

The Freethinker

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IN A RECENT issue of a French political journal, I noted an interesting, but not actually unexpected piece of information. A proposal has apparently been mooted in religious circles in the State of Israel, to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, the unique sanctuary of the Jewish people. As everyone knows, the last of the three Jewish Temples, that one erected by the non-Jewish Herod shortly prior to the origins of the Christian era, was finally levelled to the ground by fire when the Romans stormed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Since that now remote era, no sanctuary dedicated to the Jewish tribal god, Jahveh, has stood in Jerusalem, Zion, David's ancient capital, the Holy City of the Hebrews.

For, since the Jews originally returned from their historical exile to Babylon in the fifth century B.C., the precept in the Book of Deuteronomy which categorically forbids the erection of a Temple anywhere else than in Jerusalem, has formed part of the orthodox Jewish faith. The pseudo-Messiah, Bar-Cockba ("Son of the Star") in the course of his last desperate insurrection against Rome in A.D. 131, struck coins depicting the Star of Jacob shining over the Temple which Titus and his legions had destroyed in A.D. 70. The bloody suppression of his national-religious rising by the iron hand of Rome, soon put a stop to any such project. Since the conclusion of the Bar-Cockba revolt in A.D. 135 (which appears to be mentioned in the Fourth Gospel, probably written about the same time. It has also been suggested that Bar-Cockba and not Christ was "the bright, the morning star" referred to in the Apocalypse) the Jews have been exiles from the Holy Land, until the successful revival of the State of Israel in 1948. During which lengthy era, Judaism, deprived of its only legitimate sanctuary in Jerusalem, has been the religion of the Book only; bound together by the written word of the Bible alone.

Rebuilding the Temple

In view of such an historical context, it is not surprising that such a suggestion should now be mooted as that one noted above. Now that the State of Israel is once more in existence, and now that the Holy City of the cosmopolitan Hebrews is once more a national capital nothing appears to be more logical, from the standpoint of the Jewish creed, than that the Temple should once more become the outward and visible sign and religious headquarters of Judaism as both a national and international cult. For the Temple, in fact all three historic Temples—that ascribed to Solomon and the less dubious sanctuaries assigned respectively to the Maccabees and Herod, were in ancient days the recognised headquarters of the already international Jewish "racial" cult. A modern Temple in Zion would presumably occupy a similar cosmopolitan position, besides enhancing the prestige of the present State of Israel as the chosen sanctuary of the national God Jahveh (or Jehovah), who commanded his chosen people always to remember Zion.

The modern State of Israel, the successful outcome of half-a-century of Zionist propaganda and persistent permeation, has now been in existence for twelve years. During that period of chequered fortunes, the judicial and ethical problems associated with the violent creation and stormy existence of the Zionist state have been extensively discussed at every conceivable level and from every conceivable point of view. Unfortunately, however, most

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Remembering Zion

By F. A. RIDLEY

of such polemics appear to ignore completely the only real motive and, from the Zionist standpoint, historical justification for the past creation and present *status quo* of the Jewish state. For there is only one *bona fide* and, at least, logically consistent argument that can be advanced to justify the otherwise fantastic claim of the Jews (or rather Zionists, since not all Jews are Zionists) to a moral right to reoccupy lands in which their ancestors allegedly resided from about 1400 B.C. to 135 A.D. when the Roman Emperor Hadrian expelled them *en masse* after the bloody failure of Bar-Cockba's rising. That reason is that Jahveh, the supreme Deity and Creator of the Universe had, for some inscrutable reason known only to himself, elected Israel as his "chosen race" and had arbitrarily selected Palestine as his "Holy Land": as the predestined and permanent National Home of his Chosen People, Israel. It is, I repeat, this aboriginal covenant, and nothing else, that furnishes the modern Zionist movement and its current State of Israel with a valid claim to be recognised in 1959 A.D. as a political entity with a moral right to occupy and to continue to occupy in perpetuity, the land of Palestine which (according to the Old Testament) it conquered under Joshua c. 1400 B.C., and which it has reconquered by broadly similar methods in our own day under the leadership of that modern "Joshua," David Ben-Gurion. This, and nothing but this, represents the only allegedly moral justification for the State of Israel—the various political and economic reasons sometimes advanced by non-religious Zionists (of whom Ben-Gurion himself is said to be one) in order to justify the recent Jewish reconquest of Palestine are not worth the paper they are printed on. If as so often stated, the previous Arab inhabitants were too poor to cultivate "the land flowing with milk and honey" properly, surely the moral remedy was to assist this admittedly backward people to overcome its still medieval environment by adequate technical and financial assistance, rather than, as was actually done, to harry them out of their native land by fire and sword, by methods remarkably similar to those employed by the Biblical heroes in order to cast out the Canaanites from the Promised Land. As for the pseudo-judicial argument that the ancient habitation of Palestine by their remote ancestors eighteen centuries and more back, gives the modern Jews a moral right to reclaim their ancestral patrimony by force; this argument is almost too puerile to be credited. What nation

in the modern world would deserve to have any fixity of tenure if such a claim were valid? For example, historically the ancient Britons, the ancestors of the modern Welsh, were conquered by the Romans about the same time as the ancient Jews were. Does anyone in his senses think that this gives the modern Welsh also a moral and juridical right to reoccupy England, the ancestral "land of their fathers" by force, supposing that they possessed it? Yet such a claim would be almost exactly and chronologically on all fours with contemporary Zionist claims when argued on a secular footing.

In point of fact, modern Israel, however much its non-religious adherents may try to disguise it, has one and only one valid *raison d'être*. Jahveh gave it to them; and what Jahveh gives is forever, and overrides all subsequent secular considerations. That is the current argument

of religious Zionists, and it is at least an honest and logical one, just as to rebuild the unique Temple would be its logical completion since, in the same revelation, Jahveh commanded that a sanctuary should be raised perpetually to him in Zion. For a religiously-inspired State, without a religion, represents a grotesque anomaly, and Jews without Jahveh are certainly an anachronism when viewed from the standpoint of a secularly-inspired philosophy. Whether conceived as a "race," creed or cult, Judaism (and its Zionist projection) has no meaning apart from Jahveh. In sheer gratitude the Jews should certainly build yet another Temple, even if the Arabs eventually burn down the next one as the Romans burned down the last. For without Jahveh, its celestial god-father, what earthly right has Israel even to its name, let alone its existence?

Learning to Learn

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

Can People Learn to Learn? by Brock Chisholm, Allen and Unwin, 1959. 15/-.

IN THIS BOOK Freethinkers will find expressed in language which all can follow, much that they will have thought for themselves, here given with the authority of the first Director of the World Health Organisation, whose genius has made of the WHO one of the great international institutions of our day. Its theme is the urgent need for mankind to *think freely*, "free from all preconceptions as to rights and wrongs, free of all certainties imposed on us as children, free of all loyalties to particular accidental and temporal patterns of living among which we happened to be brought up"; to be *Freethinkers*. The need is urgent, since mankind is faced by destruction at its own hands.

It opens with a chapter, "The Nations", in which the author endeavours to suggest the natural outlook of, and the problems facing, the inhabitants of different lands. Under the heading "Israel" he draws attention to the deep confusion wrought by the Old and New Testaments, which present differing pictures of a deity "but many sincere people try to believe in all at once". Later he asks, "If we look at all religious faiths as though we were coming into this world for the first time, that is free of the prejudices we normally carry . . . would we choose one of them, and, if so, which one?" The answer is clearly implied, None.

"Almost universal in the human race" is, says Dr. Chisholm, anxiety. It is least, so it would appear among Eskimos, until they are corrupted by the fears of the white man's world, especially by his religion. "If there is to be hope for freedom from anxiety and fear in the world and for peace (fear is the cause of war, preparation for war and cold war) it appears that something will have to be done *to discredit faith in favour of reason*, and to change the foundation of belief away from its ancient base in tradition, authority, magic, miracle and ritual to a more useful, dependable and reasonable reliance on observation, knowledge and intelligence."

The pressing questions of population, of natural resources, of race and language are briefly considered. All of these confronted Dr. Chisholm in his work at WHO. From these considerations he passes on to demand for all, Freedom to Think, the foundations of which freedom must be laid in childhood, for today we are reaping the harvest of centuries of prevention, centuries of fear, of "overt threats of hell-fire", of the "watchful, all-seeing god" which produce feelings of personal guilt and inferiority.

Education, in its wide sense, is the sole means of gaining Freedom of Thought. Our author therefore devotes more than a quarter of this little book to this subject. Children must be educated into men and women prepared to face facts and trained in solving problems; they must learn not to be afraid and not to pass responsibility on to a god or a state or a church. They must grow up and stand on their own feet, not kneel to priests, commissars, kings or hypothetical deities.

Dr. Chisholm is Vice-President of Honour for the Americas of the World Union of Freethinkers, and is participating in the international Freethought Congress at Brussels from September 4th to 8th. His educational ideals were those of Ferrer, whose martyrdom will be then commemorated.

The above brief review will have shown that Dr. Chisholm's book is one that should be in every Free Thinker's library to be placed in the hands of those who seek to divest themselves of the religious and other prejudices of their environment, particularly to be read by the young who are launching out on the great adventure of living.

ASKING FOR MORE

THE Rev. G. E. David Pytches, curate-in-charge of St. Patrick's Church, Wallington, doesn't think there are enough religious programmes on the BBC on Sunday evenings, and he has urged his parishioners to write to the Corporation complaining about the dearth (*Wallington and Carshalton Times*, 13/8/59). From the *Radio Times* we prepared an agenda for the religious-starved Christian viewer and listener, which BBC secretaries are at liberty to use in replying to Mr. Pytches's parishioners. On Sunday, August 16th, there was "Meeting Point" on TV from 7.0 to 7.25; "The Way of Life" (Home) 7.45 to 8.25; "Sunday Half-Hour (Light)" 8.30 to 9.0; and the choice of two epilogues at 10.50 (five minutes on TV; ten minutes on the Home). This made 105 or 110 minutes viewing and listening in four hours—not too bad, we would have thought. But Mr. Pytches must have been worried about the 9.0 to 10.50 period when his parishioners would have to see and hear, news items, a play, music or a programme on the fight against poliomyelitis.

NEXT WEEK

ENGLAND'S OLDEST ALLY

By COLIN McCALL

Prophet of the 20th Century

By PETER F. MOORE

THE MERE FACT that he has been claimed as a founding father by so many groups that have arisen in this century, places Friedrich Nietzsche among the great thinkers of this epoch, for only a truly great mind can present so many apparently contradictory facets, so strongly as to maintain a grip on those who come after. No one can pretend this influence to be wholly beneficial, but no one can deny that it is there. Other thinkers who have given form and order to the ideas existing in their time became famous because they supplied to their contemporaries the picture of the world that was required. Plato voiced the shattered city-state ideal. The Stoics personified the philosophy inherent in the Roman mind. St. Augustine foreshadowed the Middle Ages, and Leibnitz, Spinoza and Descartes represent the struggle to assimilate the Renaissance. But Nietzsche stands forth, not as a representative of his own time, but of ours.

Another important difference between Nietzsche and all but the very greatest is his continual development. There is no set masterpiece which contains a complete system; even *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, though it may contain the best of him, is but a phase. That mighty vision of "The Transvaluation of all Values" remains but one published volume, *The Will to Power*, and a mass of notes. *The Will to Power* was taken as gospel by the Right in Germany between the wars. But to take one part of a quartet as the whole and base a mode of life upon it is totally unsatisfactory. The analogy of the string quartet is very close in this case. As in the late quartets of Beethoven, ideas are formulated far in advance of their time, and one movemental one can give a completely false impression. But with the complete work there is a unity of form which seems impossible from the diversity and complexity of the separate parts. So it is with the "Transvaluation." The one movement extant gives no indication of the possible scope of the whole.

Principal interest for Freethinkers lies in Nietzsche's downright denunciation of Christianity. Humanists and Rationalists often retain Christian morality, without the embarrassment of a god who outrages their sense of logic. Nietzsche, however, attacked the whole theory of Christian morals, believing that the virtues indoctrinated into us from childhood are slave values. Humility, chastity, obedience, and the rest, are attributes which keep slavery alive. Once necessary; with the passing of time they become elevated into virtues. The prisoner learns to kiss his chains. At the same time, in his deepest heart the slave resents, not so much the loss of his own liberty, but the freedom of others.

Mithras, Christianity's most formidable early rival, had the aristocratic virtues of courage, honour, and victory, as its moral bases, but Christianity, playing upon the slave's resentment, promised a judgment in which the rich and powerful would suffer in hell, just for being rich and powerful. It thereby spread among the slaves; and poor Nietzsche maintained that the Barbarians of the North were also ruined and perverted by this unnatural cult, but I cannot go this far with him. The Barbarians took Christianity as a social organisation, but remained Pagan at heart. Christian morality only took hold in proportion to the emergence of a slave class as "powers behind the throne." In fact, Christian corruption in Europe was not completed until the Reformation, when Luther and Calvin managed to thrust the burden of sin on to everybody's shoulders.

Nietzsche saw that, while the Industrial Revolution had made the slave morality universal, the Churches could no longer provide for the savage resentment of the disenfranchised proletariat. The old Greco-Roman world, at its collapse, had been superseded by the Barbarians. In the modern world, where were the successors to come from? Nietzsche despaired, seeing only a rapid decay, with mass warfare on a destructive scale hitherto undreamed of. And this despair finally unhinged his mind in 1889.

We of the Twentieth Century have seen the rise of mass media to hold at bay the resentment of the populace, with a general reduction to the lowest common denominator. We have seen two wars fought with unparalleled destruction and the invoking of the basest motives which can activate the human mind. What is more, we are hardened to them. But to a man of the Nineteenth Century, happening upon them almost against his will, the effect must have been shattering. So it was to Nietzsche.

The Existentialists lay very strong stress on Nietzsche as one of their early saints. The claim is just, for there are two main roads to philosophy: one via science, the other via the arts. As these two have opposing mainsprings, they never fully understand the other's way of thinking. Bertrand Russell provides an example of this. As a brilliant mathematician he can see all problems, all truth, in terms of calculation. If a calculation can be made, then there must be a solution. *The History of Western Philosophy* is magnificent in the treatment of the mathematically-inspired, but less than just to the others. Nietzsche, like all Existentialists, stands at the opposite pole to the mathematical concept. He was by training a philologist and, as such, saw the world in terms which could only be expressed by art. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* not only presents a great thesis, but is great writing on its own account. Similarly, Sartre, Camus and Kafka, use plays, novels and poetry to show their truth to the world. This linking of philosophy with art is one of the cornerstones of all Existentialist thought. The same combination runs consistently through all phases of Nietzsche's growth. He always claimed that Schopenhaur's *World as Will and Idea* set him on the road to the *Will to Power*. Indeed, it is hard to say whether Schopenhaur did more to form Nietzsche or Nietzsche to make Schopenhaur's fame, but it is true to say that the *World as Will* crystallised that fundamentally tragic view of life which entwines with the artistic throughout Nietzsche's quarter century of creativeness, 1865-1889.

Closely connected is Nietzsche's appraisal of ancient Hellas. Up to his time, Pericles, Socrates and Plato had been looked upon as the peak of Greek civilisation. Nietzsche was the first to see them and their city as the symbols of the collapse of the true Hellenic ideal, which is largely the modern opinion. By building an empire, Athens was compelled to suppress the Dionysian half of its life. It was in this balance between the civilising Apollo half, and the savage subconscious half of human existence, that Nietzsche saw the greatness of the Greeks and, indeed, the greatness of mankind. But once the Dionysos in man was driven underground, it grew inwards and festered. In the Nineteenth Century he realised that Society had the power to drive one half of human experience completely back upon itself.

(To be Concluded)

This Believing World

One of the illustrated French journals *Paris-Match* gives a double-page spread to a photograph showing huge queues of pilgrims inside Treves Cathedral passing through to see the famous "seamless coat" worn by Jesus at his crucifixion. They are even allowed to touch it—an unprecedented honour—though whether this would cure incurable diseases is so far not claimed. Thus once again the Roman Church has its rivals beaten to a frazzle in the arts of publicity. Do our English Protestant Churches ever get double-page spreads abroad?

A heading in the "Daily Express," "So many Irish" has explained why the adherents of Roman Catholicism have increased from 3,250,000 in England to 5,250,000—the former figure is the estimate of the Catholic Directory, the latter that of the Newman Association Demographic Survey. Though Eire is part of God's Emerald Isle, and is perhaps the stoutest defender of the Roman Church in the world, crowds and crowds of Irish are leaving it for the "heathen" wilds of their traditional enemy—England. It just proves how a Welfare State and regular work can oust even Rome when it come to practical politics.

The Brains Trust the other Sunday had to discuss that original problem, "What is the purpose of life?" and needless to add, found it quite insoluble. Apart from mumbling something about God, the Abbot of Downside was simply incoherent, while the Asiatic Prince who formed part of the "Trust," as a good Buddhist, claimed that it was all a question of successive "reincarnations" each designed to make you better and better until you dissolved into "nothingness." It was all very entertaining and very silly. Nobody dared to say that, in the ultimate, there was *no* purpose in life—except to have "a good time." Of course the problem still would remain—what is "a good time?"

The Pope is going to call a Church Council designed to put to an end to "disunity" in the Churches of Christ once for all. All he wants is for every Christian Church forthwith to unite with Rome, and the thing is done. After all, as he insists, the Church of Rome was founded by God Almighty and is therefore the only true Church; and it is quite reasonable on his part to expect *all* the others to give in, give up their blasphemous heresies, and "unite" with God. That is all the Pope requires—and Christianity will again reign supreme in the world. Perhaps the Pope will now ask for the Moon and thus clinch the matter!

The BBC is to be congratulated on its TV presentation of Bishop Fulton Sheen—easily the most popular religious speaker on the radio and TV personality in America. He took as his subject the well-known story from the Gospel of John, of Jesus and the woman from Samaria at the well, and made it a most dramatic representation showing how the lady, after calling "our Blessed Lord" a Jew, finished up by admitting he was the Messiah and the Saviour.

Actually the story is mostly unmitigated nonsense—but then the Bishop would never have achieved his reputation if he had not easily shown the wonderful beauty and unerring brilliance of everything pertaining to "our Blessed Lord" (the Bishop always referred to Jesus as our Blessed Lord) related in the Gospels. Had he been obliged to give a sermon on Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp, he would have equally succeeded in a thrilling exposition of the wicked Uncle and the marvellous innocence of "our

Blessed Aladdin." Still, the performance was a five piece of publicity for the Roman Church, and it cost the Pope nothing—which after all is something!

Archbishop and Bathing Beauty

By N. E. S. WEST (U.S.A.)

THE JEWISH GOD, according to the Jewish bible, made all men suffer because of the original sin of Adam and Eve. This is religious morality. Recently, Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne of New Mexico, threatened to punish the family of a Roman Catholic girl, if she appeared in public in a swimming suit in the Miss Universe beauty contest. The Archbishop said he would withhold the Sacrament, not only from the girl, Miss Sue Ingersoll, but from her family also (*Los Angeles Times*, 4/7/59). I assume no masses would be said for members of the girl's family who now (allegedly) dwell in purgatory, either, though it is seldom that a priest will pass a chance to collect money, and masses for the dead are a regular source of revenue. However, the Archbishop certainly threatened to punish the innocent relatives of Miss New Mexico, although the girl's mother had tried to dissuade her daughter from participating in the beauty contest.

So does the Roman Catholic Church, like the Nazis, never hesitate to put extreme pressure on the families of the errant, as well as the latter themselves. If it is for the good of the Church, the end justifies the means. So has it been for centuries.

Obedience is a fundamental requirement of the Roman Catholic faith. There is no provision for the simple masses to have any opinions of their own. Miss Ingersoll put up a fight—at first. She declared she would show everybody that Catholics can and do think and act for themselves. But she finally withdrew from the Miss Universe contest. Not, she said, because of the Archbishop; but I have my doubts. In my view the pressure exerted by her Church was too strong. She could no longer, it is true, be imprisoned or burned at the stake for her defiance of her Archbishop, but she must know that the Church makes frequent use of boycott possibilities. Many is the time that it has forced its members—and others—to do as it says, through boycott threats, even in "the land of the free and the home of the brave." Miss Ingersoll operates a beauty shop.

Undoubtedly there must have been other Roman Catholic girls in the Miss Universe contest, from different parts of the world. Each Archbishop makes his own decision and each speaks with authority, though Miss Ingersoll endeavoured to show otherwise. She made a gallant attempt that was doomed to failure.

The blackest pages of history record the ruthlessness of the Roman Catholic Church and its hierarchy. They have promoted wars, converted by the sword, and burned maybe thousands at the stake for refusing to bend the knee to the Pope. But the type of threat used by the Archbishop of New Mexico, that of punishing relatives, is no less vile. Yet it is said that these prelates represent a loving god, in fact, the god of the Jews. There is, of course, no evidence that the Jewish god did the things they said he did, or said the things they say he did. The Jews tried to build up their stature by claiming that God had talked to them. But, if their god actually did the things they said he did, and if the Archbishop of New Mexico is really one of his representatives, I hope he keeps far, far away from my door.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (rear of Morley Street Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. CORINA and DAY.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: L. Ebury.

London (Finsbury Square, E.C.2).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. L. Ebury and C. MCCALL.

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Saturday from 6 p.m. and every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. Ebury, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

London (Tower Hill).—Every 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).—Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 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.; Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street) Sunday, August 30th, 6.45 p.m.; CHARLES H. SMITH: "The World Problem of Teddy Boys."

Notes and News

WE HAVE to remind readers that, owing to increased costs following the recent printing agreement, the price of THE FREETHINKER will have to be raised to 6d., from the issue dated September 4th. Subscription charges will also be increased to 35s., 17s. 6d. and 8s. 9d. for 12 months, 6 months and 3 months respectively, and, for the U.S.A., \$5.00 per year.

CONGRATULATIONS to Mr. H. Cutner on his recent thousandth article for THE FREETHINKER continue to arrive from many parts of the world. We are sorry we can't print them all and that Mr. Cutner can't acknowledge them individually. Here, though, is a passage from an American letter which is typical. "For many years I have enjoyed Mr. Cutner's keen, analytic pen, and also his out-and-out attack on the religionists. He never minced words and was bereft of any feeling that one should treat a brain-washed religionist with kid gloves. THE FREETHINKER's influence has been enhanced by his trenchant articles."

POPE JOHN XXIII, we learn from the *Sunday Express* (9/8/59), "is contemplating a drastic revision of the Roman Catholic Church's 400-year-old Index of forbidden books." Such a revision, said a Vatican official, is in keeping with the Pope's determination that the Church of Rome should be "alive to modern needs and problems and not hidebound by tradition." Certainly the *Index* is

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £252 12s. 11d.; A. Faiers, 12s. 6d.; C. W. Marshall, 3s.; W.H.D. 7s. 6d.; F. Fawcett, 5s.; M. Bittner, 10s.; H. G. Blewett, 10s.; Well Wisher, £15; A. Alexander, 3s.; Total to date, August 21st, 1959, £270 3s. 11d.

a curiously unsystematic affair containing, for instance, such widely different works as *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and *The Three Musketeers*. Among recent additions are the complete works of the Italian novelist, Alberto Moravia, and the French Existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre; and one very good reason for revising the *Index* is its general ineffectiveness even among Catholics. But we very much doubt whether the Pope will throw off "tradition" sufficiently to abolish the *Index* altogether.

★

TOO OFTEN, people let their minds wander when they are in church, and especially so in Italy, declared the Pope in a sermon at Castelgandolfo on Sunday, August 9th. "In cities the Sunday service is attended by many people," he said, "but in what way? Most of them by looking round for a place, standing up against columns and walls . . ." "Sometimes," he added, "they do not even see the priest at the altar," (*Daily Mail*, 10/8/59). Often, we would suggest, they don't particularly want to see the priest, but an attractive member of the opposite sex. G. W. Foote once referred to Sunday school as the place where Alfred and Angelina meet to read the scriptures and flirt. Alfredo has his Angelina, too, and in lieu of Sunday school, Mass will do.

★

FOR THOSE who liked *The Ten Commandments* (which ran for four weeks at one of our local cinemas last month), Hollywood has now produced *The Big Fisherman*, likewise calculated to bring in the millions. Apart from Howard Keel as Simon Peter, the film offers the beheading of John the Baptist and "stabblings, hurricanes, ambushes, chases, the miracles of Christ, racial conflict between Arabs and Jews, one case of polio and a death by charcoal burner," with "the Sermon on the Mount, delivered by an offstage voice in soft-sell tones." (*Time*, 17/8/59). Nor is the sex-interest lacking. The "temptress" murmurs to Herod, "You thrill my inmost being", and an Arab prince "pursues an ebony-eyed half-breed (Susan Kohner) through the three tasteless hours and 14 minutes (with intermission), only to lose her in the end." All this in "Panavision," colour and stereophonic sound.

★

BUT, BETTER (or worse!) is to follow. After *The Big Fisherman*, the biggest fisherman, who told Peter he would make him and his brother "fishers of men." A new film company, Parliament Pictures, aims to portray the life of Jesus from Annunciation to Ascension at a cost of £10 million. This time, obviously, more than an off-stage voice is required, but the actor playing the principal role will remain anonymous.

★

WE HAVE just learnt, with very great pleasure, that the Polish Association of Atheists and Freethinkers will be participating in the 33rd Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in Brussels from September 4th-8th. Three representatives of the Association are expected, and they will include Mr. Michael Horoszewicz, whose English (to judge from his letters) is perfect. "We are eager to enter at last into full contact with freethinkers from the whole world," he writes. We in turn look forward to meeting our Polish fellow freethinkers, and we hope that it will be the prelude to closer co-operation.

Those "Miracles" of Healing

By H. CUTNER

NOT ONLY Christians but Spiritualists dodge as much as they can all miracles except those of healing. You do not these days get Christians very enthusiastic about—what we may call—the devilish miracle of a real Devil carrying Jesus through the air and putting him on top of the Temple. Even Fundamentalists who swear that every word, nay every comma, in the Authorised Version of the Bible comes straight from God Almighty, shirk the Devil and Hell business which once was so popular with all Christian preachers, just as they cannot stand the beautiful picture of Jesus brimming over with love, telling them that you must hate your father and mother to be his disciple.

So our Spiritualist journals leave out as much as possible such striking miracles as "apports," materialisations, reading letters in a closed leaden box, and many similar marvels, and concentrate on our gifted "healers" who perform incredible feats of healing either through long-departed spirit doctors—who somehow or other keep in touch with the latest modern discoveries in medicine and surgery—or put it all down to "miracles" performed by Jesus Christ through the spirit doctor and thus through the spirit healer. How else can one account for the marvellous cures performed in thousands every day by simple but deeply religious spiritualists?

All such cures are called "unorthodox", and in his *Frontiers of Healing* (Max Parrish, 1958), Mr. Geoffrey Murray devotes nine chapters describing other kinds of "unorthodox" methods of curing the sick—bonesetters and manipulators like Sir Herbert Barker, modern osteopathy, Christian Science, Magic Boxes and Pendulums, and, of course, the extraordinary cures we get at Lourdes. As far as I can see in his very readable book, Mr. Murray has some faith at least in "magic" and the "supernatural." He cannot explain the why and wherefore of the "miracles" of healing he describes so they must be due to one or both of these.

But if we read the detailed accounts of people getting cured by unorthodox means, that is, without the aid of a fully qualified doctor, there is no doubt that cures do take place in a most surprising way. I personally know of genuine cures through the use of extremely minute doses of drugs as prescribed by homeopathic doctors—and just as many failures. I know that herbal medicines which one can buy from humble herbalists based only on their observations over a period of years have cured millions of people for centuries. And there is no doubt that many almost illiterate bonesetters have done and can do things which have defied the best surgeons. The great success of Sir H. Barker is a case in point. Though completely disowned by the General Medical Council during and after World War 1, he was curing by the hundred crippled soldiers given up as hopeless by even the most famous doctors. In all these "unorthodox" methods, cures were constantly recorded; and "magic" or the "supernatural" can be ruled completely out. Even many "old wives' cures" have been known to succeed, as well as "patent medicines" so despised by doctors.

Mr. Murray's chapter on Mrs. Eddy seems to follow the "orthodox" *Life* by Sybil Wilbur. He appears to be quite ignorant of the Georgina Milmine biography which so thoroughly debunked the gracious lady and her ignorant mixture of Mind, Matter, and the Divine. Even if we admit some of the cures claimed by Christian Science, there is nothing marvellous about it because other healing

methods, unorthodox as well as orthodox, could easily show as good a percentage of cures. A great boulevard in Paris is named after F. V. Raspail who ridiculed the medical claims of his day and wrote a "medical" work showing how to cure many ailments with little more than decoctions with camphor as a base, and aloes; and his book was so to speak the "bible" of the French poor in matters of health for over a century. It must have helped to cure millions of French people.

But when Mr. Murray comes to Lourdes, he is literally enthralled with its "miraculous" cures. He lists the names of doctors, all fully qualified, of course, who vouch for Lourdes miracles, and in his "Book List", gives the titles of the book by the Catholic Drs. F. Leuret and H. Bonn on Lourdes and that by Fr. Ravier, S.J. This last is entitled *Lourdes, the Land of the Gospel*, which is enough to vouch for it being "Gospel Truth". The really intriguing part of it all is that in most of the other chapters of his book he rather denigrates the average medical man, no matter what are his qualifications. But not at Lourdes. There, the "miracles" are all vouched for by fully qualified medical men.

All the same, he is obviously puzzled at the way the Virgin treated the celebrated Bernadette who, after the notorious interviews which made Lourdes world-famous, became a nun, and forthwith began to be ill. She "suffered from rheumatism, blood vomiting, caries, and a tumor." She died at 35, almost forgotten and certainly unloved. Why did she not take a dip in the divine spring she claimed came into being at the behest of the Virgin? Mr. Murray hastily dodges this very unpleasant fact, which believers in Lourdes all similarly dodge. Naturally, he mentions some of the cures regarded by the Roman Church as veritable miracles—like that of Louis Bouriette which took place in 1862! In those far-off days, "miracles" were plentiful. Dr. Thérèse Valot tells us in her book *Lourdes* that in 1858 there was one cure for every two hundred pilgrims to the shrine; in 1900, one for 2,000; in 1930, one for 5,000; while in 1949, only one cure for one million pilgrims.

The oft-repeated "miracle" of Bouriette is utterly without any evidence—he was supposed to have lost an eye through an accident and recovered its sight after a dip in the Lourdes spring—and even Catholic doctors these days require some evidence. Mr. Murray accepts any "miracle" as far as I can see, so long as it took place at Lourdes.

Of course, on occasions he tries to produce "evidence". For example he gives us copious details in the case of Jack Traynor who, in World War 1, was a naval reservist. He was badly wounded, and his right arm was paralysed and useless. He was under the famous surgeon Sir F. Treves who failed to cure him, and he received a 100% disability pension when discharged in 1916. He was epileptic and suffered three fits a day. In 1923, he managed to go to Lourdes and everybody thought he would die on the journey. Even a priest with him tried to persuade Traynor not to go. So, of course, he went, and three Liverpool doctors reported that Traynor had epileptic fits on the way to Lourdes. Once there, he insisted on bathing in the grotto spring which he did no fewer than nine times. Suddenly he felt a tremor in his legs and his paralysed arm began to move. The Archbishop of Rheims made the sign of the cross when he asked for a blessing, and later Traynor said "the rosary prayers." Whether it was the bathe in the grotto waters, or the sign of the cross, or the

rosary prayers which cured him in the end is not clear, but Traynor suddenly walked unaided and was completely cured. In fact, he was permanently cured—though, as far as his pension was considered, “the Ministry of Pensions never admitted that.” Nor was the cure “accepted by the Church as miraculous.” But if the detailed evidence given by Mr. Murray (I abridged it) is accepted, the cure is as big a “miracle” as ever occurred at Lourdes. Traynor lived quite normally for twenty years after his cure, and died in 1943 from a hernia.

What does Dr. Valot say in her book *Lourdes* about it? Here are her words:—

Here is what a neuro-psychiatrist, known as much for his professional integrity as for his Catholic opinions, thinks about the Traynor case—“I knew his case personally and the facts have been most strongly exaggerated.” This was quoted by Professor A. Dognon at a meeting of the Faculty of Medicine held under the auspices of the Rationalist Union on March 23rd, 1954.

Now it is true that Mr. Murray gives us “the facts” about Traynor, but we have to accept them as facts without question. We are given many names of doctors, we are told that Traynor was examined by the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, and by Liverpool doctors, and so on, but it is quite impossible to check or test a single one of the “facts”. We do not get a single written or printed authority except a reference to a report of “the Medical Bureau certified on October 2nd, 1926” which I need hardly say ordinary people like myself could not possibly examine. What Mr. Murray says about a hopeless fraud like Mrs. Eddy, or about the “miracles” at Lourdes, he expects us to accept as “facts.”

Unfortunately, comparatively speaking, very few people ever read an adverse criticism of Lourdes and its miracles. That is why its supporters can get away with almost anything in print. The “miracles” of Lourdes are truly as fraudulent as the “miracles” of Jesus Christ. Only the crassest ignorance and credulity can accept either.

Ready to meet God?

By Elizabeth A. Miles

“If you died tonight, would you go to heaven? Are you sure? Are you certain?”

According to Billy Graham, “There will be only one question on that day—what did you do with Jesus?”

God apparently, doesn't care how much liquor you drink—“You don't go to hell for drinking liquor”.

God doesn't mind if you swear—“You don't go to hell for using profanity”.

God, apparently, doesn't mind whether or not you live a good life. Not Billy Graham's God, anyway. You may say, “But, Lord, I lived a good life”. And the Lord will answer, “Depart from Me, ye accursed, I never knew you”.

And all because you didn't accept Jesus as your personal Saviour.

You may cast out demons (if you can). You may attend church regularly. Your life may be exemplary. You may be a teetotaler. Your language may be the language of the Sunday school or the ladies' sewing circle. It won't make a particle of difference. According to Billy Graham (see his leaflet, *Are You Ready to Meet God?*) and the Bible quoted therein, there is going to be a dreadful day of judgment. The wheels of industry will cease to turn, the places of amusement will be empty, the cocktail bars will be vacant. Motor cars will be at a standstill and the beaches will be deserted. And then God will call for the

dead to be brought forth— *All of them.*

From the ocean depths, from graveyards, from battle fields, all those who have gone before us over the centuries. Hottentots, one presumes, and pygmies, and aborigines—brown, black, red, yellow and white and all the in-betweens. And when all are assembled, the *book* will be brought out. Two *books*, if Billy is to be believed. In one will be the names of those who *believed*. In the other will be the names of those who used their common sense—or perhaps just didn't know about Jesus. Although, here the leaflet becomes a little confused, because in quoting from Revelation XX: 11-15 it includes a passage which says, “. . . and they were judged every man according to their works”.

And yet Billy Graham himself assures us a little further on that living a good life will not get us into heaven. Perhaps Billy knows more about it than the Bible prophet. Or perhaps neither of them knows anything about it.

Anyway, according to the Bible and Billy Graham, there is a lake of fire waiting for those with whom God and Billy are displeased.

“But there is no judgment for those who believe God and accept His Son”, (Graham leaflet). Just imagine, all you have to do is believe.

“I'll never be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone”, says Billy. “And no accusing finger will ever be pointed at me because the Lord Jesus Christ has already borne my sins, for God laid upon Him the sins of us all”.

Well, Billy Graham, I'm pointing an accusing finger at you right now. I'm saying that the money that is wasted on your campaigns could go to help feed the hungry of this world. I'm saying that it's time you did an honest job of work. I'm saying “Be a man, Billy Graham, and if you've committed any ‘sins’—and who hasn't?—take the blame and the punishment yourself. Use your common sense. What person in his right mind can believe that Christ could atone, two thousand years ago, for ‘sins’ that are being committed today? And what person with any backbone would want someone else to atone for his sins?”

“And what persons with any knowledge of psychology and the cause of anti-social behaviour would be fobbed off with the notion of ‘sin’ anyway?”

(Reprinted from the *N.Z. Rationalist*)

N.S.S. Executive Committee Meeting

WEDNESDAY, August 5th. Present: F. A. Ridley (Chair), Messrs. Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Ebury, Gordon, Hornbrook, Johnson, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Trask, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Messrs. Alexander, Corina, Manhattan and Plume. Report of Nat. Council for Civil Liberties AGM was before the meeting. The search for premises continued. New members were admitted to North London Branch, making eight in all with Individual members. Dissolution of the Society for the Abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, and transfer of funds, etc., to the Humanist Council was ratified. Mr. Mark Lillingston's report on canvassing in Basildon was well received. Normal subscription and extra £10 towards expenses was voted to the World Union of Freethinkers. Letter from San Juan Branch expressing thanks for attempts to elucidate the Blasphemy Laws position in the West Indies was received with satisfaction.

CONSIDERATE!

THE SECOND [Tent Mission] (arranged by the Baptist Church) was in the town of Chorley. Wet and stormy weather made things very difficult and, in fact, at the end of the first week the tent was struck by lightning. It is a cause for praise to God that this took place on the one night when we had no meetings in the tent. The pole broke in two places and, of course, the roof completely collapsed. —Annual Report, The Evangelization Society, 1959.

CORRESPONDENCE

IN CONTEXT

Re Mrs. E. A. Miles's article, "The Christian Way of Life," the words quoted from St. Luke XIX:27, to wit: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them bring hither, and slay them before me," did not refer to Jesus himself, as Mrs. Miles implies, they refer to the King mentioned in the parable, and were an answer to the citizens' rejection of their King mentioned in verse 14.

Similarly, other texts quoted from the Bible should be read and studied in the light of the context and of parallels both in the same Gospel and in the others.

It is quite easy, but equally unjust, to condemn a person by simply isolating and quoting a few words of his, giving them the sense one wishfully thinks suits his whim. Far from being scientific, such a method is most unfair and does not reflect sense of honour and responsibility.

G. M. PARIS, O.P.,

Editor *The Faith* (Malta, G.C.).

[Jesus's habit of speaking in parables has been both a curse and a blessing to the Christian Churches. Father Paris tries here to make it a blessing—to avoid attributing a terrible saying to Jesus—but it won't do. If he will refer to the Authorised Version, which Mrs. Miles quoted, he will see that the King (or nobleman) is referred to in the third person ("he said"; "he saith," etc), but then, verses 26 and 27 are in the first person. Verse 26 reads: "For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." Silly as it is, this is Jesus speaking, as the parallel passage in Matthew (XIII:12) proves. Verse 27 clearly follows on. Thus, Father Paris's suggested and admirable method shows him to be wrong and Mrs. Miles right.—ED.]

"THE NUN'S STORY"

In your column "This Believing World" for August 7th, you state, apropos "The Nun's Story," that the film "shows how any nice girl can become a nun."

Having just seen this fine film, I venture to state that, so far from showing this, the film demonstrates clearly how difficult it is for any girl to become a nun.

The heroine, a Belgian girl of courage and self-will, completes her time at the convent and is sent as surgery assistant in a European hospital in the Congo. The surgeon there, an unbeliever, rightly detects the marks of the girl's "exhausting inner struggle" (which kind of struggle, incidentally, is admirably shown on the faces of some of the convent inmates), and offers his opinion that she is not "in the right mould" for a nun, for she has not got the two first essentials, blind obedience and humiliation, to a sufficiently high degree.

After a long illness she returns to Belgium for convalescence. The doctor's words have had their effect and have corroborated her own feelings. After her father has been killed during the 1940 German invasion, she renounces her vows to see what use she can be in her occupied country.

ROGER THOMAS.

NOT SO OLD

In your issue dated July 31st, 1959, "Medicate" says: "Originally this picture appeared in *Psychic News* some 40 years ago . . ."

Forty years ago! Does not "Medicate" know that *Psychic News* was not founded until the summer of 1932? Its first Editor, and I believe its founder also, is the present Editor of *Two Worlds*.

J. W. T. ANDERSON.

[Apparently he didn't, but he does now.—ED.]

RELIGION AND CRIME

The determined and praise-worthy efforts of Mr. Colin McCall to obtain authentic figures of the religious beliefs of prison inmates, from the appropriate quarters, has unfortunately met with no success.

The refusal of the prison commission to supply these figures is not only regrettable, but alarming. It is an affront to the electorate and a denial of democracy.

The only conclusions to be drawn from it is that there is something somebody is anxious to hide.

If Mr. H. E. Gurden or any other M.P. makes such public statements which cannot be verified, the question of their fitness as representatives of the people should be brought before their nominators and their local party officials.

In view of the impending Parliamentary Election a copy of the correspondence between the Prison Commission, the Secretary of the N.S.S. and Mr. Gurden ought to be in the home of every voter in the Selly Oak (Birmingham) constituency.

THOS. H. R. JAMES. (Birmingham)

RELIGIOUS NEUROSIS

The article entitled "Freethinking Today," by Dr. G. Brock Chisholm, is one of the most significant and penetrating to have appeared in *THE FREETHINKER* in recent years. The author has pinpointed the feature which all opponents of religion should recognise as the chief obstacle to progress and enlightenment; the paralysing and inhibiting effects of religious neurosis.

This blight on man's life is born of the lie that our natural state, our natural feelings, our natural thoughts and imaginings, etc., are wicked, corrupt and "unholy," therefore deserving of eternal punishment. Nature gives us certain powers and dispositions; our instinct is to accept them and take them for granted. Religion sets up conflicts and complexes and neuroses, by telling us that what seem to us to be natural gifts are, in reality, the "temptations" of hypothetical devils. It is no accident that the great framers of the theological systems, St. Paul, St. Augustine, Luther, etc., have been neurotics, epileptics, and so on.

S. W. BROOKS.

CONSOLATION?

Reading the other day the diary of the intrepid Boer Voortrekker Louis Trichardt, I came across the following passage:

"About 11 o'clock Almighty God called her away—in Him I place my trust. My worthy and adored love had entered into blessedness, of that indeed I felt sure, *but the thought brought me no consolation My dearly beloved is taken from me for ever.*" (Italics mine).

Trichardt was probably the most dauntless of the Voortrekkers penetrating the treacherous wilds of Africa, and subject to constant assaults by sickness, wild animals and savage tribes. He had a strong faith in Christianity and in the Bible as the literal word of God and yet, when put to the test on the death of his wife, we see how he reacted. There must be many good Christians like Trichardt.

ERIC A. McDONALD (South Africa).

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