

The Freethinker

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"AMBITIOUS TO EXALT THE PERFECTION of the Gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption." So did Gibbon put the whole matter in a sentence. Fortunately for our edification and delight, he added a good many other sentences, from which we may select: "Since desire was imputed as a crime, and marriage was tolerated as a defect, it was consistent with the same principles to consider a state of celibacy as the nearest approach to the Divine perfection. It was with the utmost difficulty that ancient Rome could support the institution of six vestals; but the primitive church was filled with a great number of persons of either sex who had devoted themselves to the profession of perpetual chastity. A few of these, among whom we may reckon the learned Origen, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter. Some were insensible and some were invincible against the assaults of the flesh . . . But insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights, and this new species of martyrdom served only to introduce a new scandal into the church." And, as our greatest historian so wisely added, "the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition."

Precautions

Sex has always been a source of trouble to the Christian — and especially to the Catholic — Church. Origen's recourse (*vide* Matthew 19.12) being a little too drastic for lesser mortals, elaborate precautions have had to be taken to protect male and female celibates from the vengeance of "insulted Nature." Many of these precautions persist today. Witness the religious Orders who live in perpetual isolation and never undress. Even the wearing of special garb serves as a protective measure. Less well known are the restrictions on priests in Italy, for example, where a football match or a cinema is out of bounds; where pushing a pram or carrying large parcels(!) is forbidden; and where walking a few times with the same woman — even an aged relative — is frowned upon. And canon law prescribes 40 as the minimum age of a priest's female housekeeper, as *Time* (23/11/59) reminds us.

Lapses

How many 40-year-olds and their masters have "fixed it up together" — as did Honorine and the Curé Ponsse, and Josépha and the Abbé Jouffe, in *Clochemerle* — it is, of course, impossible to say. Renan said he had never seen even the shadow of a scandal, but this seems incredible, and the purity may well have been his. As Joseph McCabe remarked, "The fact that from time immemorial ecclesiastical legislation has returned again and again to

the question of priests' servants is instructive enough." It may be *à priori* reasoning, but H. C. Lea was surely sound when he questioned the Church's "reliance that the gift of chastity will accompany ordination"; and the wisdom of turning loose "young men, at the age when the passions are strongest, trained in the seminary and unused to female companionship, to occupy a position in which they are brought into the closest and most dangerous relations with women who regard them as beings gifted with supernatural powers and holding in their hands the keys of heaven and hell." McCabe estimated, "as a result of long reflection," that probably one priest in ten was

of exceptionally high character, one in ten of degraded or hypocritical life, and the remaining eight-tenths neither very "spiritual" nor the reverse: liable to "lapse occasionally." But, in Catholic countries like Spain, he added, "clerical immorality is general." The late Paul Jury, 40 years a Jesuit, was in a special position to know the sex-life of priests, because many were referred to him for psycho-analysis. In his *Journal d'un Prêtre* (Gallemard, Paris) he said that masturbation was a plague among seminarians and was not regarded by the authorities as any bar to the priesthood; while one of his Jesuit colleagues, a confessor to priests, declared that a third recently broke their vows of chastity, another third did so occasionally, and the remainder were faithful to them.

Postponement

In one sense the Church's aim was laudable. Putting God before man; the next life before this one, she sought to remove all distractions from the contemplation of such glories. And with Armageddon at hand, the idea was plausible, too. It is the indefinite postponement of that event that has complicated matters, as the Christian should make quite clear to his inconsiderate deity. It is one thing to abstain from sensual pleasures, not knowing when the master of the house cometh; it is quite another to continue doing so after the better part of two fruitless millenia, while more and more of the world takes the cash in hand!

With the passage of the centuries, the Church's preservation of the celibate ideal has become increasingly impossible. But the priest's plight is surely less tragic than the nun's. Here, indeed, has Christianity surpassed itself in the mutilation of life. What can be more calculatingly cruel than the grotesque espousement to Christ, complete with bridal gown and wedding ring? Do we not all regard it with instinctive revulsion? I think we do, and I think we are right.

Kidnappers

So do we deplore the case of Katharina Korpitsch, the 18-year-old Austrian girl, whose parents allege that she has been tricked into becoming a nun at the convent where she was sent to learn cookery (*Sunday Express*, 22/11/59). So do we join with the crowd that thronged the convent shouting "Kidnappers, kidnappers." For it *is* kidnapping,

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Celibacy

By COLIN McCALL

whatever the motive. "I have been called to join the Order," Katharina wrote, but that should not deceive us. It will not deceive anyone who knows the workings of the Church of Rome; who knows anything of the psychological methods it has been using for centuries.

"Misfits"

How many millions of lives have been mercilessly warped in childhood and youth, with stories of the corruption of the world and the purity of monasticism? Boys filled with fervour for following Christ; girls for marrying Him! It is sometimes argued that convents and monasteries are socially harmless because they syphon off the "misfits," but this ignores the influence those misfits wield over others, particularly the young. "Hate" doesn't mean "hate" in Luke 14.26, protests the Christian apologist but it seems to mean something very close to it. As Katharina's father said to the *Sunday Express* reporter, "I wish I had never

sent her to the convent. She has rejected us totally. She never wants to see us again."

It is not enough to regret such a situation; nor just to condemn the nuns and priests directly responsible. They are themselves the inheritors of a tragic tradition, and it is the tradition that must be halted. It is not confined to the Catholic Church, or even to Christianity; Buddhism had it long before Jesus was ever thought of. Aztec priests were celibate. And asceticism of some kind seems almost inseparable from supernaturalism. But it is in its Roman form that it most affects us in the West. And it is as I think of the helpless children who are being unwittingly but deliberately prepared for an unnatural life of religious celibacy, that my hatred of the Church of Rome reaches its peak. Many, I know, will escape the clutches of the rapacious "sisters" and "brothers." For that I am thankful. But every Katharina is one too many.

Roman Catholic Criminality

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG (Australia)

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP of Brisbane is reported as saying, 5/7/59, ". . . As far as juvenile crime is concerned, lack of religion is largely responsible." This is totally untrue, indeed the exact reverse of the truth. The Roman Catholic religion is responsible for a great deal of the Crime and Delinquency in the world. The Archbishop is not deliberately lying; he just does not know, and apparently has not tried to know, the facts. Here they are in part. I can produce impeccable evidence ten times the amount here produced to the same effect. As a class everywhere in the world, Roman Catholics have the worst record for crime, especially sex crime, delinquency and prostitution. A state doctor saw two girls from a well-known Brisbane Convent and a third Catholic woman, all street girls, in one week.

His Grace speaks of teaching Brothers. I went to a Catholic Brothers Boarding School. My teacher made repeated attempts to seduce me homosexually; the head Brother had frequent intercourse with the Matron; a third seduced young boys. At one and the same time, the school had boys who finished as follows: (a) Murderer — 40 years in gaol; (b) Habitual criminal, spent most of his life in gaol; (c) Embezzling Solicitor, 14 years and another 5 for a second offence in gaol; (d) Another embezzling solicitor, not prosecuted as funds stolen belong to R.C. Church; further legal action suppressed. At the school, theft, lying by both teachers and boys, and homosexuality were rampant. The ages of football teams with an age limit were systematically faked by the teachers so that the school team always won. One candidate for a Rhodes Scholarship was very poor at sport. However, the Brothers lined him up with a few other kids and sent them over about 50 yards, the others being instructed to run dead for the candidate; he won and was sent up as the School Sprint Champion. The Brothers did the same for swimming and rowing, the latter in hired pleasure boats. He got the Rhodes Scholarship, one of the highest awards for students in the world, on a deliberately faked record, a Christian Brothers swindle. The Oxford sporting students must have got a terrible shock when they saw the runt Queensland sent them that year.

Roman Catholic solicitors have a high theft rate.

I have seen delinquency figures from Melbourne, Liverpool, Leeds, Glasgow, Chicago, Massachusetts (U.S.A.); in all, R.C.'s top the lists, while the non-religious, constantly abused by Bishops, Priests and Parsons, are usually less than 1 per cent.

State school children are far, far, better behaved than children from Catholic schools.

Catholic criminality is notorious the world over and there is no doubt that Roman Catholicism promotes crime and delinquency. The last New South Wales Annual Prisons Report published with the religious affiliations of convicts showed R.C.'s, 19 per cent. of the general population, were 35 per cent. of the prison population. If the Archbishop is so anxious about politicians and others being honest in this matter, he has only to ask the State Governments to publish the religious affiliations of criminals and of delinquents appearing before the State Children's Courts. These reports have been suppressed at the request of the Church, especially the R.C. authorities, for the obvious reason. He will be so shocked that he will undoubtedly ask for the suppression to be resumed.

A Church whose clergy pay no income tax, no rates on their homes, promote crime, and so increase the financial burden on the community for the provision of extra police, for Courts and prisons, has no right to ask for the people to be taxed further for the endowment of schools which, *being demonstrably inferior morally to the State schools*, it would be wrong for any Government to subsidise with public money.

The Archbishop's reflections on non-religious and State school children are intolerant, grossly untrue, unfair, indefensible and in very poor taste. I think he owes them an apology.

PRIESTS

SEE THEM PASS IN THEIR LEGIONS, branded by their ton-sures as a flock of sheep. I do not feel for you, you poor marionettes of the altar, either hatred or rancour; you are just victims whose necks have been bent with the weight of the stole. The Church, yesterday bride of Christ, today bride of Croesus, uses you, you poor hornless cattle, for her vile plunder. She teaches you uselessly to cross — as St. Francis — your arms over your breasts; to impose fasts, bless coffins, drop salt in the mouths of innocent babes, to growl platitudes, bark out sermons, sing masses, dole out heaven and hell. You poor pallid fools, you are just mute tools which the Church uses to extract money and so pile up treasure. The Church is a vile serpent which has spread over the world; in whose coils the human conscience is being strangled for centuries. The joints of this implacable monster are you O priests; the head is the Pope and, as you all know, the serpent has its strength in its tail and its poison in its teeth.

The Hydra or Thoughts on Seeing a File of Priests Pass, by Guerra Junqueiro, translated from the Portuguese by Nan Flanagan.

The Problem of Mars

By F. A. RIDLEY

PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT, certainly the most sensational, of modern technical developments, is that associated with the science of space travel. For within the past few years, mankind's powers of flight have been enormously increased by the startling evolution of long-distance missiles; an evolution which has just culminated in the fantastic Russian achievement of circling the moon and photographing its hidden side. As has already been noted in these columns it can hardly be an accident that the nation which first accomplished this, was one which officially endorses an atheistic and materialistic philosophy?

It now appears to be almost certain that space ships with human crews will reach the moon in a comparatively short time, perhaps even in the course of the next decade. And since "appetite comes with eating" it can reasonably be assumed that once human feet have trodden the rugged surface of the satellite, human space-craft will venture further afield into the planetary system. Upon what routes will they change at Lunar junctions? As far as can be ascertained on the basis of our present knowledge, the only possible termini to such planetary objectives are our two nearest neighbours (other than the moon) in space, Mars and Venus, both at their nearest point of approach in the region of 35-40 millions of miles from the earth. Natural phenomena will probably compel these limited objectives. For the physical constitution of the remaining planets in the solar system appears to make them forever unattainable to human visitation, e.g. Mercury, the sun's nearest neighbour, where the temperature is that of boiling lead, is and always will be, too hot for human visitation; while the big, outer planets of the solar system, "gigantic snowballs" as they have been aptly termed, are all far too cold. Among our neighbours in space, only two, Mars and Venus, appear to hold out any tangible goal for translating into fact, the sanguine fiction which has imagined actual human contacts with these brilliant objects in the sky: the Red Planet, Mars, and Venus, our romantic Evening Star.

Of these two proximate planets, much more is known about Mars than about the beautiful planet so appropriately named after the antique Goddess of Love. For Venus, while more similar in size to the earth (actually slightly smaller) is concealed by a dense atmosphere veiling it so effectively that little can be conjectured regarding its surface. Mars contrarily has a thin atmosphere through which clear, if rather ambiguous markings can be discerned. We recall the famous controversy over the Martial canals, those peculiarly shaped markings which some astronomers have held to indicate artificial creations. More recently, further observations appear to indicate the presence of a green belt on the Red Planet, from which the conclusion has been drawn by some contemporary observers — including the ex-Astronomer-Royal, Dr. Harold Spencer-Jones — that, whatever may be the case with hypothetical higher forms of life on Mars, more elementary forms of vegetation undoubtedly exist. Perhaps the most thorough examination of, as well as convincing advocacy for this point of view, has been made by a German observer now employed by the American Air Force, Dr. Hubertus Strughold. In his book, *The Red and Green Planet*, Dr. Strughold examines the whole question of possible life on Mars in relation to its known, or surmised, physical environment. The conclusions to which he comes are of the greatest interest and importance, particularly at this present exciting stage in inter-planetary space-travel.

Unlike nearly all earlier observers, Dr. Strughold is a physicist rather than an astronomer in the more conventional sense. Actually his major studies have been concerned with high-flying space altitudes, and it is from this point of view that he approaches the whole question of life on Mars. For the density of the Martial atmosphere, a major constituent in the appearance and subsistence of physical existence everywhere, has been approximately determined. According to our authority, any life that may exist on Mars must do so at an atmospheric density comparable to that which an aeronaut would encounter at a height of about 56,000 feet above the earth's surface, that is, about twice the height of Everest. Dr. Strughold insists on this fact throughout; for it cannot be too strongly emphasised in any scientific (as distinct from science-fiction) study of the problems of life on Mars, that this atmosphere question is, and remains fundamental to the whole problem. Any kind of life on Mars, he insists, can only be conceived at all realistically as occurring against a background of atmospheric density equivalent to that which would be encountered at an altitude nearly twice that of our own highest mountain. And since, or so he states continuous human activity is not possible upon our terrestrial earth at much above 12,000 feet, the hypothetical "canal builders" of Mars must necessarily have carried out their arduous labour at what corresponds in density to a height nearly five times that at which continuous toil ceases to be possible, on this planet at least. As seen in this "dry light," the much written-up presence of human beings — or their local equivalents — on Mars appears highly improbable. There just aren't any Martial natives at all to drive their canals through the arid deserts which make up the bulk of the Martial scene. That is, assuming (as we must, in order to discuss the problem at all) that life on Mars follows a roughly similar pattern to that found here. Otherwise, no discussion is possible at all. Actually, the above assumption seems to be a reasonable one since, according to our authority, both the earth and Mars originated about 3,000 million years ago and both are composed of broadly similar physical constituents in, of course, varying quantities — e.g., there is very little oxygen on Mars — another serious obstacle to the existence of any sort of a local *Homo sapiens*.

Dr. Strughold is quite emphatic on the impossibility of anything resembling human life on Mars. He describes it as "belonging to the realm of fantasy." (So much for the famous canals!) And the same also applies to any kind of warm-blooded animals in the thin air of Mars, they could not possibly have originated in the past, nor exist in the present.

And the same presumably applies to cold-blooded creatures and even to the higher forms of plant life. However, Dr. Strughold makes one concession — albeit an unromantic one — to the upholders of life on Mars. The green belts noted on Mars may, and probably do, represent genuine, though very primitive, forms of plant life. As he demonstrates in a learned, though rather technical, argument, primitive forms of plant life can subsist on earth at very high altitudes, and they might do so even under the Martial conditions. Hence, our author entitles his book, *The Red and Green Planet*.

[cf. *The Red and Green Planet* by Dr. Hubertus Strughold, Sedgwick and Jackson. N.B.—I have used the word "Martial" rather than the more usual "Martian" as the appropriate adjective — Mars — Martial.]

This Believing World

So at last the Archbishop of Canterbury has come out solidly against "adultery" — he would like to see it made a *criminal* offence. The famous *Daily Express* cartoonist Cummings has given us a picture of him (*à la Orwell's 1984*) with the caption, "Dr. Fisher is watching you," but it would take much more than Dr. Fisher to stop "adultery." It would require a huge army of snoopers, or perhaps two armies representing male and female snoopers. Nothing whatever seems to arouse intolerant anger among the religious than anything to do with sex. And the extraordinary thing about it is that the Archbishop's master, "our Lord" (as he is called) never married.

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Yet what Jesus said about sex is still the standard of all fully-believing Christians. Roman Catholic priests are — so we are assured — *quite* celibate, and Anglo-Catholics would love to make celibacy compulsory in their Church. Yet the sexual record of the Church as a whole, especially during the Dark and Middle Ages, could not be blacker. Books like *The Decameron* (1348-53) are a scathing attack on the immorality of the priests of its day. Yet their followers today insist on lecturing us on "morality" in the name of Christianity. Fortunately, Dr. Fisher can have little hope of being listened to on such a subject as adultery no matter what Jesus said.

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So few are modern scientists on the side of religion that when one does come across a professor who is an out-and-out believer in Christianity, nobody is more warmly welcomed in our Sunday Press. The *Sunday Express*, to prove that there is a life after death, called in Prof. C. A. Coulson, FRS, PhD, MA, DSc; for obviously with such a range of distinctions, he *must* be able to answer the problem in the affirmative. He bases his belief or conviction on the "things which Our Lord Himself said." Everybody before was "groping," but "with Christ the matter was quite different." Dr. Coulson believes that every word in the Gospels was uttered by "our Lord," and no doubt if you asked why, he would say because they are all in the Gospels. And are the Gospels true? Certainly — they contain the words of Jesus. Could anything be more convincing?

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Dr. Coulson is sure that "many scientists agree" with him, though "sometimes they cannot go the whole way" — the whole way being his own infantile Fundamentalism in which he admits that "there is bound to be some element of faith in what we do believe." There can be no arguing with him; or for that matter anybody who can quote Richard Baxter's "'tis enough that Christ knows all, and I shall be with Him." Even the most illiterate member of the Salvation Army could not go *worse* than that.

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It will surprise most people, particularly women, that Miss Estelle Roberts, whose exploits in Spiritualism show an unbounded credulity not easily equalled anywhere else, is, according to *The People*, "the most amazing woman in the world." We particularly like the "blurb" which accompanies this electrifying statement — "Brilliant minds have disagreed about her, so-called experts have been baffled by her, many controversies have raged over her." We wonder who supplied this piece of glaring nonsense? Whose are the "brilliant minds," or who are the so-called experts, and where can we find particulars of "the many controversies"? Can even the readers of *The People* swallow this rubbish?

We are told by this "amazing woman" some of her childhood experiences in the "spiritual" field, one of them being that she saw "beyond the window . . . a dazzling vision of a knight in shining armour." Children galore have seen not only knights in dazzling armour, but millions of fairies and gnomes dancing about in the garden, to say nothing of dozens of similar "visions." Miss Roberts's "knight" had "a two-handed sword" and, of course, "a blazing red cross on his chest," and he pointed the sword at poor little Estelle and her sister who promptly fainted.

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Needless to add Miss Roberts after that began to see spooks everywhere together with people dying in such a way that she saw their "spirits" leave their bodies by "emerging from the back of their heads," the "spirit" being attached "by a cord." It wasn't till after she was thirty that she discovered the "psychic gifts" which made her the most amazing woman in the world — though for ourselves we think it is far more amazing that readers can be found who can lap up this sheer drivel so wholeheartedly.

★

Any discussion on the Church of England's "beliefs" was bound to be interesting, and so ITV's "About Religion" the other Sunday, introduced by Mr. Tom Driberg, M.P., proved that about the only thing on which its leaders agreed was that "our Lord" was its Glorious Chief. There are, in the Church, people who are "Low" and people who are "High" and people who are in the "Centre"; but the various "rituals" associated with each appear to be more or less despised by those in the other categories. High Church is hardly distinguishable from Roman Catholicism while Low Church is almost Nonconformism. Mr. Driberg, who is very "High," tried to be tolerant, but what could he do with the hotch-potch served out to him by the Bishop of Coventry (Centre), Father Ross (High), and the Rev. D. Rees (Low)?

Papal Infallibility

IN 1431, THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH had Joan of Arc burned at the stake for witchcraft, sinful pride, wearing masculine attire and for claiming she was responsible to God and not to the Church.

Think of it! This means a girl of 19 and a virgin, was chained to a stake; a fire was built under her and she was burnt to ashes. No dumb beast is as bad as the religious beasts.

In 1456 the Holy(!) Roman Catholic Church annulled that order to burn her. In 1909 her beatification was proclaimed, and she was canonised in 1920. Poor Joan! She was burned alive by the Roman Catholic Church but the Pope saved her reputation for the historians.

This is a sample of papal infallibility — arrogant and arbitrary.

[c.f. *The Retrial of Joan of Arc* by Regine Pernoud, 1955.]

The earth is flat, it is the centre of the Universe and it does not move. The sun goes around the earth — the scripture says so.

Galileo in the 17th century, under Papal pressure and to avoid torture recanted and agreed with the Popes. Galileo elected to recant rather than burn at the stake.

Papal infallibility? Ridiculous.

[c.f. *The Crime of Galileo* by Giorgio De Santillana, 1955.]

T. T. PLUS.

—NEXT WEEK—

FREETHOUGHT AND SCIENCE

By Prof. J. M. ROMEIN

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, CORSAIR, SMITH, etc. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH, etc.

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.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street.) Sunday, December 6th, 6.45 p.m.: D. H. TRIBE, "The Church's One Foundation—A Novelist Looks at Jesus."

Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, W.1.) Sunday, December 6th, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Belief and Behaviour."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, December 8th, 7.15 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "Christianity and Morality."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, December 6th, 6.30 p.m.: P. A. W. COLLINS, M.A., "The Theatre in Leicester."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, December 6th, 2.30 p.m.: S. THOMAS, "Should Politics Enter Local Government?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, December 6th, 11 a.m.: Dr. M. BURTON, FRSA, "The Tortuous Path to Truth."

Notes and News

WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED a sad, but at the same time encouraging, letter from Mrs. M. Garland of Brisbane. It reads: "Owing to the death of my husband, will you kindly stop forwarding THE FREETHINKER, which he had been taking for so many years. I know he would like me to add to this how greatly he appreciated the fine articles written by those on the staff of THE FREETHINKER. It was the *one* and *only* paper he loved, and he always looked forward to receiving it."

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BLACKPOOL TOWN COUNCIL has turned down the General Purposes Committee's decision not to have a civic thanksgiving service after the autumn illuminations, on the grounds that there was no merit or purpose in the suggestion. A member said that the council should agree to the proposal of a thanksgiving service being held, as suggested by the vicar, the Rev. J. C. Handley Vaughan. It was one way the Corporation could show that they were quite prepared to respect the wishes of religious bodies. The amendment to hold the civic service was then carried. Another Councillor said it was the responsibility of the Corporation to support the service.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £296 4s. 5d.; Wm. Wilkie, (Australia), 15s.; A. W. Harris, 10s.; A. T. Browne, £1 2s.; Mrs. N. Henson, £1; E. Henderson, 15s.; A. Georgetti, (Australia), £3 5s.; S. Clowes, £1; Mr. and Mrs. MsCorrisken, 10s.; Anon, 7s.; Total to date November 27th, 1959. £305 8s. 5d.

IN OCTOBER 1958, a British European Airways Viscount crashed near Anzio after a collision in daylight with an Italian jet fighter. The official report of the Italian commission of inquiry has now been published, and it states that the 31 people who were killed died because of "an act of God." In the English translation, published by the Stationery Office, this phrase has been rendered: "a fortuitous and fatal conjunction of circumstances."

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FOLLOWING THE APPEARANCE on the BBC TV programme "Tonight" (referred to in last week's issue) Mr. C. H. Hammersley, Secretary of the Leicester Secular Society, received mention in *The Guardian* (24/11/59). An article by David Gray on the Leicester Letter Writers' Club noted that Mr. Hammersley "dips into religious controversy."

★

A CORRESPONDENT WRITES: "I dipped into De Quincey lately: *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* — "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons." His conclusion is: "In general, then, I affirm as a fact established upon historical research, that, before the beginning of the 17th century, no traces are to be met with of the Rosicrucians or Masonic Orders. And I challenge any antiquarian to contradict me!" What do our Rosicrucians and Masonic enthusiasts say to that? Was De Quincey's challenge accepted?

RATIONALISTS ON RELIGION

TWO DISTINGUISHED RATIONALISTS spoke very strongly about religion last week. On the BBC television programme "Asian Club," Bertrand Russell seemed to shake a few of the club members by saying he saw no distinction between religion and superstition. Some of the audience demurred, but nobody was prepared to challenge him. On the same day (November 27th) Sir Julian Huxley commemorated the centenary of *The Origin of Species* with a lecture at Chicago University. "There is no longer either need or room for supernatural beings capable of affecting the course of events in the evolutionary pattern of thought", he said (*Daily Mail*, 28/11/59). "Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness by creeping for shelter into the arms of a divinised father figure whom he has himself created, or escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of divine authority, or absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient but, unfortunately inscrutable providence."

To our mind, it is a pity that Sir Julian persisted in retaining the terms "religion" and "theology", even in a semi-metaphorical sense. A new religion would emerge in the near future he predicted, "to serve the needs of the coming era", and its theology would evolve from modern knowledge. Still, he made it clear that it would be "religion" devoid of supernaturalism. "Instead of worshipping supernatural rulers it will sanctify the higher manifestations of human nature in art and love, in intellectual comprehension and aspiring adoration and will emphasise the fuller realisation of life's possibilities as a sacred trust". The truth will set us free, said Sir Julian: it frees us from subservient fear of the unknown and the supernatural and exhorts us to face this new freedom with courage tempered by wisdom and with hope tempered by knowledge.

What is the Christian Case?—2

By H. CUTNER

HOW VERY CONFUSED Mr. Ashe can be on the question of "evidence" for miracles, or for Christianity, or for both, can be seen in his first reply to me. "The demand [for evidence]" he says (Aug. 21), "clearly rests on special pleading." Why this should invalidate the demand is quite beyond me. He continues,

If the same critical criteria applied by Rationalists to the New Testament were applied to other early historical records, most history before the Middle Ages would evaporate. One could "prove," for example, that there was no such person as Alexander the Great, because his own tutor, Aristotle, doesn't mention him. Opponents of Christianity who insist on applying such standards should recognise that to do so consistently would invalidate their own attempts at historical proof.

Here it will be noticed at once that Mr. Ashe equates the purely "secular" Alexander the Great with the purely "supernatural" New Testament as if they were the same thing and under the same laws of "evidence." But surely the fact that Alexander defeated a number of his enemies in some military campaigns cannot possibly demand exactly the same kind of evidence that we ask for in the case of a Virgin-born Son of God — the Living God who created all things — and who was actually his own Son? If we were told that Alexander defeated his opponents, not because he was a military genius, but because the Father of Jesus lent him a Legion of Angels all armed with modern tanks, modern machine guns, and modern bombs — is it "special pleading" to ask for evidence? And in any case, would *modern* historians believe that God Almighty really helped Alexander in this way?

As a matter of fact, there is actually no contemporary evidence for a good deal of the life of Alexander, but we do know that military men have campaigned and won "glory" on the field by killing off opponents; so we can accept the accounts left us by later writers. But who accepts the legends which surround Alexander, that he was a trinitarian Christian, for example, said also of Aristotle, or that he knew Hebrew and studied the Book of Daniel, or that he can be identified with "the two-horned" of the Koran?

Mr. Ashe has every right to believe in miracles, and to call them "divinely-ordained" if he so wishes; but I have the same right to call the miracle of the Wonderful Lamp of Aladdin also "divinely-ordained," and to insist that it should be believed on exactly the same terms as he expects us to believe in the miracles of the New Testament. It would be "special pleading" on *his* part to ask me for evidence. Mr. Ashe pleads for the truth of the miracle of Jesus flying up to Heaven, and he actually believes this is historical truth — yet he resolutely refuses to believe in the miracle of Aladdin's aerial flights with the genie of his Wonderful Lamp. I can see no difference whatever between the two miracles.

Mr. Ashe's second objection is to our "attack by way of Comparative Religion," and the first point I wish to make is this — the case for Freethought, or as he would call it, the Anti-Christian Case, would be as indestructible as if Osiris, Krishna, Odin, and Company were never heard of. The case against Christianity with its Miracles, Devils, Angels, Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, to say nothing of its Gods, does not depend on the other Deities at all, not even on "bulls and astrological fish." It does not even depend on Evolution. If Mr. Ashe knew even a little about it he would see why this is so but he has picked up scattered bits here and there, mostly from Roman Catholic sources I suspect, and appears never to have gone beyond

what he reads in, say, Bruce or some such writer. No wonder he does not want to deal with Renan or Robertson. Renan, of course, never went further than a human Jesus; but any opponent of Freethought can no more afford to ignore J. M. Robertson than an anti-Evolutionist can afford to ignore Darwin.

The proofs given us by Christians for the existence of God have been shattered by Freethinkers long before the question of Comparative Religion was studied, but it is only fair to add that since Dupuis wrote his immortal work *L'Origine de Tous Les Cultes* that our attack on Christianity has been immeasurably strengthened. We know now why Jesus proclaimed himself as "The Light of the World," and why "there was darkness all over the land" when he died. As a "Sun-God," there was bound to be "darkness" when he died. But Jesus was much more than a mere "Sun-God," and it would be absurd to imagine that hundreds of years after another Sun-God — Bacchus — had been invented, Jesus should reproduce *exactly* the same traits. Other lands, other centuries, other priests, have all gone to colour in various ways the exploits of a number of Sun-Gods and Saviours.

Only a fool would expect the story of Krishna to be exactly the same as the story of Jesus. But how remarkable are the similarities! For example, in the stories surrounding Krishna we can find that he was born of a Virgin called Devaki, that his birth was announced in the heavens by a star, that though of royal birth he was born in a cave, that he was adored by cowherds and was presented with gifts of sandal wood and perfumes, that his father was warned to fly as the reigning monarch sought his life, that one of his first miracles was curing a leper, that he is represented at his death with arms extended hanging as if on a cross, that he descended into hell, that while on earth he was in constant strife against the evil spirit, that he healed the sick, raised the dead, that he had a beloved disciple — and so on. He was called the Saviour, Redeemer, Mediator, Good Shepherd, Holy One, and many other *Christian* titles, and he was actually worshipped in the time of Alexander the Great, that is, in the years *before* 323 BC.

And what about Buddha? His mother was the Virgin Maya, and his "incarnation" was brought about by the divine power called the "Holy Ghost." He also had a star in the heavens when born, and was presented with costly jewels and precious substances. His life, when a child was threatened, and of course he beat everybody else in the temple in many subjects at the age of twelve. And later, when the "Evil One" tempted him, he said, "Get thee away from me." Buddha at death even ascended bodily to the "celestial regions." Naturally, when "teaching" them, his followers demanded "a sign" from him that "they might believe." As for the various names by which he is known, even now believers call him the *Lord* Buddha, as well as the Teacher, the Messiah, the Blessed One, the Eternal One — and so on. Almost any book on the Lord Buddha would not only confirm all this, but also would give dozens of similar parallels to Jesus.

When we come to "Saviours" there are at least sixteen I could give, all listed in Kersey Graves's *Sixteen Crucified Saviours*. Of course, they were not "crucified" in the way described in the Gospels — they were Pagan Gods and even in their stories no doubt we can find contradictions. The Virgin Births of Osiris or Attis or Horus are described in their own literature and are bound to be different from

the two Gospel stories — which incidentally contradict each other.

According to Matthew, the Virgin Birth of Jesus was "prophesied" by Isaiah about the year 742 BC — but the story has as much to do with Jesus as it has to do with cheese cakes. . . It is based on a mistranslation in the Greek Septuagint of the word "young woman" in Hebrew; and in this connection let me quote what that very religious Catholic Encyclopedia — for not even Mr. Ashe would credit it with pandering to outdated Freethought — has to say: —

Modern theology does not grant that Isaiah 7, 14, contains a real prophecy fulfilled in the virgin birth of Christ; it must maintain, therefore, that St. Matthew misunderstood the passage when he said: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spake by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son . . . (CE, xv, 451).

Of course, this does not mean that the Roman Church does not believe in the Virgin Birth, but it does mean that "modern theology" has given up the fantastic story — a story always laughed at by Jews.

It is the same with the many Crucified Saviours we find in Comparative Religion. Their stories are bound to be different from that of Jesus set as they are in different times, and in different countries — but they show the same hopeless credulity and fear and downright ignorance of history we get in the Christian adaptation if taken as literal truth.

Thus, when Mr. Ashe talks about "the heaping-up of Attises and Osirises and bulls and astrological fish" only strengthening "the Christian case," he seems to me to follow the Roman Catholic line of misleading its followers, or showing an astonishing ignorance of what Comparative religion means. To put it another way — does he know what he is talking about?

In my next article, I shall try and deal with Mr. Ashe's contention that the New Testament is "history."

The Voice of Spain

By A SPANISH TEACHER

I FEEL IMPELLED TO SPEAK TO YOU, in the name of Spanish Freethought, on the announcement of President Eisenhower's intended visit to Franco in Madrid. It is imperative that Freethinkers all over the world should speak in a loud and clear voice on the significance of this visit, when Spanish Freethinkers are working so passionately against the Franco tyranny.

President Eisenhower's trip to Madrid will be interpreted as an expression of friendship or sympathy by the USA towards the Falangist regime, and, by implication, as a condemnation of those libertarians who oppose that regime and who now, after years of suffering, see hope on the horizon.

We know and are grateful that a number of British newspapers deprecate Franco; we are grateful, too, for the radio broadcasts of the BBC. But we need all the help we can get. Franco is the most rabid enemy of liberty; his regime is a putrid canker in Europe, buttressed economically by the USA and supported in its diabolical policy by the Vatican. We Spaniards live as medieval slaves. The people of the democracies should remember that.

Democracy is not an empty word: it is filled with significance. You can fill it with significance by preventing Eisenhower's trip to Madrid. All over the world it is necessary to protest against the trip. Through newspapers, radios, by demonstrations and meetings of students and workers, by messages to embassies; through these means and others, all should protest. And Freethinkers especially. If President Eisenhower's trip can be prevented, liberty will have gained a great success and you will have done your duty. I hope you will not fail us.

If Thy Wife Angers . . .

THIS IS NOT A JOKE: it happened in England until the late 19th century that Christian husbands sold their legally wedded wives if they got tired of them. The lower orders thought it legal if a halter was placed around the woman's neck who had to pass through three toll gates, and if the price asked was not below 2/6d. Cases reported in 1895 and 1900 even used wife-selling as a defence against bigamy charges. How could they be bigamists after they had disposed of their first wives in open market? The *Hereford Times* of May 6th, 1854, called wife-selling a misdemeanour, and a few husbands were actually fined and punished. Particularly cautious purchasers asked for a stamped receipt for the money paid. In Knighton, Radnorshire, the town crier announced such deals publicly in 1851 and again in 1854.

Frequently the woman was quite happy to get rid of the husband she knew and hated in exchange for one that might treat her better, particularly if she was put up for auction to the highest bidder. In Smithfield market, in 1797, the bidding for a particular woman reached as much as £4; the astounded husband, seeing that his good old woman was worth more than he thought he to be, took her home again.

The *Hereford Journal* of July 29th, 1857, reported a deal where the woman was sold for one shilling and a quart of ale, whilst in other cases reported in the *Kentish Gazette* (March 15th, 1805) and *London Observer* (March 17th) the wives changed hands for sixpence each, similar to that reported in the *Sunday Times* of December 22nd, 1850, where a wife was sold to "a mulatto" for a tanner. A sale for a quart of beer was mentioned in Parliament in 1881.

But yet the priests have not stopped prating about the holy sacrament of matrimony and even refuse the right to remarry.

P. G. ROY

CORRESPONDENCE

VACCINATION AND VIVISECTION

Is Mr. MacIver not aware that thousands of people died from smallpox after having been "protected" for life? Is he not aware that the "protective" value of vaccination is now considered to be about six months or even less? In fact, so utterly discredited is modern vaccination that it is no longer compulsory in this country.

As for what happened to anti-diphtheria inoculation in Paris in 1894 — we get no authority from Mr. MacIver — does he mean that the same anti-toxin would be used these days? Why, if I use any figures for or against anti-toxins dating before the war, I am laughed to scorn by my medical opponents. I hardly dare go back a year!

However, I happen to have a few figures issued by the Metropolitan Asylums Boards for the years 1895 to 1910 by me, and I find that in the cases which used anti-toxin against diphtheria in 1895, there were 2,182 cases and 615 deaths; in 1896, 3,764 cases with 717 deaths; in 1897, 4,381 cases and 896 deaths; and so on — increasing the number of deaths until 1901. In the cases where no anti-toxin was used — in 1895 there were 1,347 cases with 181 deaths; in 1896, 1,411 cases with 154 deaths; and in 1897, 1,978

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cases with only 62 deaths; and so on. Will Mr. MacIver be good enough to explain away these figures?

I am not attacking the many eminent firms which are spending hundreds of thousands of pounds upon research if it really is research. They are fighting no doubt for humanity's great war on disease. But I have very little proof that research which means torturing millions of animals — details of which makes one physically sick has contributed anything or even very little to established cures. I can *prove* that doctors differ on these among themselves quite as much as theologians do on Christianity.

Incidentally, I for one would refuse to have an anti-tetanus injection if I really had tetanus. In most cases, it can be cured without this very questionable method

H. CUTNER.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Mr. Huxley's scare mongering ("Naturalisation and the NSS") reminds me on an amusing incident. After my arrival in London from Czechoslovakia, I went to a public library to take my bearings; when no title available in the newspaper room appeared to fit my requirement, I approached the attendant, a little old man, and asked: "Do you not stock periodicals such as *The Atheist* and *The Anarchist*?" He gave me a horrified look and pronounced gravely: "Public libraries in this country are not allowed to keep anything attacking the Crown or the Church." And in a fatherly tone he added: "And if I were you, I would not ask for such papers . . ."

O. T. WOLFGANG.

I am not in the habit of uttering false or misleading statements. How many lawyers must concur before their pronouncements receive acceptance? Substantial agreement certainly can be inferred, since all their opinions are based on the same data. People who do the same sums are apt to get the same answers. I put the question to a young man between whom and the Bar lies only the final examination. After a fortnight's pondering (during which time he may have consulted his Law School) he told me that no lawyer could give any other opinion. It would be better to look facts in the face and stop wishful thinking.

I have no interest in "Ethical Positivism" or any other plan to bring back Christianity in another guise. I am not hurt if Mr. Bennett cares to call me a "Negative Atheist." Before building operations can commence, it is necessary to clear all obstructions from the site; in this case supernaturalism and the Churches which propagate it. That task is quite sufficient for this generation and the next.

Probably the word "Secular" was adopted by unbelievers of the last century because a frank avowal of Atheism was dangerous. Perhaps for the same reason T. H. Huxley coined the word "Agnostic." I dislike both words and opine that the time has now come for us all to announce ourselves boldly as Atheists. *L'audace, encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace!*

By "disavow all politics" I mean all politics not directly connected with our cause. Cardinal Mindszenty and his Hungarian rebels were no concern of us Freethinkers. But handing the education of British children over to the Churches most decidedly is. If the institution of British monarchy appears contemptible to Mr. Bennett, he is free to attack it from the Republican platform. Some of us others are not prepared to join him. Britain is already a Republic in all but name. It is the genius of the British people to change the substance while retaining the form and pageantry of our historic past. The monarchy itself is democratic now.

I consider indifferentists half way to Atheism. A little more propaganda of the right sort would bring many to our side. Like Tom Paine, I claim the world as my country and hail every man as a brother. I do not think this forbids me to cheer when English batsmen punish Australian or Indian bowling. There are Leicester and Glasgow Secular Societies, but they are not at variance with National, Foreign or International groups.

No matter how active a small minority of elderly people may be, the cry will soon arise: "Their mouths are stoppt with dust." It is essential to enlist the young.

Mr. Leroi should reread Robert Clarke's letter on p.272, since it sparked off the controversy about the monarchy. He will see that it is a personal attack on the Queen because she is going to have a baby. We Freethinkers acknowledge no authority in the realm of thought. Mr. Clark has as much right to his views as I to mine, which are that his letter is in the lowest of bad taste and a disgrace to Secularism.

It is doubtful if all the duties of a sovereign could be performed by a plebian. And if one were appointed there is no guarantee that he would remain neutral and unpolitical. He would have crowds of relatives and friends each with an axe to grind. The

danger of his succumbing to the temptation to help his friends would be great.

The present royal family are sufficiently aloof to be free from such temptation. Their long tradition and training from infancy fits them for the job as nothing else could. I am satisfied that none could do this useful job any better and so I am quite content to leave things as they are. It is not advisable to make changes when things go well. Atheists need all their ammunition for the main targets, the Churches.

Mr. Corrick writes: "Our society advocates . . ."

Exactly. It advocates too much. It has bitten off more than it can chew. That is why Church bells still ring.

W. E. HUXLEY.

[This discussion is now closed—Editor.]

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH. Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Manhattan, Plume, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apologies from Mr. Corina. New members were admitted to Central London Branch and Head Office. University Humanist Federation Inaugural Conference in Birmingham on January 2nd and 3rd, and NCCL Conference on "Rights of Youth" in London on December 12th were announced. NCCL Conference on "The Colour Bar" was reported by Mr. Hornibrook. Correspondence was dealt with from Central London Branch, Leicester Secular Society and Mr. W. J. McIlroy. Worthing Branch request to change name to Sussex Branch was approved. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, December 30th.

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