

# The Freethinker

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IN A RECENT ARTICLE, I mentioned the famous prophecy attributed — in my opinion not very convincingly — to a medieval Irish ecclesiastic, St. Malachi, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland and ecclesiastical monastic reformer. As some curiosity has since been evinced regarding this little-known, but in its way remarkable prediction, I am taking some space to consider it. While I don't put credence in predictions in general, it is possible, given sufficient insight into the present, to predict the course of the future with, at least some appearance of probability, and I think that this "prophecy" — probably forged in Rome towards the end of the 16th century — actually does accomplish this feat to a certain extent.

## Who was St. Malachi?

The titular author of the famous prophecy: *Concerning the Roman Pontiffs from now until the end of time* (as it may be freely translated), was an Irish archbishop and monastic reformer who flourished in the first half of the 12th century and is known to us from a contemporary (and apparently reliable) biography, written by his friend, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, at whose monastery the Irish saint departed this life in the odour of sanctity in 1148. Actually the prophecy has been continuously in print since 1598, when first printed at Rome, and though its list of Popes starts in Malachi's own life time and continues to the end of (simultaneously of course) both the Papacy and the world, it appears more probable that it was actually the work of some Roman ecclesiastical forger towards the end of the 16th century, the era of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Whoever he was, the author appears to have been someone *au fait* with the traditions of the Vatican, and deeply versed in Papal history. In particular, in the ecclesiastical characteristics which mark men out for the highest of all ecclesiastical positions. (This supposition is, I suggest, the only rational alternative to a superstitious acceptance of this often remarkably detailed prediction as a genuine emanation from the supernatural world.) It may be relevantly added that the authorship and authenticity of Malachi do not constitute a dogma in the Roman Catholic Church and, in point of fact, St. Malachi's most recent Catholic biographer (1950) does not accept the Prophecy as a genuine composition of the medieval Irish saint.

## The Prophecy of St. Malachi

The literary form taken by the Prophecy is brief and extremely simple. Every successive Pope from Malachi's own day (12th century) to the end, is described in brief, Latin phrases of not more than two or three words each. As might be expected from a work of such a character, many of these Latin anagrams bear little enough resemblance to the actual Popes who corresponded with their numerical values; while others are, no doubt, presented in purposely vague and general terms. But, in my submission at least, the expert knowledge of the Vatican and of its successive Papal conclaves reveals itself. Quite a number are remarkably accurate; a few almost uncannily so;

e.g. *De Balneis Etruriae* ("He of the Etruscan Baths") the anagram attached to the number actually personified by Gregory XI (1831-46) who founded the Etruscan Museum at the Vatican. Here, of course, the prophecy may have *caused* the event described. But it is certainly difficult to see how this could have been the case with such Popes as Leo XIII (1878-1903) described as *Lumen in caelo* ("Light in the sky") since the arms of the Ricci

family, to which this Pope belonged, represented an emblazoned comet. The appellation *Bos* ("Bull") which figures in the description of the famous (or infamous) Borgia Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) was probably *post eventum* (after the event), since the

forger probably lived after the time of this Pope whose arms were a bull rampant. (In the case of the Popes mentioned previously, both lived long after the prophecy, by whomsoever written, had appeared in print.) Such literary coincidences are of course not entirely unknown even in secular literature; our contemporary *The Humanist*, recently cited a really outstanding prediction made by Dean Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*, in which that brilliant satire on the science of his day, made a remarkably accurate forecast of the actual size and motions of the two satellites of Mars, Deimos and Phobos, which were not discovered until 150 years later, in 1877. No doubt Malachi — or rather his impersonator — was favoured by similar luck on occasions. But, we must repeat, the whole Prophecy could only have been written by a person deeply versed both in Papal history and, in particular, in the psychology of Papal conclaves.

## The last five Popes

Malachi was obviously a pessimist. According to the Prophecy, there are to be only five more Popes after Roncalli, and then comes the tersely described end. John XXIII was, incidentally, one of the author's "successes"; his anagram runs: *Pastor et Nauta* ("priest and sailor"). Roncalli came from Venice where most travel is in gondolas. (Some prophets of last year's Papal Election who knew their Malachi had predicted the surprise Election of a *foreign* Cardinal, the first since 1523 from across the sea. Prophecy, it will be seen, is a dangerous business, and one apt to mislead!) Contrarily, Malachi's anagram about Eugenio Pacelli, Pius XII, *Pastor Angelicus*, appears a singularly inappropriate description of that astute politician, and appears to be one of Malachi's less fortunate guesses. For the information of our younger readers, who may hope to survive their future reigns, the remaining five Popes still to come are, respectively: *Flos Florum* ("Flower of Flowers"); *De Medietate Lunae* ("under the orbit of the moon"); *De Labore Solis* ("under the motion of the sun"); and *Gloria Olivae*, ("the glory of the olive"). The last Pope of all, who concludes both the Papacy and the world, gets 27 words, as against the maximum of four for any of his predecessors, from Celestine II (12th century). Malachi's contemporary onwards.

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## Will the Papacy End Next Century?

By F. A. RIDLEY

### The end of the Papacy

Malachi (or whoever the author was) ends his Prophecy with this terrifying sentence: "Then in the dire persecution of the Holy Roman Church will Peter II, a Roman, feed his sheep amid multitudinous tribulations, during the course of which, the city on the seven hills will be destroyed, and the terrible judge will summon his people to

the Last Assize." One prosaic comment alone must be added by way of an anti-climax to this conclusion. Taking the average reign of recent Popes as about 11 years, the holy prophet leads us to expect the end of the Papacy (and the world) somewhere around 2020 A.D. On non-theological grounds, as I have indicated elsewhere, Malachi may well have scored another hit on his prophetic target.

## Back to the Bible

By A. D. HOWELL SMITH

MR. CUTNER SEEMS UNABLE to engage in controversy without being rude. To say that I have always been on "the side of the angels" is just silly pique. Nobody is, in his eyes, a Freethinker who does not find myth where he finds it or believes that the Gospel legend grew up about a Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate. He has built up an orthodoxy of his own and all dissentients fall under his anathema. My work for Rationalism is well known.

I cited in full the passage from Irenaeus' treatise *Against Heretics*, which gives "the Gospel" (obviously that "according to John") and "the Elders" as testimony that Jesus was nearly 50 when he died. Unless the crucifixion of a man of that age was impossible, or at least most improbable, what Irenaeus says does not rule out the Crucifixion. Even if Jesus died at 50, he could still have been born under Herod the Great and have suffered under Pontius Pilate, if we follow the dates given by Josephus.

Confronted with the fact that Irenaeus accepts the Four Gospels and Paul's Epistle to the Galatians as authoritative, and in these works the Crucifixion is regarded as historical and of great theological importance, Mr. Cutner now dismisses the treatise *Against Heretics* as an impudent forgery. But that theory will not save his illogical interpretation of the passage under dispute nor show its compatibility with the rest of the work attributed to Irenaeus.

Mr. Cutner's only grounds for disbelieving in the reality of Irenaeus and his literary activities is that there is no mention "in contemporary sources" of a Bishop of Lyons about the year 180 A.D. Only in Christian documents should he expect to find such a mention. Will Mr. Cutner give the names of contemporary Christian historians who should have given the information? Hegesippus is too early, and we have only fragments of his work. Tertullian (early 3rd century) knew the treatise ascribed to Irenaeus.

Mr. Cutner refers to Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) as never mentioning the Gospels. Justin's *Memoirs of the Apostles* covered practically the same ground as our Four and included the story of the Passion.

In my critique of Mr. Cutner's article "Records in Clay" I gave my private opinion that Abram may have been a historical figure, perhaps a fusion of two, in mythical contexts. Mr. Cutner sneers and plays the fool. He is sure that I believe "all the Bible heroes" are historical and fused of two figures!! Two figures have evolved into dozens!! Really, Mr. Cutner!

I am afraid I find something worse than bad temper here. Mr. Cutner *knows* that I do not believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve and the other antediluvians; that I said that the sons of Jacob were not men, but tribes.

Mr. Cutner's dabblings in philology are a scream. To equate the Hebrew "Terah" with the Latin "Terra" is palpably absurd. No Hebrew writers earlier than the author of the First Book of Maccabees (1st century B.C.) betray any knowledge of the Romans, and Latin words are most unlikely to have entered the Book of Genesis. The Greek "Rhea" does not mean a "Star."

Paul's allegory of Hagar and other figures in the Abra-

ham saga does not prove that for him they were unhistorical. Philo of Alexandria, an orthodox Jew for all his interest in Plato, allegorised all the Genesis stories of the Patriarchs, but he believed that they and their wives had really lived. St. Augustine taught that events and persons in the Bible were both historical and allegorical. Medieval exegesis went along the same lines.

Mr. Cutner's views on Hebrew would rouse the contempt of all Hebraists of world repute. What Prof. Canney actually said to him I do not know. But if he agreed with Mr. Cutner's theory, why did he not publish his views?

If Hebrew was an esoteric tongue, invented by cunning priests, then only priests were meant to understand it. But the Old Testament abounds in narrative, poetry, proverbs, and other literary media, clearly meant to be read by all who could read. The language of the Old Testament is identical with that of the Geger calendar, the Samaritan and other ostraka, seals found at Megiddo and elsewhere in Palestine, the Siloan inscription, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. None of these are esoteric documents.

No archaeologist today, so far as I am aware, denies that the Moabite Stone (now called the "Mesha Stone") dates from the 9th century, B.C. Even if we date it six centuries later, that does not affect the argument that the language differs from Hebrew only as one English dialect differs from another. If mystery-mongering priests concocted Hebrew out of Moabite, they must have been very straitened in their wits. The script of the Mesha Stone is identical with that of the Siloam inscription, a little over a century later.

[Mr. Cutner writes: Mr. Howell Smith again raises many points, some of which I have dealt with over and over again, and others each of which would require a separate article. I shall do my best to reply from time to time to those points of particular interest to Freethinkers.]

### BISHOP'S BROADCAST

"People of all denominations or none" — wrote a Mrs. Frances Edwards of Brighton in a letter to a national daily — "are disgusted that a Bishop of the Church of England should publicly sponsor so-called 'family planning'." Note the all-inclusive style of writing. We might equally say "People of all denominations or none are delighted" etc. It would be just as valid. What Mrs. Edwards means is simply that *she* is disgusted, but to write that would be nothing like so impressive — to the uncritical reader, at any rate. However, what we should like to ask Mrs. Edwards, and those of all denominations or none who share her disgust, is, did they hear the Bishop of Southwark? If not, they should write to the Family Planning Association, 1 Great Cumberland Place, London, W.1, for the text of his radio appeal. If they are still disgusted after reading it, nothing can be done for them. Here is a relevant quotation from the broadcast: "There are differences of opinion and conscience about the methods which may be used to plan the family and control its birth-rate. The Association fully appreciates that and is most careful to respect the feelings of those who come for advice."

# The International Congress of Freethinkers

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER  
(President of the World Union of Freethinkers)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1959.—Although the Committeemen and the representatives of the affiliated societies had been busy from 9 a.m., the full Congress did not open till the evening when the Belgian Federation received the Congress with a "vin d'honneur." This hospitable beginning having been duly discussed, then Congress adjourned to the new Grand Auditoire (Great Hall) of the University, a superb building seating, if need be, 2,000, but for our purposes reduced in size by a mobile screen. The Rector, Dr. Henri Janne, philosopher and sociologist, welcomed the Congress to the University, saying that the University of Free Enquiry was happy to receive in its halls a Congress devoted to the quest of authentic truths, scientifically verifiable. Modern psychology, he went on, warns us to distinguish between reasoning and rationalisation; people commonly act according to their judgment as if these judgments were reasoned conclusions, whereas they are no more than beliefs with little investigated foundation. Nevertheless, such judgments serve to unite groups. Unless the judgments are to some degree sound the group will disappear. The duty of Freethinking is to extract the verifiable truth from the unsound trappings in which they may be wrapped. The Social Contract, as the sociologist sees it, is that he who denies any factor of the beliefs uniting a group by this quits the group. It is important that such dissent should be free. Hence Dr. Janne repudiated any claim to impose on the individual any form of belief, religious, political or social. The Free University of Brussels, established in 1834 has long maintained a struggle with the Roman Catholic Church, in the course of which it has at times developed a fierce anti-clericalism. It must be recognised that today the weapons of the 19th century are not so effective against the Church of the 20th century. Yet, although (I must state my personal belief, said Dr. Janne) religion does not in its essence include mystification and desire for social dominance, these evils must be fought without truce wherever they appear. The Freethinker's aim must be to clear as best he can his own mind of all the prejudices and preconceived ideas derived from his social situation. In certain domains he may find friends among progressive Christians and enemies on his left, as well as the old adversaries on his right. He must, as Spartacus of old, first break his own fetters that he may better help to break those of his fellows.

Our old friend Arnold Boulanger, now 85 years old and far from well, though still President of the Belgian Federation and present at the Congress, had requested M. Paul Braun, President of the Brussels society, to welcome the Congress on behalf of the Belgian Federation, hosts to the Congress; which he did effectively. The President then opened the Congress, welcoming all, in particular those from afar, from New Zealand, from Uruguay, and from Canada, as well as those who were newcomers; he next regretted the losses the movement had suffered by death, particularly: in Belgium, Joseph Merlot, former Minister of State, and Max Busset; in France, Joliot-Curie, Paul Rivet (French President of the 1957 Congress, director of the Musée de l'Homme), P. L. Couchoud, Roger Martin du Gard, Dr. Reverzy, Dr. Thérèse Valot and Emile Kahn; in Italy, Giulio Doria; and in Australia, H. Scott Bennett. The aim of the Congress, said the President, was threefold: to commemorate the birth and assassination of Francisco Ferrer, martyred for his efforts to emancipate the children of Spain; to study the situation in the schools today as

making for free and independent thinking; and lastly to learn from the lips of distinguished scientists to what extent humanity had been emancipated by scientific progress.

The first speaker was the granddaughter of Ferrer, Dr. Olga Ferrer, teacher of Spanish at the University of Buffalo, U.S.A., who analysed Ferrer's guiding principles. In the first decade of this century, scientific developments were still relatively slow, the penetration of ideas equally so, and the solidarity of the whole human race did not yet seem of importance; the political outlook was still dominated by that of a Liberal State based on the principles of the French Revolution and not overshadowed by systems of an all-powerful State. Ferrer had some pre-sentiment of these problems and met them in his own way in the peculiar circumstances then reigning in Spain. It must be borne in mind that the Escuela Moderna of Barcelona was closed in 1906 and Ferrer, after a simulacrum of justice, was murdered in 1909, since when, in all Spanish educational centres, free enquiry has been extinguished. Ferrer's ideals were grounded on those of the philosophers of the 18th century and of the French Revolution of 1789; absorbed in his youth and crystallised during his 15 years in Paris. He held that to live a full life one should not be forgetful of the past, but should work for the future. Attracted by the philosophy of anarchism, he worked for a reduction of state interference and an increase in individual autonomy. The first and most important need was to raise the Spanish people from its profound ignorance; to teach the young to appreciate the beautiful, to love justice and to seek the verifiable truth. Among the unpublished works of Ferrer found recently by his daughter, Mme. Sol Ferrer, in the family home in Catalonia, is an outline of Principles of Rationalist Ethics which he composed while in prison in 1906-7. In this he foresees the destruction of the contemporaneous social state through the rapid development of scientific knowledge, bringing about a largely materialist outlook which would govern throughout the world all human relations. Rationalist Ethics must be based on a belief in the unity of the human race and must be opposed to all religious and political dogma which may produce schism; such a moral system must purge the human mind of all the poisons it has inherited from the past. In this alone lies the hope of a united world.

The second speaker "HemDay" warned his hearers against a too facile belief that today there may be greater liberty than when Ferrer was imprisoned and murdered; he then analysed Ferrer's thinking from an anarchist point of view, claiming that he was of the same school as Proudhon, Godwin, Bakunin, Kropotkin and Reclus, with a belief that schools were a better mode of transforming society than were barricades and bombs.

Vice-President Lorulot, the third speaker, was one of the few — perhaps the only one — present who had known Ferrer personally; he recalled with emotion the day of 1909 when it was learned that Ferrer had been arrested and the shock of his death.

(To be continued)

—NEXT WEEK—  
**MITHRAISM**  
 By J. M. LARKMAN  
 (Convenor: The Society of Mithra)

## This Believing World

**That one-time infidel smasher**, Dr. Donald Soper, who every now and then makes mincemeat of the elementary questions hurled at him on his "soap-box" appearances for ITV was the cause of a church leader and two parsons being fined (or sent to prison) for "disorderly behaviour." At an open-air meeting at Ballymena, Co. Antrim, when Dr. Soper was dealing with interruptors at his address, a Bible was thrown on to the platform, and everything that Dr. Soper tried to say was drowned by the interruptions of one of the parsons, Dr. Ian Paisley and his supporters — all, we gather, of true Presbyterian blood.

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**It is obvious that even** Dr. Soper's mildest of mild "heresies" were too much for the Presbyterians who are generally Fundamentalists of the deepest dye. In fact, Dr. Paisley "believes" Dr. Soper to be "a hypocrite preaching a false doctrine," and also of being "a Communist." On the other hand, one of the magistrates, Mr. John Fox, insisted on the right of free speech, "however controversial or provocative" the speech might be; and "freedom was denied to Dr. Soper." In other words, we wonder what is the exact difference between Roman Catholicism and Calvinism — which loathe one another — when it comes to "free speech."

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**It is a tragedy according to** Mgr. R. L. Smith that people listen "with more respect" to psychologists than to preachers, especially when, he insisted, the same conclusions were reached long ago by theologians, and particularly by "that supreme practical psychologist, the mother of the large family." It is always amusing to note how these celibate priests champion large families, especially when bringing the children up, and providing for them, and attending to them from infancy to adolescence, is none of their business.

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**But "large families" were — more or less —** the subject of Dr. L. Harrison Matthews, President of the Zoology section of the British Association at York recently; and what he said attracted world-wide publicity. He considered the growth of population in the world was the greatest problem facing mankind, and was unable to understand "that there are bishops willing to bless battleships, bomber aeroplanes, or troops before battle, but consider it wrong to avoid procreating them to endure such horrors."

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**Dr. Matthews considered that if** the present rate of world population increase lasted a thousand years there would be room only for one man to stand on each yard of the available land in the world. This was challenged later by a TV speaker who proved, with the aid of mathematics, that the number would be *one hundred* on every square yard of earth. And we cannot help wondering where in this scheme of things God Almighty came in. Perhaps when a cheap, efficient birth control method is evolved, it will be discovered that after all it was anticipated by "our Lord," thus making Jesus the greatest family-planner the world has ever seen.

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**A talk between a Jew and a Christian** was a recent ITV contribution to its "About Religion" programme; and the Rev. I. Levy was allowed to produce part of the Jewish ritual from a synagogue and from his home for the benefit of Sir John Wolfenden and Christian viewers. But the really interesting thing was that Sir John quoted two famous sayings of Jesus innocently believing that both were "unique" teachings of "our Lord" — and Mr. Levy had no difficulty in showing that they were actually passages

from the Pentateuch. One was "Love thy neighbour as thyself," which is almost always claimed as coming *only* from Jesus.

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**In his opening remarks**, Sir John mentioned that Jesus preached in Jewish synagogues — and, of course, the rabbi skilfully avoided any discussion about this. The fact is that there is *no evidence whatever* that Jesus "preached" anywhere, let alone in Jewish synagogues. If there really was a Jesus, most Jews are convinced that he was "illegitimate," and Mr. Levy must have remembered Deuteronomy 23,2. It would have been most impolite to have referred to this passage in God's Sacred Word.

## Parliamentary Candidates and Religion in Schools

*Suggestions for questions to candidates in the General Election prepared by the Secular Education League.*

THE CANDIDATE should be asked whether he is in favour of secular education in state schools, that is, the exclusion of religious instruction and religious worship from the schools, as in the United States. He will almost certainly reply that the Education Act of 1944 made undenominational religious instruction and worship compulsory in British state schools, and that this national policy is not contested by any party.

He should then be asked if he is aware that this has placed a burden on the teachers which many find not only irksome and unfair to themselves but also educationally detrimental. He is likely to say he is not aware of this, and what justification is there for saying it is the case.

The answer to this should include the following points: —

- (i) Religious Instruction is treated as an ordinary school subject whereas it is not, which is dishonest and educationally perverse.
- (ii) Although teachers who object to taking Religious Instruction because of their beliefs may legally be excused, it is unfair to force them to take action which may be to the prejudice of their career.
- (iii) In a similar way, although the beliefs of parents are safeguarded, it is unfair to make them bring these discriminations into the school-life of their children in order to maintain their beliefs.
- (iv) Religious Instruction stands in the way of simple direct treatment on a common basis of moral and civic principles and questions.
- (v) The school is the place for common citizenship and universal knowledge; disputable views should be taught at home and in sectarian Sunday schools.

*N.B.*—The Education Act of 1944 requires: —

- (i) that each school day shall start with an Act of Worship;
- (ii) that one period a week shall be given to religious instruction on a syllabus agreed by a local committee representing the Protestant Christian denominations, the teachers, and the Local Education Authority.
- (iii) The Act provides that a child may be withdrawn from both worship and Religious Instruction at the request of parent or guardian; and that a teacher is entitled to exemption from attendance at worship and from giving Religious Instruction on grounds of conscience.

Secularists who attend meetings and put such questions are asked to send brief reports of the candidates' attitude and of any discussion to the Secular Education League, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8.

# 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: Messrs. CRONAN and MURRAY.

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, September 27th, 6.45 p.m., A Lecture.

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, October 6th, 7.15 p.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, "Politeness: Its Varieties and Functions".

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, October 4th, 6.30 p.m., Tea followed by Concert given by the Leicester Accordion Club.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, October 4th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "The Advancement of Science—Whither?"

## Notes and News

COLIN FRAME (*The Star*, 22/8/59) had a few plain words to say about taking the oath, which he considers "about as archaic and useful as the tail of an embryo child." It is a simple matter of mathematics, he said, "to show that on average every day in some court or other a thousand people swear by Almighty God to tell-the-truth-the-whole-truth-and-nothing-but-the-truth and then proceed to tell lies." We don't believe a man because he swears by God or because he crosses his heart and hopes to die, he continued: "You believe him because, as he talks, you test his words and his personality by your experience. So why bring the Bible into it?" Precisely. And Mr. Frame quoted eight-year-old Alan Robinson who, when asked in a Huddersfield court if he knew what taking the oath meant, replied: "Yes. It means that when you take the oath and you don't tell the truth everyone will believe you."

RE-READING *Elmer Gantry* recently, we were again struck by Sinclair Lewis's delightful descriptions of religious

types. Best of all perhaps, Eddie Fislinger. "Whatever difficulties he may have had with philosophy, Latin, and calculus, there had never been a time since the age of twelve when Eddie Fislinger had had difficulty in understanding what the Lord God Almighty wanted, and why, all through history, he had acted thus or thus." We meet Eddies every time we speak on the National Secular Society platform and we often think of reading that description to them but they wouldn't appreciate it.

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THE NATAL DAILY NEWS (31/7/59) reports that the South African Government Department of Bantu Education will distribute about 35,000 Bantu Bibles among school children next year, as a result of an agreement with the British and Foreign Bible Society. "Bantu," it seems, is the Nationalist Government's term for all African black-skinned peoples, and the Bibles are to be in seven languages. It will cost the Bible Society an additional £12,000, but it should be worth it to them: the Bible is to be one of the prescribed books of the Bantu schools.

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A LETTER TO *The Times Educational Supplement* (28/8/59) by Constance M. Savage of Kingston-on-Thames (not, we trust, a teacher!) really needs to be read to be believed. Some of us believe, it says, "that it is the teaching in our schools and colleges of Darwin's 'transformist' hypothesis *as fact*, that puts our children on the wrong road" because it is (and this is the only sensible bit of the letter) "impossible to believe Darwin and the Bible." Miss or Mrs. Savage, like most fundamentalist "critics," has apparently read no evolutionist works of this century, and we beg leave to doubt whether she has even read *The Origin of Species*. (Darwin nowhere suggested that "might is right," for example.) But she knows that "there are many scientific objections to his fantastic theory," though, "melancholy fact," the children are "never told these."

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WRITING RECENTLY IN THE "*Daily Mail*" (9/9/59) on "the teenage terror which has gripped the city [of New York] for the past month and a half," Mr. Don Iddon rightly drew attention to economic, social and psychological factors contributing to it. The Puerto Rican section "is a blighted area of rotting tenements, shacks, and cold-water flats. They live five and six in a room and their children are brought up in violence. The Puerto Ricans are looked down on as lower than the coloured by whites and the coloureds themselves. They are regarded as scum and are often treated as scum. No wonder they and their children have taken to crime." Giving other people's reasons for the outbreak of violence, Mr. Iddon wrote: "The Church says the parents and the children have turned away from God." Actually, he commented, "Puerto Ricans are often fervent Roman Catholics."

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MR. J. MORRISON OF FORT WILLIAM resurrected the old "city made by man: country made by God" argument in a letter to the *Daily Record* (1/9/59) and he advised "all atheists and agnostics to spend at least a year in the country." He guaranteed it would change their views. Poor Mr. Morrison and his naive, outdated Wordsworthianism! Aldous Huxley once remarked that a short time in the New Guinea jungle would have shaken the Lake poet, and we might say the same to Mr. Morrison. Instead we will point out that the countryside as we know it, and love it, is very much man made. Man has been cultivating, planting hedges and trees, in short, adapting, and *improving* the countryside for ages.

# A Problem Unsolved

by COLIN McCALL

ALTHOUGH IT WAS first published in 1940 and has been available in the paperback Fontana Books for two years, I had never read Dr. C. S. Lewis's *The Problem of Pain* until it was sent to me by a Welsh reader, Mr. C. S. Denning, with a request that I should deal with it in THE FREETHINKER. I am grateful to Mr. Denning, though reading the book has confirmed the impression I had of its low intellectual merit. How *The Spectator* came to consider it "A really remarkable book" and *The Manchester Guardian* was able to praise it "unreservedly," I don't know. They must certainly have given it to Christian reviewers, and pretty credulous ones at that. I am aware that it is something of a best seller, but that is not necessarily a criterion of worth. It does, to some extent however, justify my belated criticism of it here.

Part of Dr. Lewis's attraction for the Christian is undoubtedly his claim to have been once an atheist: a vague, apparently entirely unverifiable claim which, in *The Problem of Pain* seems to be deliberately misleading. "Not many years ago when I was an atheist . . .," he begins his introductory chapter in 1940. How many years, we are not told. Nor is his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (written in 1955 to tell how he "passed from Atheism to Christianity") notable for chronological precision. But he does tell us that he was born in 1898 (in Belfast); that in religion his father was rather "high"; that his own "slow apostasy" occurred between 1911 and 1913; and that, in the Trinity Term of 1929 he "gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed." We know, then, that Dr. Lewis ceased to be a Christian between the ages of 13 and 15, and that he prayed at the age of 31. But it isn't quite as simple as that. He had been "compelled to give up realism" (which I take to be a synonym for atheism in this context) at least seven years earlier. So Dr. Lewis's atheism, such as it was, covered no more than the ages 13 to 24, and "Not many years" therefore means eighteen or more.

Now, back from *Joy to Pain*. Dr. Lewis, of course, doesn't solve the problem of pain: no Christian can. What he does is, present us once again with a mixture of arguments, from reason to revelation, none of which is convincing and much of which is quite preposterous. Creatures are not "separate from their Creator," he says. "The place for which He designs them in His scheme of things is the place they are made for." Yet, because "Man was appointed by God to have dominion over the beasts . . . The tame animal is therefore, in the deepest sense, the only 'natural' animal—the only one we see occupying the place it was made to occupy . . ." On this argument, all the animals that lived before the evolution of *Homo sapiens* were "unnatural"—"in the deepest sense," that is, while today, the only "natural" tigers must be those in circus rings—and presumably these cease to be so if they hurt anybody. This is clearly ridiculous, but it is a ruse whereby Dr. Lewis avoids a great part of the problem of pain—that caused by predatoriness.

It is, unfortunately, not the only ruse employed by Dr. Lewis. Another is to play down the suffering of animals by calling it "speculative," and by asking us to "distinguish sentience from consciousness." The suffering of the higher animals is not speculative; it is a valid, indeed unavoidable, inference from a knowledge of their anatomy and their behaviour. We cannot, of course, know at first hand that a dog suffers pain, but then we cannot know at

first hand that another human being suffers pain, either. We relate the behaviour of others to our own experience and, in the case of dogs and men, the physiologist confirms our conclusions that both suffer pain in a broadly similar mammalian way. Dr. Lewis's attempt to associate pain with "consciousness" rather than with "sentience" is invalid. It is through sentience that we experience pain. An animal may not say to itself—or to us—"I am in pain," but the higher ones feel pain. That is the crucial fact; it is not, as Dr. Lewis tries to say, merely that "Pain is taking place in this animal." The animal is feeling it; pain is a sensation.

Where man is concerned, Dr. Lewis cannot, of course, deny suffering. He has therefore to try to show, either that God is not responsible for this, or that it is good for us. Like a lot of Christian apologists, Dr. Lewis tries to do both at various times, and the result is disastrous. It seems to him "a reasonable supposition, that some mighty created power had already been at work for ill on the material universe . . . before ever man came on the scene." But this doesn't solve anything connected with the problem of evil. The "mighty created power" was presumably created by God, in which case God is ultimately responsible; and, in any case, a "mighty created power" is inferior to God, the Almighty Creator.

This ultimate responsibility of God is the inevitable consequence of Dr. Lewis's belief, but it is the one thing he, in common with other Christians, cannot admit. If "we are members of a spoiled species," are "vermin," as he suggests, God must have designed us for that role; it must be, in the words quoted earlier, our place "in His scheme of things," the place we "are made for." "Free-will" doesn't relieve God of responsibility, and, when Dr. Lewis refers to "the 'weak spot' in the very nature of creation" he is really admitting this: he is indicting his God. But he regards it as a "risk which God apparently thinks worth taking." So, we have Omnipotence taking a risk! "God wills our good," says Dr. Lewis on another occasion; yet "Christ takes it for granted that men are bad." God having designed us, it follows that He must have designed us contrary to His own will.

Elsewhere, we read the old story that pity is dependent upon suffering, that "suffering naturally produces in the spectators (unless they are unusually depraved) no bad effect, but a good one—pity." But it isn't the spectators who concern us, it is the victims. It is no argument in favour of a child being born blind, deaf, dumb or crippled, that the child's infirmity evokes pity in us. This is shifting the question: it is the problem of pain that is before us, not that of pity.

It should be said in Dr. Lewis's favour, that he would like to remove the doctrine of Hell from Christianity but, as "it has the full support of Scripture and, especially, of Our Lord's own words," he has to retain it. Moreover, he thinks it has "the support of reason." But this alleged reasonableness is most unfortunately expressed in the form: "If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it." A game; playing and losing—and going to Hell! This is an ill-chosen metaphor for a doctrine he tells us he detests from the bottom of his heart.

To Dr. Lewis's discredit must go misleading statements like the one on page 74 that, "We have recently been told by the scientists . . ." when he means, in fact, one scientist, the late Sir James Jeans in *The Mysterious Universe*. I

can't regard this as a mere slip of the pen; Dr. Lewis knows better than that and, anyway, he had seventeen years to correct it before my paperback edition appeared.

What always surprises me (it shouldn't, I know, but it always does) is the Christian's peculiar attitude to morality. This is exemplified early in *The Problem of Pain*, where it is suggested that morality "may be madness—a madness congenital to man and oddly fortunate in its results—or it may be revelation." This, I repeat, is a peculiar attitude. Morals have evolved, as it were, by natural selection; decent behaviour is not madness, nor "oddly fortunate," it is essential for the continuance of human life and society. But Dr. Lewis is fond of extremes; indeed he thinks in extremes, like many Christians. Thus, Jesus was either "a raving lunatic of an unusually abominable type, or else He was, and is, precisely what He said. There is no middle way." Who says not? I can think of other alternatives, but it wouldn't suit Dr. Lewis's purpose to consider them: it would complicate matters; introduce greys when the author wants to view the world in terms of black and white only.

A fondness for "jumps" also characterises Dr. Lewis. "When man passes from physical fear to dread and awe, he makes a sheer jump," and "Morality like numinous awe, is a jump." Dr. Lewis, in short, is a typical Christian apologist: imprecise and inexact at best; at other times illogical and even contradictory; at worst dangerously near insincerity, as I think I have shown. Here is another passage that worries me: "We can, perhaps, conceive of a world in which God corrected the results of this abuse of free-will by His creatures at every moment; so that a wooden beam became as soft as grass when it was used as a weapon, and the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults." I can't take that seriously, and I'm not sure that Dr. Lewis means me to. Do I really have to tell him to go one stage further and "conceive" human beings created so that they never attempt to use a beam as a weapon; never tell lies or hurl insults?

A musical simile is likewise disturbing. "If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship," writes Dr. Lewis, "the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note." This is unbelievably naive. At present the various (Christian) instrumentalists haven't even got the same music.

I am doubtful, too, whether Dr. Lewis is quite as modest as he insists he is. But let me finish with one of his doubts. He doubts, he says, "whether it would have been intrinsically possible for God to continue to rule the organism through the human spirit when the human spirit was in revolt against Him. At any rate He did not" (italics in original). Nevertheless, "if you will let God have His good way" (i.e. if you will let Omnipotence have its way!) you will certainly go to Heaven, and your place there "will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it—made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand."

With that, it is appropriate to leave Dr. C. S. Lewis and his Almighty Glover.

**OBITUARY**

JOHN LESLIE, who has died at the age of 68, was a firm Freethinker and Socialist, holding a Branch Secretaryship of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers for many years. At his request, a secular service was conducted by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society at West London Crematorium on September 18th. We extend our sympathy to Mr. Leslie's sons and daughter.

**Impious Youth**

THE AMERICAN ROMAN CATHOLIC MAGAZINE *Commonweal* (4/9/59) reports on an opinion poll recently carried out on the religious views of French youth, by the Institute of Public Opinion at the request of the R.C. weekly *La Vie Catholique Illustrée*.

Thirty-five hundred replied to the questionnaire. Of these, 96% practised religion in childhood, the distribution being 1% Jews, 4% Protestants and 91% Roman Catholics. About 80% of the latter had made their First Holy Communion. At present 76% said they were Catholics, 6% of other faiths and 18% of no religion.

"The ancient country," comments the author, M. Barrat, "remains quite skeptical and Voltairean. The attitude that religion is something for children, women and old men still persists. In many families, the questionnaire disclosed, the First Holy Communion is the moment at which most children definitely abandon the practice of religion."

Of the 76% who claimed to be Catholics, only 34% regularly or occasionally go to church. In the Paris region, 19% of the young people are "practising" Catholics, 19% are "resolutely atheistic," and the remainder indifferent. In small villages, 10% claim to be atheists while 40% practise. But there is a definite shift of population from the country to the cities, which will tend to aggravate the Church's problem.

The author finds "a certain saving lack of logic" in the replies. Although two-thirds of them have abandoned all practice of religion, seven out of eight say that they have married or will marry in church, while three-quarters of them are giving or will give their children a religious "education."

Only 14% are conscious of any opposition between science and religion, but this is because "basic theoretical problems leave these young people cold. Only the technical and utilitarian applications of science hold their attention."

Furthermore, their attitude is secularist — "attachment to material realities and concern for the problems of getting along and finding one's place in life predominate."

Their beliefs are "vague and undeveloped"; 62% believe in Christ as the Son of God, 55% in survival after death, 51% in the Trinity, 49% in Original Sin, 38% in Heaven, Hell and Purgatory and 32% in the resurrection of the body. Among "practising" Catholics, only half believe in the existence of heaven.

"Given such answers," says M. Barrat, "one is forced to wonder how much Catholicism remains." The irreverent rationalist would be inclined to say "none!" and suggest that such a bankrupt Church should go into voluntary liquidation, and leave her "Eldest Daughter" in peace. No such act of mercy is likely.

D. J.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

## FATHER PARIS AGAIN

In reply to your editorial note on my correspondence (8/8/59), I beg to state that verses 26 and 27 (Luke XIX) are the *conclusion* of the parable, and as such they form an essential, integral part of the parable and should not, therefore, be referred to Jesus himself though they are in the first person.

Commentators (Authorised Version) say verse 27 expresses God's vengeance against his enemies in the Last Judgment, of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a symbol.

Jesus's mind may be explained through Matthew XI,29: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall have rest unto your souls." Matthew IX,13: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Matthew XXVI,52: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." See also Matthew XXVI,28. As to Matthew X,34: "I came not to send peace, but a sword," this and similar passages should be taken in the spiritual sense, as the Fathers of the Church have always understood. St. Luke XXII, 49: "... Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his (Malco's) ear, and healed him." Jesus declared He did not come to judge the world but to save it. There is nothing wrong against Jesus in Matt.XIII:12.

G. M. PARIS, O.P., Editor, *The Faith* (Malta, G.C.)

[Unable to explain the change from third person to first in verses 26 and 27, Father Paris yet tries to attribute the words "But those mine enemies," etc. (verse 27) to the nobleman and not to Jesus. He surrenders his case, though, when he adds that this verse "expresses God's vengeance against his enemies at the Last Judgment." Precisely; Jesus is stating the point of the parable: that his (and God's) enemies will be slain before him. For the rest, Father Paris is indulging in the selective quoting and special interpreting that he deplors in others.]

## NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS

The New Zealand Parliament is soon to debate the question of religious indoctrination ("instruction" the clergy call it) in schools. I think it will be a sorry day for New Zealand if Parliament decides to make religious instruction compulsory. At present our educational system is supposed to be secular, but the clergy manage to sneak in, through a loophole in the law.

In my opinion, the Christian clergy have added two commandments to the ten that they claimed from the Jews; they are:—

11. Thou shalt not think.

12. Thou shalt not attack Vested Interests.

Our Governor-General, addressing a gathering of clergy a few weeks ago said: "A few tuppenny-ha'penny scientists tell us there is no God but the vast majority of scientists realise that scientific truth is its religious truth."

P. G. BAMFORD (New Zealand)

## WAGNER

Without wishing to take up any position in the great Wagner Schism I would like to ask Geoffrey Ford whether physical size is to be regarded as an absolute criterion of artistic merit. Did the technical resources squandered by the late Cecil B. De Mille on his Biblical "epics" ensure their place in any serious appraisal of the cinematic art? I think not, and possibly Mr. Ford would agree on the answer there. De Mille was a small-souled man (I use the word "souled" purely for semantic convenience) obsessed with the very bigness of magnitude. His dinosaur works can only be discussed at all in a religious context, and not in any zone of comparison with Eisenstein, Clair, Kursawa or Huston.

If Mr. Ford can get hold of a copy of Cecil Gray's *Peter Warlock* he will find, in the introductory chapter, quite another opinion on the importance of size in art. He may not accept all its propositions, but I do hope it will lead him to a less absolute appraisal of this question.

C. A. WILLIAMS.

P.S. I have a tatty old copy of "Peter Warlock" which I will gladly put at Mr. Ford's disposal.

## CARYL CHESSMAN'S FATE

If Caryl Chessman dies in a cyanide fumes chamber in San Quentin prison, San Francisco on October 23rd, the final scene in a macabre drama will shock many people in many countries. Chessman may or may not be guilty of certain crimes for which he was convicted 11 years ago, but no one who has read the books he has written in prison will fail to sense disturbing features. *The Face of Justice*, smuggled out of cell 2455 will cause many to ask the question "What is justice?"

The State of California, with one more vote on the Judiciary Committee of the State Government would today be having a

five-year moratorium — no legal killings for five years. Eventually the moratorium, or absolute abolition, will come and Chessman's pen will have played a not unimportant part. All this aside, it is surely a wretched abominable thing to still for ever a brilliant brain in a gas chamber and to make a convict pay the supreme penalty after years of confinement in the condemned cell. Surely there is a limit to punishment in these alleged enlightened days. I have written to the State Governor at Sacramento, California, and appealed for clemency for Chessman. Some of us in Auckland have formed an *ad hoc* "Save Chessman Committee." I hope many in England are likewise bestirring themselves. Time is short and, when a man is dead, he is beyond help. Who in England will write to Governor Brown?

ARTHUR O'HALLORAN (New Zealand)

## WITHOUT COMMENT

ONE OF THE remarkable things about America, so often charged with being a "materialistic civilisation," is the way the churches have grown in strength.

According to figures published today, 63 per cent. of the population go regularly to church. This is the highest percentage reached this century.

In 1900, church membership was only 36 per cent.

— *Daily Express* (9/9/59).

CRIME: The Federal Bureau of Investigation has just released the 1958 crime statistics for New York City.

Murder went up to an average of one killing a day. There were two rapes every day. And 16,811 cars were stolen.

— *Daily Express* (10/9/59).

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