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The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVIII—No. 26

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IN THE YEAR 1540 at the height of the crisis engendered by the Reformation, a new Roman Catholic religious order founded in Paris a few years previously, was formally constituted by the Pope, Paul III. The Founder and first General of this new order was a former Spanish soldier, Ignatius Loyola, who had been invalided out of the Spanish Army after a wound received in a skirmish with the French in the Pyrenees. Ignatius then went on pilgrimage to Palestine, and returned resolved to devote the rest of his life to preparing a Crusade for the purpose of rescuing the Holy places from their Muslim proprietors. It was with this express object that he founded his Order, and because it was destined to recover the tomb of Christ for Christendom, he called his Order *The Company of Jesus*: the word "company" having a definitely military significance, as befitted its specifically crusading character. Such appears to have been the Founder's original intention, though historical conditions eventually turned the activities of the famous "Company" into other channels.

Monks with a Difference

Like the earlier religious orders which have appeared from time to time in the Catholic Church, the Jesuits—as posterity commonly describes them—were an order of monks; but monks with a difference. They were intended to be, and, in fact, have actually been, the mobile shock troops of the Catholic Church, largely freed from monastic restrictions and able to move about freely and engage in a variety of occupations. It is a matter of elementary history that the great Spanish Order subsequently played an important role in the evolution of modern Catholicism and even of modern secular history. It has even been seriously suggested that, without Loyola and his highly trained *corps d'élite*, the Reformation might have destroyed the Catholic Church altogether. Though temporarily suppressed by Rome in 1773 on charges of insubordination (the Jesuits have always been very much of a Church within the Church) and of corruption, the proscribed Order was revived in 1814 after the French Revolution and proceeded to play an important part in the ecclesiastical controversies of the 19th century—particularly in the recognition of Papal Infallibility in 1870. Nowadays, though perhaps not quite so important as in some earlier centuries, the "Company," founded over four centuries ago, still remains a cosmopolitan organisation with international activities of a very varied kind. Last year an important event—the meeting of its 38th General Congregation—took place in Rome, an event which attracted considerable publicity in the contemporary secular press and which was addressed by the Pope in person.

"The Times" and the Jesuits

Conspicuous among the notices of the Jesuit congregation which appeared in this country was a sympathetic and largely factual article which appeared in *The Times* after the Jesuit Congress, in January this year. Gone, evidently,

are the Victorian days when the "Thunderer" of Printing House Square called down periodical fire and brimstone on the Roman "Antichrist" in defence of the integral and Reformed Protestant religion. This article, contrarily, written by the traditionally anonymous "Special Correspondent," was actually so favourable to Loyola's heritage that the Jesuit periodical, *Our Friends* (Bulletin of the Jesuit Seminary at Heythrop, Oxford) has recently

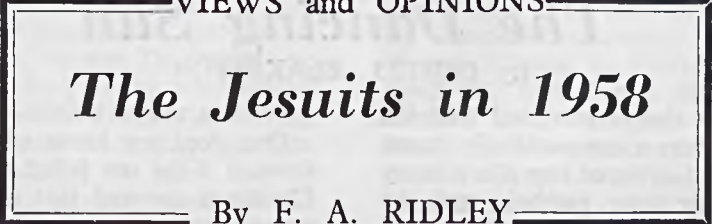
re-issued it as a special supplement! Are there crypto-Jesuits on the staff of *The Times*? Evidently, at least, if that pious Anglican, Queen Anne, "The Church of England's Glory," as the Vicar of Bray described her, is proverbially long deceased, the same is true

of that equally pious "Defender of the (Protestant) Faith," Queen Victoria; when the semi-official and ultra-respectable *Times* can now talk in such a fashion of the black militia, the "Old Guard" of the Vatican "Antichrist." I am indebted to an anonymous correspondent—not, I trust, also a Jesuit—for the reception of this instructive article from which most of the facts recorded below are taken with all due acknowledgments both to the article and to the sender.

The Jesuits—1958 Style

Perhaps the above descriptive caption represents a misnomer? For at least, according to the Special Correspondent of *The Times*, there is not, and there was not at last year's "Congregation" at Rome, any special 1958 Jesuitical style; according to our authority, the sons of Loyola only recognise *one* style, that laid down (in both "Spiritual Exercises" and in his "Company") by the Founder himself. As *The Times* strikingly notes: "If there was one figure that dominated the proceedings, it was that of a man dead these 400 years—the Spaniard who founded the Society in 1540"—and died in 1556, too busy in sorting out the post to Spain to notice his own approaching dissolution. However, the world moves on, and evidently the current need is felt in the Order, now in its fifth century of continuous existence, only interrupted by one brief break during its temporary dissolution by the Papacy—1773-1814—to adapt itself to the changing times; when enemies unknown to Loyola, Atheism and Communism, have now succeeded Islam and Protestantism as the major foes of the Catholic Church. Though *The Times* article does not explicitly mention either, no doubt it was to combat them more effectually that this 38th "General Congregation" met in Rome from September 6th to November 11th, 1957. There were 185 delegates, all fully-fledged "Professed" Fathers of the Jesuit Order and priests of the Catholic Church, who took part in this "General Congregation," presided over by the General of the "Company," the Belgian Fr. Janssens. *The Times* is careful to note that in the constitutional machinery of the Society of Jesus, despite its largely despotic character, the "General Congregation" is superior even to the autocratic Jesuit General, "the Black Pope," who, unlike the Vatican Pope, has not yet

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —



The Jesuits in 1958

By F. A. RIDLEY

been proclaimed as "Infallible." In the Jesuit economy, unlike that of the Church, the "Congregation," the General Council, is still superior, as before the Decree of Papal Infallibility in 1870, the General Councils of the Church were to the Pope himself. But the presumably Catholic writer in *The Times* does not emphasise this ecclesiastical contrast—for perhaps very good reasons.

Current Statistics

Perhaps wisely eschewing theological theory and concentrating on current statistics, our august contemporary proceeds to give us some useful and impressive statistics. The total "Labour Force" working under the central direction of the Jesuit General, is about 36,000 strong, engaged in very varied fields, in which missionary work and education appear conspicuous. The Society, we learn, is divided into 50 full provinces, 19 vice-provinces and some 40 smaller units. The English province contains about 870

members with a training centre at Roehampton and a number of educational centres, including public schools like Stonyhurst and Beaumont and Oxford centres at Campion Hall (named after a Jesuit martyr under the first Elizabeth) and Heythrop College, which publishes the *Bulletin, Our Friends*. Leading Jesuits like D'Arcy and Copleston are also well known as broadcasters. The Jesuits seem pretty ubiquitous, in fact, even on the other side of the Iron Curtain. I myself saw a Jesuit College in East (Communist) Germany. Perhaps for all their professed hostility, the Jesuits are secretly grateful to Communism for, so to speak, keeping them up to scratch. For did not the Founder, whom all Jesuits revere and after whom they are supposed to model themselves, go on record with the maxim? "No tempest is so dangerous as a perfect calm, and no enemy is so dangerous as the absence of all enemies." *Verb sap* for his successors in 1958.

The Dancing Sun

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

IN MY SIMPLE IGNORANCE I'd always imagined that the "miracle" of the dancing sun was a comparatively recent tale, and I was amazed when I discovered that it is a hoary chestnut. The pagans had their solar gambols, and the Fatima publicists have been anything but inventive.

I came across documentation on the subject when I was in Finland getting material for my new book (*The Sun at Midnight*; Anthony Blond, 18s.). At the Finnish Literary Society in Helsinki I found the archivists sorting references relating to the dancing-sun lore, crates and crates of records. I was fascinated, and I asked one of the experts to give me a digest of the history.

He began by telling me that the Danish scholar, Hans Ellekilde, says that the frolicking sun was connected with the fertility festival of Spring, a feast which became merged in the Christian Easter. Since the Christian times, countless Finns have testified to seeing the sun revolve and jerk and shiver and quiver on Easter morning. The Livonians say the sun plays, really dances, jumps about, turns around, moves and quivers, rejoicing at the resurrection of Christ. Some Norwegian peasants hold that on Easter morning the Virgin Mary dances with the sun on a silver dish. People in Sweden, Denmark, Russia and Iceland have all seen the sun lap and lick, tremble and frolic in holy glee.

The pious went in processions up the mountains to see the spectacle on Easter morning. It was not, in fact, necessary to go to the top of a hill to see the dancing sun; but here, anthropologists tell us, we may find the influence of those ceremonial processions up the mountains which took place at the fertility festival.

Actually, the sun has been seen to caper at other times. In Vestmanland in Sweden salvoes were fired on Whitsun morning so that spectators could look safely through the smoke at the jittery sunrise. They, at least, were not going to have it said that the sun swayed because people became dizzy looking at the brightness.

In Russia, the sun performed for the middle of summer. A Russian account, dating from 1810, relates:

With a feeling of great solemnity and delight the peasants with their womenfolk, dressed in their best clothes, go to some hill on June 28th, and there, spellbound and with dumb fascination, keep waiting for the imposing sight of the rising sun. They call this watching over the sun. They believe, and there is nothing that would cause them to waver in this belief of theirs, that on this day the sun, when rising, now plays, now hides itself, now reappears, now gleams pale blue, now red, now one colour, now another. Hardly have the first rays appeared on the horizon, when the leading singer begins, others joining in

with him, to greet the sun—by singing.

One does not know what alibis the pagan priests put forward if the sun failed to perform, but we do know the Christians asserted that any inactivity on the sun's part was due to human sin. There is a rather pleasantly cynical passage in the memoirs of H. C. Andersen, the writer of fairy stories. He recalls that the sun was almost always covered by cloud when the good citizens went up the Nonnebakken hill to see it "play"—"but in their hearts everyone believed that the sun had been 'playing' behind the cloud."

The glorious irony of the whole business is that there is no reason why people should not see the sun dance. The "miracle" is a natural occurrence! The meteorologist states: "On bright spring mornings the surface of the earth reflects warmth into space. The earth itself has not yet had time to warm up to the temperature of the heat it reflects, and cools the air nearer the ground. So the atmosphere has layers of air of different temperatures. The rays of the sun, refracted by different layers of air, appear to come now from this point and now from that, so the sun changes its position and jumps." Easter time, then, is particularly favourable to sun dancing, but the natural illusion can occur at other times, and may be related to local conditions.

"Inevitably," the expert told me, "the affair of the dancing sun turns up in Switzerland and all over Europe, but we have been dealing primarily with Northern manifestations. Incidentally, your Scotland is rich in accounts."

Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio writes in the annals of the Finnish Literary Society: "Modern research has proved that many beliefs and myths are based on some perception by sight or hearing, which people have interpreted in their own way." The writer goes on to remark that as the dancing sun has been associated with religious explanation, modern people have denied the possibility that the sun can dance, a fact they could observe for themselves, because they have transcended the religious pretensions.

Ah well, Finland I know is an enlightened country, but think of Portugal and other Catholic countries! It will be a long time before people there fall into the error of saying the sun can't dance because they have transcended all the incredible errors of the hocus-pocus of religion!

All the same, it does seem to me to be about time the Catholic publicists got hold of some original notions for their ballyhoo. We deserve something more spirited than the old hat of the dancing sun in an age of sputniks.

A Humanist Charter

By REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

DR. WILSON JONES'S interesting Charter for Scientific Humanism (THE FREETHINKER, March 14th) prompts me to make a few observations on the same theme.

In my view, to the humanist the aim of life should in general terms be simply the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Since John Stuart Mill enunciated this famous principle, it has been the target of much criticism, originally from the Church and certain pedantic philosophers, and, more recently, from the existentialist purveyors of doom. Like all first principles, it cannot be defended by rational argument. Happiness is either seen to be a desirable state or it is not; and if it is not, no amount of logical demonstration can convert the doubter.

Above all else, the chief enemy of happiness is Christianity, which casts its blight over almost every free activity of man. In this connection I disagree with Dr. Jones, who thinks humanists should "stop tilting at the windmills of religion and myth," since truth will live and falsehood die of their own accord. I wish I could share this optimism, but I fear I can see little evidence for the belief that the survival of truth is an automatic process which we can safely leave to time to bring about. Countless numbers are still in the grip of a 2,000-year-old superstition which fosters intolerance and brutality, and which humanists must never cease to try to exterminate root and branch. We must stress again and again that most of the isms which the Church condemns are fictions of its own, and that indeed there is but one sin, cruelty in all its forms, mental and physical.

Let me now enumerate certain specific reforms which must be striven after if our ideal of happiness is to be attained.

The most important of these possibly lies in the sphere of education. Here I believe religious conceptions of enforced discipline have bedevilled our whole approach to this vital subject. Things have improved somewhat in recent years, but in too many schools the guiding principle is still to keep the children quiet at all costs. However, training in the art of happiness should surely be the primary aim of education. A few enlightened reformers have founded schools based on a recognition of the child's right to freedom from fear. One of the most interesting of these is that mentioned by Mr. Drewitt in his articles, which was founded in 1921 at Summerhill in Suffolk by A. S. Neill. A full description of this fascinating experiment can be found in Neill's own books on education, particularly *That Dreadful School*. At Summerhill freedom without licence is the keynote. Attendance at all classes is completely voluntary—the children can play or study as they wish. But in fact most of the young people do turn up at lessons just because there is no compulsion, and although there are no "silence" rules, their behaviour is exemplary. Smoking and swearing are not prohibited, and indeed a swearing epidemic was cured by organising a swearing "competition"—familiarity with naughty words soon bred contempt of them. There is no corporal punishment, compulsory games or religious instruction—no child in the history of Summerhill has ever expressed a desire for the latter! A school parliament with a child as chairman meets every week to discuss problems of organisation and discipline. Neill and the other teachers attend, but make no attempt to influence discussions, and can be outvoted. The school is inspected regularly by the Ministry of Education, and the latest of these reports stresses that fears that the

products of Summerhill would be unable to fit into ordinary society are shown to be groundless by the evidence of the many successful posts which Summerhill ex-pupils have in fact obtained during the thirty-seven years of the school's existence. "The children's manners," the report continues, "are delightful . . . they have friendliness, ease, naturalness and a total absence of shyness and self-consciousness," and concludes that responsibility and integrity are encouraged and indeed are being developed by the system.

Prison reform should perhaps be our second most important aim. Some advance has been made in this direction since the publication of Shaw's famous pamphlet *Imprisonment*, which is the most irrefutable indictment of the existing situation ever penned. But, as the recent testimonies of such inmates as Croft-Cooke, Douglas-Home, Wildeblood and Joan Henry show, there still abound sadistic warders, soul-destroying work and deplorable sanitary conditions. Humanists must ever press for the substitution of reformation for retribution as the motive force behind imprisonment.

Two of the male prisoners mentioned above are homosexuals, and the present indefensible legal persecution of these unfortunates should come under full-scale humanist attack. It is intolerable that this one sexual deviation should be subject to imprisonment, while the adulterer, the lesbian *et al* are (quite rightly) unpunished.

Another very obvious but no less vital item in the charter must be the liberation of our Sundays from obsolete religiously-inspired laws. Recent events have taught us that there must be no slackening of the efforts of freethinkers in this direction. The Lord's Day Observance Society's successful intervention to prevent a ballet being performed in Coventry Cathedral underlines the continuing power of the three-centuries-old observance laws. Indeed, it seems from the recent failure of the attempt to get sufficient support for a repealing Act in Parliament, that many M.P.s, however much they may privately disagree with the existing disgraceful situation are afraid to say so publicly.

There are many other legal reforms which it should be the frequent concern of humanists to attain. These should include, in my opinion, the establishment of divorce by consent, the legalisation of euthanasia and suicide, the complete abolition of capital punishment and drastic revision of the licensing laws. I have not in this article considered such perennial problems as those concerning national and international politics. I am myself both a pacifist and a socialist with anarchist sympathies, but I realise that wide divergence of opinion exists among humanists on these points. I hope, however, that most freethinkers would agree with the inclusion of the specific reforms I advocate as the basis of a humanist charter.

BIBLE QUIZ

1. Who slew 1,000 men with the jawbone of an Ass?
2. Who slew 600 Philistines with an Ox goad?
3. What booty did David (after slaying 200 Philistines) bring to the king?
4. What leader caused a goat to bear all the sins of his tribe?
5. What two sisters committed incest with their father?

(Answers on page 208)

This Believing World

The Churches must chortle with joy at having such a stout supporter in the Director General of ITA, Sir Robert Fraser, who told the Commonwealth Press Union Conference the other day that TV "has started to help millions of people to realise that Sunday stands for something." In this, of course, he is backed by hundreds of M.P.s who would never, never change our God-like Sunday laws. Sir Robert is more than delighted that the religious programmes run by ITV "have audiences running into many millions"; and no doubt they would be considerably more if he allowed "infidels" to question the priests and parsons who monopolise the programmes, as they ought to be questioned. But is Fundamentalist Christianity returning with a rush?

★

The Commission sponsored by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on "divine" and "spiritual" healing have at last issued their Report, and it appears to be a pretty devastating one. According to all believers—as *The Star* pointed out the other day—"the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, cancers are healed," and we are always told that the doctors attending these cases are literally staggered at the cures, which are "nothing less than miracles." But the investigators appear to have been little impressed by these wonderful cures, and they attacked Christian Science—which they call, rather belatedly, neither Christian nor Science—and Spiritualism, and even what *The Star* calls "the fantastic achievements" of healers like Mr. Harry Edwards.

★

Of course, Mr. Edwards is very indignant and *Psychic News* gives us a portrait of him holding in his arms 600 letters from doctors "appealing for help for themselves or their patients." Well, we seem to remember when Mr. Edwards appeared on TV with two doctors, they made mincemeat of his pretensions. He was asked whether he ever followed up any of his "cures" and he told the doctors that that was their job. He was unable to produce even one properly authenticated cure—and he has always claimed that his cures were due to the same kind of miracle as performed by Jesus. It would be useless to point out to Mr. Edwards that there is no evidence whatever that Jesus ever cured anybody, anywhere.

★

New Zealand is horror-stricken. The Rev. W. P. B. Gamlin, who is the secretary of the N.Z. Council for Christian Education, found numerous children in the country's schools who actually didn't know the Lord's Prayer, who had no "comprehension of the prayer" and, in trying to write it, could only write correctly one-syllable words like "from" or "but." But we cannot help wondering whether Mr. Gamlin himself could recite the corrected version of the Lord's Prayer as given in the Revised Version? Or could he tell us which version is the one Jesus really spoke? They differ from one another profoundly.

★

Of course, this attack was not taken lying down by the Wellington School Committees' President, Mr. R. Heppleston, who emphatically passed the buck on to the parents. If the children did not know the Lord's Prayer, it was up "to the parents to teach the children. It's certainly not the fault of the schools." As to whether any child was better or worse off knowing or not knowing this dismal prayer, that was not argued. Is anybody whatever better off for knowing it? Will some earnest Christian tell us?

The BBC provided us on TV the other Sunday with a "discussion" between two authors on the Church and Industrial Relations—Canon Wickham, who has written a book on the subject, and Mr. R. Hoggart, who has written *The Uses of Literacy*. They talked and talked and talked, but what it was all about of any use to anybody would have been hard to find. As far as we could see, they both took for granted that the Church was "the Church of God" as Canon Wickham insisted; and so any idea of criticising that was completely ruled out of court. The Canon, of course, had to admit that the "working man" these days was not particularly enthusiastic about the Church but we never got further than that. For sheer futility, this programme would be hard to beat.

Chapman Cohen Said

The saying that God's ways are not man's ways is not a complaint: it is a compliment that man pays himself.

★

In a civilised state religion is not forced on an adult; he can resist. It is forced on a child; he cannot resist. The chivalry of Christianity is a wonderful thing.

★

There is one good thing about a travelling evangelist. There must always be a number of places that are able to enjoy his absence.

★

It is not surprising that in all the communications received through "mediums" the inhabitants of the next world are all religious. It has been made clear for generations that heaven is a place where mental degeneration sets in with phenomenal rapidity.

★

The test of every idol is a laugh. No god has ever survived it.

★

The conventional Christian is not a hypocrite. Hypocrisy co-exists with mental clarity.

★

To the Christian, morality is not a product of human society, but something imposed on men by the "will of God." It is to be enforced by penalties and backed up by a system of deferred payments in the next world. Without the assurance of these dividends the Christian sees no adequate reason for morality. His is the morality of the Stock Exchange plus the intellectual outlook of the savage.

★

It is not surprising that Christianity should so constantly harp on death. It worships a dead God, its doctrines have no life in them, it worships through dead forms, it prays to a ghost, and insists that the only safe thing for the present is to be guided by a dead past. The only thing which it insists must be up-to-date is the currency that flows into its coffers.

APPRECIATION

Enclosed please find \$5.00 (five dollars U.S. currency) for further subscription to THE FREETHINKER magazine. I was contemplating letting my subscription drop, but you have made it impossible for me to do so. I don't believe I'd feel right without a couple of FREETHINKERS in my pocket; furthermore, the standard of the articles is so much better than I have found in other similar publications; it cheers me up every week. Keep up the good work.

D. A. RICKARDS, M.R.C.V.S. (Cleveland, U.S.A.)

—NEXT WEEK—

THE PROBLEM OF CATHOLIC CRIMINALITY

By DR. J. V. DUHIG

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 29th, 11 a.m.: Miss KATHLEEN NOTT, "Argument."

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m. D. SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Notes and News

An interesting postscript to Mr. F. A. Ridley's article last week, "I Don't Know—Yet," was provided by General Weygand in a message to the Jeanne d'Arc Association. "All Catholics," he wrote, "have understood that this date [May 13th]—falling in the Marian year of Lourdes and the anniversary of the first apparition of Fatima—was an unquestionable sign. It is evident that the Virgin Mary herself intended to promote the movement which would lead to the resurrection of France. . . ." General Weygand, it seems, is one who *does* know—now!

★

THERE has been some recent correspondence in *Vegetarian News* on Religion and Humanitarianism, with particular reference to Baron von Hugel. In the June issue, the Rev. G. F. Tull doubts whether the Baron used the word "humanitarianism" in its now "rather specialised sense" and thinks it more likely he meant "the subtle enemy of religion is *humanism*." But Mrs. E. Wynne-Tyson, of Sussex, will have none of it. She strongly disagrees that humanism is the *subtle* enemy of religion. The modern variety, at least, she says, is "blatant materialism!" Why, "Mrs. Knight of the BBC—that dark Knight of the soul—

calls herself a humanist!" Mrs. Knight may not be surprised by the descriptive pun, but we are sure it will come as news to her to learn that she is "of the BBC."

★

ACCORDING to the *Unesco Courier*, the most widely translated authors in the world are Lenin, Jules Verne, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, and Mickey Spillane, with the Bible sixth. This announcement outraged the pious editors of the *Daily Express*. "It is completely inaccurate," they declared. "Instead of being sixth the Bible should be first." Unesco, they explained, had overlooked Britain and the U.S. as Bible translating countries. We are now in a position to upset the *Daily Express* even more. An American reader sends us a cutting stating that "U.S. playing cards were just a trifle more popular in 1957 than Bibles printed in this country (U.S.A.) in the foreign export market." Playing card shipments amounted to \$1,265,451; Bible shipments to \$1,247,428. Most of the Bibles were exported to Canada and the United Kingdom. This last fact is particularly ironic for—as the *Daily Express* informed us—Britain is a major publisher of Scripture in many languages. Ah well, God moves in a mysterious way. . . .

Gift of Ingersoll Papers to R.C. University

IT WAS IN THE JUNE ISSUE of the American Freethought monthly, *The Liberal of Philadelphia*, that we read of an unusual donation by Mr. Isaac D. Levy, a prominent Philadelphia attorney.

Mr. Levy, though not a Freethinker himself, had a collection of Robert G. Ingersoll items, conservatively valued at \$50,000. He had started the collection because he wished to study Ingersoll as a brilliant lawyer, orator and philosopher; in February he made the donation—an outright gift—to, of all places, the Roman Catholic Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.!

The most valuable item, Mr. Levy feels, is the original draft of Ingersoll's speech supporting James G. Blaine's nomination for the Presidency at the Republican National Convention in 1876 and, because the main Blaine collection is at Georgetown, Mr. Levy has added his Ingersolliana to it.

He thinks it is a wonderful thing that a Roman Catholic institution should accept the papers. We think it ironical. Remember what Ingersoll said about the Church of Rome?:

"There is no crime that the Catholic Church did not commit—no cruelty that it did not practise, no form of treachery that it did not reward, and no virtue that it did not persecute. It was the greatest and most powerful enemy of human rights. It did all that organisation, cunning, piety, self-denial, heroism, treachery, zeal and brute force could do to enslave the children of men. It was the enemy of intelligence, the assassin of liberty, and the destroyer of progress. It loaded the noble with chains and the infamous with honours. In one hand it carried the alms dish; in the other, a dagger. It argued with the sword, persuaded with poison, and convinced with the faggot."

Now it has his papers.

WHERE FRENCH IS USEFUL

"COULD my son be given extra French lessons in the place of Divinity, as I feel the former would be of more use to him in the hereafter?"—Letter from a mother to a schoolmaster.

—*Daily Telegraph* (18/6/58).

Looking at the Bible Again

By H. CUTNER

ONE OF THE "FONTANA" BOOKS published by Messrs. Collins is *A Plain Man Looks at the Bible* and, as its date is not 1756 or 1856 but 1956, it would, I think, be worth looking into, though whether I can be called "plain" in either of its meanings I am not sure. What I am sure is that when a "plain" man looks into the Bible, his general conclusion is, if anything, more Fundamentalist than that of the average Fundamentalist. He generally has never heard of Thomas Paine and, of course, never of G. W. Foote or Bradlaugh or Ingersoll; and it is obvious from almost the first page that, at least in this particular work which is by Dr. William Neil, he takes for granted that most, if not all, his readers have never heard even of any Biblical criticism.

So "plain" is this book that he repeats, as if they had never been answered before, "arguments" which to some of us were known in our childhood. And the only "notes" or references to authorities are Biblical ones, except that on page 84 we get three short references to Pliny, Tacitus, and Josephus, to show "as we should expect," says Dr. Neil, how sparse are references to Jesus outside the Bible. And, of course, there is not a hint here that these "references" have been carefully analysed by critics (not only Freethought critics, by the way) and shown to be utterly worthless to everybody except fully-believing Christians who believed just as much before they read these writers as after.

The great and unanswerable proofs that the Bible is from God Almighty comes from the Bible itself. As is the case with so many Fundamentalists these days, however, they are now ready to agree that "we have lost for ever a Bible which could be treated as an authoritative *vade mecum* giving tidy and compact answers to all possible problems of life and conduct." What we have now gained, Dr. Neil triumphantly exclaims, "is an immeasurably greater understanding of the real nature of the Bible." It is indeed "immeasurably" greater than anything we imagined—according to Dr. Neil. That is, the more we have shown that its science, history, and ethics, for the most part are based on futile myths, legends, and completely mistaken ideas of Nature, the greater the Bible becomes. This is indeed *plus royaliste que le roi*.

It is impossible here to take Dr. Neil up on a hundred and one points about the Bible which have been exploded for centuries. But he candidly admits that "the tribal chiefs of the period Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are vividly depicted in the narratives of the book of Genesis. Doubtless many of the stories told of them have grown in the telling and we have no outside confirmation, so far, of the existence of any of these patriarchs. . . ." Even when he makes such a confession against the "inspiration" and "infallibility" of the Bible, it does not mean that it is untrue. Dr. Neil obviously believes in the narratives, if not in every detail. He never stops to ask himself how does he know that the "period" of Abraham is really depicted? According to Bible chronology, the date is about 1900 B.C.; and if there is one thing really known about the Bible, it is that Genesis was quite certainly *not* written before 500 B.C., and it may well have been years later, that is, centuries later. The picture given in Genesis of the "tribal chiefs" was purely and simply "made up." The only way one can truly write of events in the past is through contemporary witnesses, and there were none at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their stories were

certainly *invented* by the Bible writers. The way Jews and Christians get out of this dilemma is by insisting that the Bible is "inspired." It was God himself who gave the authors of the Bible the facts.

Dr. Neil loves making "concessions" to critics as, for instance, when he points out that "it would not be surprising if the number of errors in the (original) manuscripts (of the Bible) due to mishearing, misreading, wandering thoughts and doodling (of the copiers) was not prodigious." What then? "This is, of course, no worse in the case of the Bible," he triumphantly answers himself, "than in any other ancient documents." That this hoary old argument should be trotted out as if it were something original in 1956 proves how Dr. Neil relies on the stupidity and gullibility of his readers. We know perfectly well that many of the extant copies of Greek and Latin classics swarm with errors—but nobody looks upon the *Iliad*, for example, as God's Precious Word, or believes in miracles because the Roman historian Livy gives examples of them occurring in Roman history. The Bible is the "Holy" Bible and we are not allowed to "blaspheme" against it. We have it handed to us in our courts of law as the *Holy* Bible when we take an "oath" to tell the truth, the inference being that to tell the truth would be quite impossible without the Word of God. Is this the case with any Greek or Roman classic?

If there is any mistake in the Bible, God alone must be responsible on the Church's own showing; and it is particularly mean to pass the buck on to the unlucky copiers. An infallible God cannot make a mistake, and if God isn't infallible, then what are we talking about?

In the end, of course, Dr. Neil has to admit that our translations of the Bible are, "apart from an odd correction here and there," *perfect* translations of the works of the original writers, for "if a modern version of the Bible were translated back into Hebrew or Greek and the original writers could see it, they would be prepared to acknowledge it as the product of their pens." In other words, we have an "infallible" as well as a "Holy" Bible. That is how a "plain" man reads his Bible in 1956.

Dr. Neil asks, "How do we know that the whole thing (that is, the Holy Bible) was not invented?" And without giving us a scrap of evidence, he calls upon archæology as providing us with "spectacular discoveries" in Egypt as proof that everything—or would it be almost everything?—in the Bible is true. Unbelievers like myself wonder where in Egypt or Palestine has one scrap of *evidence* been unearthed to prove that Adam, Noah, Moses, David, or Solomon, ever existed? Where has archæology shown any evidence whatever not only for Jesus, but for Peter, Paul, and the Twelve Apostles?

Dr. Neil admits that the "account of the Ten Plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea is so highly coloured that we might be tempted to dismiss the whole story of the Exodus as pure invention." The "we" here does not, of course, mean Dr. Neil, it means people who are not as familiar with the Bible as they ought to be. The Ten Plagues and the Exodus are not exactly shown on Egyptian wall paintings, but "we find that a wall painting in an Egyptian tomb depicts Semitic slaves" and therefore we can understand "why some of these Semites should want an Exodus." Here the "we" does mean Dr. Neil. Here are the marvels of the Ten Plagues, including the way an Angel from Heaven butchered all the "first-borns" in

Egypt, and the equally wonderful marvels accompanying the Exodus, all absolutely true because some "Semites" wanted to leave Egypt. That is how a "plain" man looks at many of the silliest stories ever written—if taken literally, which, of course, "plain" men always do.

Our brilliant Fundamentalists can prove all the stories in the Bible true in just this simple way; and no doubt most of Dr. Neil's readers will agree with him. The Flood—well, "we might be tempted to dismiss the Flood as a complete myth if Woolley had not discovered evidence for it at Ur. . . ." How many readers of Mr. Neil would go to "Woolley" to find out for themselves what he really discovered. It certainly was not anything about the Flood—as indeed Dr. Neil later sadly remembered, for he is obliged to admit (only a page further on) that "Woolley" actually "tells us nothing about a world-wide Flood which is said to have destroyed mankind, far less does his evidence prove the existence of Noah and his record-breaking Ark." The "plain" man can take his choice, for, of course, Noah really did live, and his Ark was certainly built. The Holy Bible says so.

In the end, Dr. Neil very mournfully admits that "we have to reckon with some archæological evidence on the debit side." So much for archæology.

Half way through his book Dr. Neil has a chapter on "the Carpenter of Nazareth"—as we should expect. About him, "the Biblical records are, however, ample in scope and rich in detail," and naturally, Mark is the earliest Gospel, written "approximately 65 A.D." There is not one scrap of evidence for this date nor is there any whatever that Mark is the earliest Gospel. It is pure, unadulterated speculation or merely the Christian Church's assertion. But it appears that Jesus was always repeating his "more striking sayings," and so "the better trained memories of his Eastern listeners remembered them accurately"! This takes our breath away. *Accurately* indeed! So accurately, that it is pretty certain that whatever Jesus is supposed to have said in one infallible Gospel may well be contradicted in one or more of the others. But, after all, a "plain" man is not expected to know the hundreds of contradictions in the New Testament.

The Origins of Lourdes

By DR. GUY VALOT

(Translated from the French *La Raison* by D. JOSEPH.)

ALL THE CHARLATANISH HISTORIES of Lourdes, that is, the vast majority of books written about Lourdes, are based on the book of Henri Lasserre as starting point. This so-called historian was at one and the same time the subject of a miracle, and a beneficiary of Lourdes.

As subject of a miracle, he claimed that, thanks to the water of the miraculous Grotto, his "poor sight" was improved. It is to be regretted that this astounding miracle should have left no records at Lourdes. A beneficiary he most certainly was; his book rapidly sold more than a million copies; it is still on sale, and has passed its hundredth edition. Lasserre gained a quite fantastic publicity in all the Catholic camp. He has no claim to the title of historian; at the most he might be called a propagandist. Nothing troubles him. The vegetation growing in the Grotto had been erroneously called water-cress by the Bishop of Terbes of the period; it was, of course, golden saxifrage (a rock plant). The authorities in Lourdes at that time were completely corroded by the spirit of freethinking. The number of freethinkers in Lourdes was truly incredible. They occupied all the important positions there. Lasserre ruthlessly assaulted Jacomet, the chief of police in Lourdes during the period, and made him appear as an anti-clerical torturer somewhat like the prefect Massy. Jacomet, who had been moved, and promoted in the service, expired in the odour of sanctity. This was not a con-dign end for a torturer, and the legend took some liberties with the truth; it was said that Jacomet had become blind for his wilfulness in refusing to acknowledge the cure of the first blind person to be cured at Lourdes. Still better, he had killed his wife with a chopper and had then administered justice to himself. Not only was he in hell, but even the horses drawing the hearse had refused to move forward as soon as the coffin containing the remains of this enemy of God had been placed in it, etc., etc.

The same causes always produce the same effects. It is interesting to note the reactions of the Catholic camp to my wife's death as the result of a very ordinary car accident on April 4th, 1956. *La Croix* (the Jesuit organ) had announced her death as having occurred on Easter Sunday (though on that day she was touring in Italy). It provided an edifying effect to conjure up visions of the arrival of my

worthy wife in hell on the very day of "Our Saviour's" Resurrection. The journal for young Catholic girls (the propaganda journal of the Children of Mary), *La Fleur de Lys*, published in its issue of June 1956: "On Easter Sunday, Dr. Thérèse Valot was found struck by the hand of death at the steering wheel of her car. 'If God did not openly punish any sin on this earth,' said St. Augustine, 'it would be believed that there was no Providence.'" Thus my wife was struck down on the day of the Saviour's resurrection; not a word was said about the accident. Heart-failure at 34 years of age! "Digitus Dei est hic." ("The finger of God is here.") God had had His revenge by assassinating a woman who had too strongly combatted the spiritual, but more especially the material interests of the Church.

Having presented Mme. Valot's death as a proof of the wrath of God, the next step was to discredit the surviving partner. This was what was done, with the connivance of Mgr. Théas (Bishop of Lourdes) by the Abbé Tauriac, who in his book on Lourdes, wherein he "refutes" us (without once mentioning our name or the title of our book, to shield his reader from wasting his time and money) ventures to write: "This doctor, having applied for the position of President of the Bureau of Authentications, and not having been nominated, wrote an abusive letter which Mgr. Théas heartily regrets having mislaid. His anger at not being nominated must be mentioned." This thoroughly "Christian" work has a preface by Cardinal Feltin who, in this instance, appears in rather dismal company.

When, over five years ago, I started looking through the Lourdes documents, I thought to myself that it would be extremely interesting to have all the official documents collected in a single volume, without the alteration of as much as a comma or full stop, because this would show clearly that the official version of the Lourdes story was based entirely on truncated and twisted texts. This book, I had estimated, would cost more than two million francs, and on balance, I thought it would be a great loss of money, since it would have very few readers. In our book, *Lourdes and Illusion*, I had written (page 117): "In two years' time, for the centenary of the 'apparitions,' we hope

to be able to write the complete story . . . if we are not assassinated or atomised in the meantime." I have had justification for these reservations. In spite of threats, I have not been assassinated, though the more worthy half of the partnership is dead; and, left on my own, I have not had time to carry out our work as planned, the work having been envisaged as a joint effort. I rather maliciously allowed the adverse party to believe that, notwithstanding, I was going to publish the authentic documents on Lourdes, and during a lawsuit which I had instituted against the journal of the Grotto of Lourdes, before the correctional tribunal of Lourdes, my counsel, Maitre Coryne, of Paris, had read photostat copies of documents from the National Archives.

(To be concluded)

CORRESPONDENCE

A VITALIST REPLIES

As a Vitalist I should like to reply, as briefly as possible, to Mr. H. Cutner's ill-mannered and violent tirade which appeared in your issue of May 16th. Mr. Cutner's reference to Chamber's definition of "matter," "That which occupies space and with which we become acquainted by our bodily senses," proves nothing. If we had been born with eyes sensitive to X-rays instead of eyes sensitive to "normal" light, we should have an entirely different view of "matter": a knife-edge would appear to be the toothed edge of a saw, and many "solid" objects would appear transparent. Which appearance is the more true? There is every reason to suppose that there are millions of appearances, but have we any right to say we know the true one?

That which Mr. Cutner describes as "matter" is to me an unknown substance which I am content to call "merely an English noun." Mr. Cutner should define his "god" more clearly—if he is able to do so. Coming to the question of Design and Intelligence in nature, I feel sure that the works of the well-known Vitalists, McDougall, Bergson, J. C. Smuts, etc., are on Mr. Cutner's private Index. When I refer to Intelligence in nature, I am referring to the evidence of purpose which one can study in embryology. Writing as a scientist, Raynor C. Johnson, Ph.D., D.Sc., in his book, *The Imprisoned Splendour*, says:

"If it be supposed that form and structure should be chemical responses to the environment as it *then* exists, how can this account for lungs which *will* at some future day be needed, for eyes which *will* at some future day respond to light, for a larynx which *will* some day be used to talk, and so on?" "If the building of so complex a structure, capable of response to an environment which it will some day meet, is not evidence of purpose—highly intelligent purpose such as highly developed Mind might formulate—I confess I do not know the meaning of the word 'purpose.'"

Logic, not "the will to believe," compels me to accept the above excerpt. Throughout nature one finds the same evidence of purpose: the urgent desire of each species to reproduce itself. A tiny speck of semen can contain a million spermatozoa, and each dandelion "clock" contains a hundred or more seeds, each one being provided with a "parachute" to enable it to travel as widely as possible. From the tomcat on the tiles to the male loiterer in Piccadilly the same urge is present. One does not find this urge in stones and other inanimate objects. Perhaps Mr. Cutner can tell me why.

Personally, I have no doubt that the difference between the animate and the inanimate lies in the fact that the former possesses an entelechy, whereas the latter does not. Although Evolution is a proven fact, as any student of paleontology can show, it appears that Mr. Cutner's interpretation of it is founded on Hæckel's *Riddle of the Universe*.

Hæckel's Mechanical Biology (if it were true) would destroy science; if all is determined, so also are thoughts, which are produced (on the Materialistic hypothesis) by organised matter—brains. I am well aware that the Principle of Indeterminacy in modern physics offers a loophole, but it is a loophole which spells danger to Materialism.

As a Materialist, Mr. Cutner, of course, believes that the brain is the mind or soul, or else he believes that the brain produces the mind in the same way (roughly speaking) as a candle produces a flame. No more candle, no more flame; no more brain, no more mind.

Moreover, he must believe, too, that memory is "stored" in what are called "brain-traces," traces which are composed of particles of "matter" which may belong to a man's brain today and to a fish's next week. If this were true, memory would be

impossible. It is also interesting to learn that the brain is the first organ in the body to disintegrate after death. This seems to suggest that it is the entelechy's withdrawal which causes "matter" to lose its form. When the current of an electric-magnet is switched off, any pieces of metal being held by the magnet fall to the ground.

Mr. Cutner's reference to "Nature's being red in tooth and claw" is largely a theological question, but the best "answer" I have so far come upon is that given by a non-theologian, Mrs. Margaret Knight. In her article in the 1955 *Rationalist Annual* ("Æsthetic Experience and the Problem of Evil") she treats the question fairly and honestly.

Consideration for space prevents my quoting Mrs. Knight's article, but no doubt Mr. Cutner has read it. "We haven't the slightest idea of what use is Jupiter, which has an icy envelope on its surface thousands of miles in thickness," is Mr. Cutner's next statement. Had he lived on another planet millions of years ago he might well have asked the same question about the Earth, which was at that time a ball of fire in the universe.

Having spent the greater part of my life in the study of science (all branches), philosophy, psychical research and comparative religion, I have arrived at a Vitalistic interpretation of nature only after careful consideration of all the facts; and so far I have not come across any work on Materialism which has made me think differently, including, with but one exception, the works mentioned in Mr. Cutner's article.

Of course, this acceptance of Vitalism does not mean that I believe in any made religion, which means all religions. Nevertheless, when religion is finally destroyed—and the day is nearer than many imagine—it will be useless to tell the masses that they owe a duty to one another and that they should be good and gentle because certain Materialists think they should. If this life is all and death is the end, ethics and so-called moral principles are meaningless. Even Materialists who believe that the mind is an epiphenomenon of the brain must find it difficult to believe that "matter" can produce "values" also. Having asked a number of Materialists to explain their strange beliefs, I have found them become as evasive as the average clergyman who is questioned about Genesis.

However, and I know this will shock Mr. Cutner deeply, the evidence provided by *serious* psychical research—the kind of work undertaken by the S.P.R.—has convinced me that some "part" of consciousness can (and does) exist after the dissolution of the nervous-system. I have little doubt that Mr. Cutner would never condescend to study the S.P.R. *Proceedings* or any other work on the subject. Some people love their beliefs so much that they dare not risk having them changed.

Finally, I have never had the pleasure of meeting your hostile Mr. Cutner (if pleasure it be), but during the four years I have been a reader of THE FREETHINKER I have read all his articles and two R.P.A. books he has written. Throughout his writing there is a certain vulgarity and hostility towards his readers and at certain times he gives the impression of being unsure of himself. Had he lived in the "Age of Faith" he would probably have been a religious fanatic. Indeed, the more I study his writing and some of his wild statements, the more disposed I become to liken him to John Wesley—that "excitable little cleric" of the eighteenth century.

J. W. T. ANDERSON.

LAO TZU

For those who may be interested in Lao Tzu, it seems that Mr. G. Duncan is correct in his surmise. In his introductory remarks to his translation of the Tao-te-Ching, Mr. James Legge (in the *Sacred Books of the East*) says that Sze-ma Khien, the first great Chinese historian (circa B.C. 85) uses the term "wished to withdraw from the world," as one might say, into a monastery or a South Sea island. He was fed up and just wished to leave civilisation for the outer Barbarians, west of China.

B.S.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Samson (Judges 15, xv-xvi).
2. Shamgar (Judges 3, xxxi).
3. Their foreskins (1 Sam. 18, xxvii).
4. Aaron (Leviticus 16, xxi).
5. The daughters of Lot (Genesis 18, xxx-xxxviii).

LOUIS RICH (U.S.A.)

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