of the book, and walked into a back room without answering our requests with regard to this refusal. We watched several officials drinking tea in this room for a time, and then asked a clerk at the counter to ask the officer-in-charge to return to see me. He walked out, saying: "What, you still here? I thought we had finished with you." We again said that we had had no proper opportunity of examining this 736 page book. This was vain. The book was again wrapped up and we were denied the right to complete our inspection of it.

The next step was to call upon the senior inspector at the Customs Department, Flinders Street. He curtly informed us that he had looked at the book, agreed that it was not to be delivered to us, but that it should be sent to Canberra for final decision.

Four weeks elapsed, but enquiry was futile. Nothing further was known of the book. We have now taken the matter up with the Minister for Trade and Customs, Senator Keane.

Now let us tell you what little we can about this book. We have already said that the author is a retired lawyer. From the comprehensive nature of the enquiry, he is obviously a man of wide knowledge. There is a separate chapter, necessarily brief, on each book of the Old and New Testaments. Some of the other chapter headings are: Man's Evolution, Gods, Soul, Priests, Devils, Church, Religious Parts, God and Church, Crusades, Creeds, Mohammed, Image Worship, Quarrel over Creeds, In-

tolerance, Revelations, Relics, Crime and Vice. There are over forty illustrations, which include such things as fine photographs of Buddhist temples, a chart of phallic symbols, and a chart showing the evolution of the brain from fish to man.

From our brief glance at the book we gained the impression that the author writes in a simple, clear, forthright manner.

On the dust jacket, under the title, Bible, Church and God, there are these words:

Don't be afraid—Read this book.

Only crooks fear the truth.

Then there is the reproduction of an old picture showing a heretic being roasted on a spit. Under the picture are these words: "The Bible, Church and God declared the earth is stationary, a lie; the man on the spit said the earth revolves around the sun, a truth, and the sacred liars burned—roasted that man to death for telling that truth. 'The tender mercies' of an almighty God, yes? Is there a god?"

The preamble to the book is as follows: "For the purposes of this work we separate the believers in religion into two classes, those who are honest and sincere, and those who use religion for mercenary or sinister purposes. We, herein, refer to and denounce only the latter class. For the former class we hold the greatest sympathy. Ignorance should be pitied, not castigated; but no ridicule, however stinging, can be too severe for those who exploit the ignorant. May the honest ignorant seek the truth as to their bible, the history of their church, and the origin of their god."

THE EDITOR EMERITUS CORRECTS THE ERRORS OF LATER GENERATIONS

THE author of the Prayer in the November Truth Seeker was not Herbert Spencer, as the late Bishop Brown would identify him, nor was he "unknown" in the office where I was setting type in the late '70s, when he submitted the "skit" anonymously for publication in Bennett's fat little book, "The Truth Seeker Collection of Forms, Hymns and Ceremonies" for the use of Free-thinkers.

The producer of that prayer was William S. Andrews, one of the four sons of the philosopher Stephen Pearl Andrews (1812-1886); and with only memory's biography of him to consult, I believe he died, near or past seventy years of age, in 1912. At the date of the prayer in print he was known in political circles as the Hon. W. S. Andrews, for he was or had been a member of the New York Legislature, elected by the County Democracy. Earlier was his career on the stage, where he played a leading role with the famed actress Charlotte Cushman. He was gifted with a quick hearing and a flexible voice that he capitalized in a lecture many times repeated on "Dialect Humor" that swept audiences with gales of laughter. I heard him twice in public places; in Chickering Hall taking turns with Henry W. Shaw (Josh Billings); again at Cooper Union doing a solo; then at a meeting in the parlors of Mrs. Emma Fernandez, theatrical teacher, who entertained the Fourth New York Liberal League. He was acquainted with Mark Twain, who gave him a piece to recite that I understood never was published because Mark judged it to be funnier when Will Andrews rendered it than it ever would be when read. In a friendly way, shortly after my return to The Truth Seeker from two and a half years of city-editing The Eye, Populist tri-weekly, Snohomish, Wash., Mr. Andrews, as street commissioner for a term, offered me a lucrative job in his department. The offer, which I could not avail myself of, connects itself with his call at the office, 28 Lafayette Place, to read the proof of a short biography of his father which he had written for Samuel P. Putnam's "Four Hundred Years of Freethought," published in 1894. Rather late in life Mr. Andrews was appointed Recorder for New York City, which office he vacated for a ward in the hospital where in 1912 he died. Unlike his out-speaking brother Charles, who died an octogenarian in 1933, he was only an occasional Freethinker, but that prayer of his youth always represented his religious views.—G. E. M.

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By JOHN E. REMSBURG

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*** The book makes some five hundred pages and is printed handsomely on heavy paper, with wide margins, excellent index. Price, \$2.50.

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