

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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A RECENT ARTICLE in the *Daily Express* (owned by that staunch Protestant, Lord Beaverbrook) drew attention to the growing power, in the political sphere, of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Germany. The most recent example of this is found in the appointment of a Roman Catholic as President of the Republic in succession to the Protestant, Dr. Heuss. For while it might appear that the personal religious views of a President are not in themselves of any great significance from the political angle, this hardly applies in the German Republic. The new German President is a member of the C.D.U. (the Christian Democratic Union), the Party of the aged, but still astonishingly vigorous Chancellor, Dr.

Konrad Adenauer, recently guest of the British Government. And, while membership of the C.D.U. is open to Protestants, it is believed to be a predominantly Catholic Party and to be, in fact if not in name, a potent instrument of political Catholicism. Religious composition in the German Federal Republic is actually about 50-50 Catholic and Protestant, and, as the *Daily Express* noted, there has hitherto been a tacit arrangement to divide the highest offices in the State between adherents of the two religious cults. Now, however, both the President and the Chancellor are Catholics; so, in addition, are the Foreign and Defence Ministers, besides others of lesser importance. (Had Dr. Adenauer himself become President, his successor as Chancellor would probably have been Dr. Erhard, a Protestant.) As it is, the present distribution of power in the new German regime appears to tilt the scales decidedly in a Catholic direction.

Political Catholicism in Germany

The above state of things, we must repeat, might not seem to have much political significance in, say, a country like this where there is no recent tradition of any special political activity (at least in the Party sense) associated with Roman Catholicism. But, in Germany, the situation is quite different. For it must never be forgotten that *German Catholicism* has always been essentially political. Indeed, it would probably be true to state that Germany, as a distinct political entity, came originally into existence as a result of the direct political intervention of Rome, which converted Pagan Germany (often by the most ruthless methods) and also created the first unified German State in "the Roman Empire of the German People," or the Holy Roman Empire as it is more usually termed. From 800 A.D., when the Pope crowned Charlemagne, up to 1806 when the Holy Roman Empire was finally dissolved by Napoleon, Germany was unified on a directly religious and Catholic basis. Even in more recent times under the Second Reich of the Prussian and Protestant Hohenzollerns, German political Catholicism continued a potent activity, organised in the Catholic "Centre" Party which defied the mighty Bismarck when he was at the zenith of his power. And in which, incidentally, the present German Chancellor received his initial political train-

ing. Today, now that the Protestant East — the old Prussia — is mostly east of the Iron Curtain, Catholicism in Western Germany has acquired a much greater influence than under the Prussian hegemony. Dr. Adenauer, for example, despite his age (83) unquestionably the dominant political figure in Western Germany, is an ardent Catholic, and the father of a priest. As such he is energetically supported by the Catholic hierarchy who, I would surmise,

much prefer him to either the Protestant Kaiser or to the half-pagan Hitler. The contemporary German proverb, which I have quoted before in these columns, "The Federal Republic was conceived in the Vatican and born in Germany," if somewhat exaggerated, has un-

doubtedly a substantial foundation of fact.

Reunion — with whom?

At present the major issue in German politics is the problem of reunion between East and West. Having been in both Republics, I do not think that the prospects for such an eventual reunion between the severed Capitalist and Communist areas of Germany are at all propitious. There are several reasons for passing such a judgment; not the least influential of which is, rather surprisingly noted by our Fleet Street contemporary. (We are not accustomed to seeing the political intrigues of Rome publicised in the columns even of our Protestant Press.) But we were, upon this occasion privileged to note the *real* views of Dr. Adenauer and his followers. For the *Daily Express* quotes the C.D.U. journal *Rheinische Merkur*, in "the heart of the Catholic Rhineland," as demanding "a Roman Catholic Federation of West Germany and Austria before worrying about the Protestant territories east of the Oder-Neise line," viz. the present frontier between East Germany and Poland. Precisely. The cat is now out of the bag. The powerful Catholic Church in the Federal Republic — and presumably Dr. Adenauer himself — do not really (despite all their protestations at election times) desire any reunion with the Protestant East. What their present political strategy is really aiming at, is reunion with Catholic Austria which, incidentally, would probably give Catholicism a numerical preponderance of population in the Federal Republic. Adenauer and Co. are evidently faithfully continuing the long German traditions of political Catholicism.

A New "Holy Roman Empire"

The *Daily Express* goes on to draw attention to the close political relations now being established between de Gaulle's Catholic France and Adenauer's so-largely Catholic Germany; and states that the French President was enthusiastically received by the Catholic bishops when he visited Germany recently. However, it is probable that the venerable Adenauer himself does not look beyond, at most, some kind of federation with Austria as envisaged above. But if Adenauer's days are numbered, the Vatican still claims to have a lengthy — indeed an eternal! — future before it! At Rome they take long views. We do not

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

German Catholicism

By F. A. RIDLEY

know what is the attitude of Pope John to the German problem, but one of his most eminent predecessors, Leo XIII (1878-1903) was quite explicit. According to a Protestant publicist, Pope Leo told the late Kaiser, when the latter visited him, that "they in Rome were hoping and praying for the restoration of the Holy Roman Empire as the European Defender of the Catholic Church." Rome, traditionally, never abandons her long-range aims; so it

may well be that Vatican political strategy, the most experienced in the modern world, now envisages the eventual creation of an all-Catholic bloc of West European States as a "third force" between Protestant America and Soviet Russia: a "Holy Alliance" in which Adenauer's Germany would take the lead. And beyond this? Who knows? A new Charlemagne and a new Holy Roman Empire? We repeat, they have long memories in the Vatican.

Science and Exodus

By G. HALLYBURTON

FIRST OF ALL, let us go back to the period before the Exodus, and examine the adult life of Moses. He was, you will remember, brought up at the court of the Pharaoh Seti I. But, far more important than that, he was initiated into the Egyptian priesthood. The education which he received from the Egyptian priests no doubt stood him in good stead when he led the Israelites out of Egypt. Only a man trained to be a leader and possessing a knowledge of psychology, as well as of the desert (obtained when he lived with the Midianites) could be fitted for a task of this magnitude. Even so, the Israelites needed something more than Moses to help them on this journey. In their ignorance and fear, as it is with other peoples, they needed a deity on whom they could depend to help them over their difficulties. The following extract suggests how Moses managed to keep up the flagging morale of his followers:—

And it came to pass that at even the quails came up and covered the camp: and in the morning when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground, and when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, it is manna, for they wist not what it was, and Moses said unto them. This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. (Exodus 16.13-15.)

We are taught to regard many Biblical events as miraculous, but I hope to show that the stories of the quails, the manna and the striking of the rock to bring out water have purely natural explanations.

It is obvious that Moses would time his departure from Egypt to eliminate as far as possible, the obstacles against him, and he chose the Spring. Now Spring is the time of the great bird migrations. From Africa, millions of birds start their journey to Europe along two routes: one by way of the west coast of Africa to Spain; and the other by way of the Red Sea and Eastern Mediterranean to the Balkans. Quails and other birds, after their long flight from central parts of Africa, are forced down by exhaustion on the flat shores of the Red Sea, where to this day the Arabs catch them by hand. Such an event might well appear miraculous to the primitive Israelites, but it is quite a natural occurrence.

For an explanation of the story of manna, we must turn to botany. Manna is registered on the botanical index as *Tamarix mannifera*, Ehr., and was reported in 1483 by Breitenbach, Dean of Mainz, as being sticky and sweet like honey. On a pilgrimage in the Middle East, Breitenbach learnt that the Arabs collect, preserve and then sell it.

The next report we have, is that of the German botanist, G. Ehrenburg, who gave it its Latin name. He discovered, in 1823, that manna was caused by a plant louse, which pierces the branches of tamarisk trees and bushes which then exude this sticky sweet substance. This "manna" has to be collected as early as possible in the morning because it is the natural food of ants, who very quickly clean it all up.

And it was like coriander seed, white: and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (Exodus 16.31.)

It was in 1923 that Askar Theodor and Friederich Bodenheimer, two scientists from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, visited Sinai and took the first photographs of manna sticking on the tamarisk bushes. Once again, the questing mind of man has exploded the miraculous, and brought to light the natural.

The next event which must have seemed miraculous to the wandering Semites occurred when Moses struck the rock at Hor-eb and water flowed out. (Exodus 17.6.) Here again a natural explanation is possible. Lime-stone rock is very porous and retains water for very long periods. In the Sinai desert the Arabs have probably known this for thousands of years. Moses obviously did not waste his time when he lived with the Midianites. Only by living with a desert people could he learn how to survive in a land so destitute of water. This method of breaking the hard outer covering of the limestone and so obtaining water for the sheep and goats had been used by the Semitic tribes of that area long before the Israelites arrived, and it was still being used in the period between the two world wars. Major C. S. Jarvis, Governor of Sinai in the years before 1939, actually saw it when members of the Sinai Camel Corps were digging for water in a wadi or valley. A small trickle of water was seen coming out from under a limestone outcropping, so the colour sergeant took a spade and struck the rock which split open, causing the water to gush out.

According to the Bible, the Lord expressly commanded Moses to strike the rock (Exodus 17.6) and that water would come forth, but Moses would probably have never known this method of obtaining water if he hadn't learnt it from the Midianites. It is surprising how serious inquiry demolishes the miraculous.

LEEDS HUMANIST GROUP

The Leeds and District Scientific Humanist Group has been very active since its formation six months ago, and it is ending the year with three interesting meetings. Last Sunday (December 6th) the Rev. J. S. K. Patrick spoke on "The Religious Humanist"; on Thursday, December 10th 7.30 p.m. (the paper may reach readers in time to remind them of this event). Mr. F. J. Corina was due to debate with Dr. Douglas Clark, a religious physicist, "Scientific Humanism versus Christianity"; while on Sunday, December 20th, at 7 p.m., Mr. John McLeish will speak on "The Technique of Conversion." Meetings are held in the Leeds Trade Council Club, Upper Fountain Street, Leeds 1. Several other National Secular Society members, in addition to Mr. Corina, are members of the Group, and readers in the area are invited to write for details to the Hon. Secretary, Mr. R. Deans, 17 Midland Road, Leeds. The minimum annual subscription is five shillings.

Freethought and Science

By Prof. J. M. ROMEIN
(Netherlands)

[The following paper was read to the World Union of Freethinkers Congress in Brussels last September.]

PROCLAIMING THAT THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL is born free, does not mean that he is automatically free already from the day of his birth. But in saying so, we express the opinion that he has the inalienable right by birth to acquire freedom in the course of his life. As far as I can see it is the same with human thinking. Human thinking is not free from its origin during the dawn of civilisation. But freedom of human thought developed along the same line as human freedom in general, that is to say, freedom of human thought is a goal, because thought can fulfill its proper function only insofar as it is free.

Human thought — and in using this term here we have first of all science (systematical thinking) in mind — in the course of its history has been bound to three powers: to religious forces, to political forces and to social forces.

The emancipation of science from the religious sphere was a process that, at least in Europe, mainly took place during the 16th-18th centuries. This emancipation was most important for the development of modern exact science especially of physics and mechanics. The emancipation of science from the political sphere has been mainly the fruit of liberal development during the 19th century. In that same century, Marxian thought, more than any other single factor, functioned as an eye-opener. No one who studied Marxism — or the sociology of knowledge, derived from it and developed by Karl Mannheim and other modern sociologists — no such one will deny the binding of the human sciences to social forces in different degrees of intensity. Political and social forces had their impact mainly on the human sciences.

In *theory*, therefore, science in the 20th century is completely free, because it is able to see the boundaries of its own loudly proclaimed liberty. In *fact* it is nowhere completely free, neither of religious, nor of political let alone of social forces.

I will try to demonstrate this actual lack of freedom in science, a task that, I fear, will not be too difficult.

As regards the religious binding of the humanities, I have the following example. Not long ago I read the introduction to a recent book on the philosophy of history. The author of that introduction no longer thought of the Renaissance as the period in which human thinking freed itself from the impact of the all-embracing medieval Church. On the contrary, the impression was evoked, to say the least, that science in that period was the fulfilment for the first time of the Biblical-Christian basic conception of God the Creator. For his first trick, the author endeavoured to show that science at that time first became aware of its creative function. And, according to him, that big vision of the creativity of the human mind was only possible as an analogy of the image of the Christian God-Creator. The second trick was to show that for the first time, fundamental doubt played its part in the scientific concept as such.

That is true, as indeed was what the man said about the new concept of the creativity of the human mind. But the relation he postulated with Christianity was in this case even more arbitrary. For he said that the function of fundamental doubt we detect in people like Bacon and Galileo is to be interpreted as a symbol of the doubt caused by the impossibility for the human being ever to know the

absolute truth of God. Unnecessary to say, at least for a Freethought audience, that the fundamental doubt in modern science, which arose in the period of the Renaissance, and even more so during the 17th century, has quite another and quite a contrary meaning; that it is a symbol, not of the impossibility to know God's absolute truth, but on the contrary, of the concept that the scientist cannot rely on the authority of God or on any other authority. That man has to find the truth all by himself; that the human intellect is our only guide in finding the truth about nature and about ourselves. A third instance of a quite arbitrary religious interpretation I found in the same introduction, where the author treats of the important new discoveries in the art of the Renaissance: the discovery of perspective. If we are to believe him, to apply perspective in a drawing is not the imitation of what we see in reality if we observe an object at some distance; it is an expression of the religious idea that all earthly visible phenomena tend to find a resting point in the absolute infinity of God! In my opinion this is mere nonsense; but that is not the point for the moment. The point is, that conceptions like those I have dealt with show themselves clearly dependent on religious convictions, but nevertheless pose as up-to-date science.

I will not waste much time demonstrating scientific dependence on political and social factors. The impact of political power on science is most clearly shown in the Communist orbit, but it would be a big mistake to think that it is restricted to these areas. If we only realise that, either directly or indirectly, funds for scientific research, especially in physics and chemistry, are procured by military authorities, our thesis is already proved without any need for many words.

Somewhat more difficult to demonstrate, but nevertheless a fact, is the impact of social forces on science all over the world. This fact cannot be denied by anyone who tries to be honest with himself and his fellow men. Up to the present day, economic science defends, as a rule, the prevailing socio-economic system. Not only in dictatorships or guided societies, but even in democracies sociology is often considered more or less suspect as soon as it explores society irrespective of vested interests or socially influential institutions.

I come to my conclusion. If what I have said above is approximately true, the task of the freethinker towards science and its students seems clear enough. That task is not — supposing it were even possible — to prevent the scientist from professing a religion, from adhering to a political conviction or from championing one or other social creed. A profession of one or other political conviction, with some sort of social creed, and maybe even with some form of religion is permissible, but on two conditions. First, that it is not imposed but has grown. Second, the scientist is himself aware that his convictions are extra-scientific.

The task of the Freethinker in this connection evidently is: to be unremittingly on the alert. Firstly, in order to make the scientists every day more conscious of the three influences to which their results are habitually subjected; secondly, to further in society every development likely to restrain the aspiration of the Church to gain power again; thirdly to restrain the aspirations of the State to assume dictatorship in scientific matters!

This Believing World

In referring to the pious Salvation Army singer, David Gustav Taylor, who has just been sentenced to seven years for swindling his firm of £20,000, most of which he spent on night-club hostesses and bookmakers, we once again must emphasise it is no argument against Christianity as such. But it has ever been the kind of argument which Christians delight to use if they can against Freethinkers, Atheists, Materialists, and even against Humanists who are not enamoured of Christianity. But while we can always produce examples of Christian scoundrels — bank robbers, coshers, child murderers, animal torturers, and similar criminals, Christians would be hard put to find even one Freethinker these days sentenced to long periods of imprisonment for foul crimes.

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The Moderator of the Free Church Council, the Rev. W. R. Shearer, appears only lately to have discovered that no more than 10 per cent. of our inhabitants go regularly to church. But he declared this did not trouble him so much as the fact that the other 90 per cent. did "not know the first thing about prayer or God." A more damning indictment of our enforced religious teaching could not be imagined. But what did Mr. Shearer propose to do about it? He advised "the growth and development of Sunday morning corporate service." We sometimes wonder when we read this kind of thing whether the reverend gentlemen responsible for such advice have ever been outside their narrow churches, and seen the world as it really is.

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The truth is that "corporate services" have been the great standbys of Christianity from the moment it became a "Church"; and its priests, with "bell, book, and candle," to say nothing of the direct threats of Hell, have ever since done their utmost to hold their flocks together in this way — with what result? 90 per cent. of Christians "know nothing about God." But if this is so, are not the priests themselves to blame? Are they completely incapable of telling us all about God? Or is it not a fact that these "Men of God" know no more about God than, let us say, the most ignorant Australian aborigine?

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And following all this, we find some of our Parish Magazines pathetically appealing for help, admitting that "the shortage of men in the Christian faith is appalling." This is the opinion of Mr. Joe Stuart who is the Chairman of St. James's Newchapel Men's Society, and no doubt his dismal conviction is shared all over the country. He wants "tough-looking men" to keep "the Christ flag flying high" but where are they? God alone knows.

★

One of the mysteries we have often battled over is how could such a distinguished writer and statesman like Sir Winston Churchill ever subscribe to the primitive dogmas and ideas which surround true Christianity? *The Observer* has been publishing extracts from his Autobiography, describing his early encounters with religion, and they make piquant reading. He found the monumental *Decline and Fall of Gibbon*, Winwood Reade's *Matyrdom of Man* and the works of Lecky — all by the way damning indictments of Christianity — simply magnificent, Gibbon, in fact, dominating his writing and speech ever afterwards. And at the same time he has nothing but contempt for Gibbon's "pompous-pious editor," Dean Milman, whose "apologies and disclaimers" roused young Churchill's "ire." The mystery is — where exactly does Sir Winston stand? If he were forced to choose now — would he be on the side of Freethought or Christianity?

Our National dailies never, if they can help it, refuse a communication from a reader, backing up to the utmost the authenticity and credibility of every statement in the Bible. So we were not surprised to find a correspondent in the *News Chronicle* angrily objecting to the archaeologists who intend to find out if there ever was a Sodom and Gemorrah by exploring the Dead Sea. As he rightly says, not only the Old Testament but the actual words of "our Lord" guarantee the one-time existence of the two cities. How could both be mistaken? We hope blatant infidels will now shut up for if they don't they will certainly incur the full extent of the wrath of God Almighty too awful to contemplate.

Determinism and Free Will

By HENRY MEULEN

WOULD ANY OF YOUR READERS like to get their teeth into the following?

All scientific tracing of causes may be described as statements that, in our experience, event A follows event B. Note that this statement is purely descriptive — what Karl Pearson called the "How" of events; we never find out why A follows B — the "Why" of events. When science "explains" a sequence, it does no more than put X, Y or Z between A and B, X, Y and Z being merely additional events that occur between A and B; the reason why these events should occur in that order is not, cannot be, given.

Now both Determinism and Free Will step in to give an answer to the question why A follows B. Determinism says that A is compelled to follow B; Free Will says that A wills to follow B in some cases. But both are making assertions on a subject on which they should be agnostic. They object to the statement that A follows B because God wills it so; but their error is just as gross. The fundamental error is the attempt to see behind, or between, phenomena; we perceive only sequences of events; the reason for the sequence must remain unknown to us.

Nevertheless, we can speculate as to the reason for the sequence, just as we can speculate on the alleged existence of God. I reject the hypothesis of God because it seems improbable. Similarly I reject Determinism because I think that no man could lead a normal life if he really believed that all his daily cogitation over alternative action were merely part of an immense mechanism, and that if he ceased to worry about things, it would be the mechanism, not he, that was responsible for the results.

I incline to the hypothesis that we have free will. Firstly because I feel that I can choose, and nobody can prove that I cannot. Secondly because I am doubtful of the "law" that every event has a mechanical cause. We have certainly found adequate causes for an immense number of events; but it is also a fact that no two events are exactly alike. The differences may not be great enough to prevent the erection of a scientific "law" but they are there, and they may be uncaused, i.e., spontaneous. When I desire a certain event, I can generally find reasons why the event is desirable; but whether the reasons (which we will call A) compel the appearance of the desire (B), or whether B arose spontaneously in me and caused A, I cannot tell; I experience only A and B. But all human sanity and dignity impel me to believe that when the desire arises within me, I can uncausedly choose between the reasons for and against the satisfaction of that desire.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE WORLD'S MOST HOLY VILLAGE
—OBERAMMERGAU

THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.
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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

Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, W.1.) Sunday, December 13th, 7.15 p.m.: W. A. GAPE, "Association versus Organisation."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, December 15th, 7.15 p.m.: K. R. C. STURMER, (Ruskin College), "Dr. L. L. Zamenhof, Inventor of Esperanto—Humanist—Poet."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate.) Sunday, December 13th, 6.30 p.m.: Film: "The Witches of Salem."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, December 13th, 2.30 p.m.: W. WHITLOCK, "A Planned Distributive Economy."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, Orpington) Sunday, December 13th, 5.30 p.m.: "Annual General Meeting."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, December 13th, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, F.R.S.E., "Ethics of a Dreamer—Thomas De Quincey."

West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, E.11.) Thursday, December 17th, 7.45 p.m.: L. EBURY, "1960—Does Freethought Matter?"

Notes and News

WE HAVE HAD to remove the "Have Faith" Christmas Card advertisement from our back page this week for space reasons. This gives us an opportunity to say that the demand for the cards has been excellent and has necessitated a reprinting. So orders can still be met; 5/- per dozen (including envelopes and postage) from THE FREETHINKER office.

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WE SOMETIMES WONDER how many MP's affirm instead of taking the Oath, but the Parliamentary record doesn't distinguish between the two. It simply says: "The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law . . ." In the House of Lords the distinction is made, and six members affirmed: Lord Chorley, Lord Faringdon, Lord Jessel, the Earl of Listowel, the Earl of Lucan and Baroness Wootton of Abinger.

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WRITING IN THE *Worthing Herald* the other week, Canon H. W. Browning of Southwark pitied those who couldn't

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £305 8s. 5d.; W. T. Hawks, £2 1s.; J. A. 4s.; T. F. Stringer, 4s. 6d.; J. Scarlett, £1; Total to date, December 4th, 1959, £308 17s. 11d.

accept the Christmas story, the "centre" of which was, of course, "Good news of great joy," etc. He was replying to a Mr. Malcolm Rutt, and he listed a number of Christian sects who "all believe that Jesus died to redeem mankind." All "these hundred of millions of people are wrong: only Mr. Rutt is right," said the Canon, conveniently forgetting a few hundred millions of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, who are also unbelievers in the Christmas Story. He also forgot that his own Bishop isn't a particular friend of one of the sects he linked with his own: the Roman.

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HAMPSHIRE EDUCATION COMMITTEE has adopted what Dr. Horace King, M.P., termed a "makeshift" scheme to enable Roman Catholic children to receive Catholic grammar school instruction at public expense. It was found impracticable to provide an aided grammar school for R.C. children in the county, and the Education Committee will pay "the full cost of pupils attending certain R.C. fee-paying schools as from September, 1960. It also covers the payment of travelling up to the limit of cost involved if the child was attending the nearest grammar school designated for the district in which the child lives." (*Bournemouth Evening Echo*, 24/11/59). Mr. W. H. Ewart-James, a barrister, moving "reference back," said he thought the Education Committee's plan was opening the door very wide. On the general principle, if a particular treatment was given to any branch of the community it would have to be given to any other branch who happened to apply. "Supposing an agnostic body came forward, or supposing a nudist body came forward, and said: 'We want similar treatment accorded to our children; we want children to go to the schools we choose,' we would have to pay for places for those children." Mr. Ewart-James's motion was "outvoted substantially." The Chairman of the Education Committee, Alderman A. H. Quilley is a Catholic.

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MR. FRANCIS STEPHENS, father of the Earl Shilton school-boy, Anthony Stephens, who disappeared eight-months ago with his former art teacher, Kevin Tracey, is disappointed with the results of recent appeals to the Pope (*Leicester Mercury*, 1/12/59). Mr. Stephens wrote to the Pope asking him to authorise the issue of leaflets carrying pictures and descriptions of the missing pair to every Roman Catholic church in Europe. The Vatican Secretariat assured Mr. Stephens that the Pope will remember the family and Tony in his prayers. "It is a heartless thing to say", Mr. Stephens commented, "but I want material help more than spiritual assistance. The letter never mentioned anything about my leaflet suggestion and I am disappointed." We can appreciate his view and see nothing heartless in it whatever.

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WE HAVE BEEN asked by the Rev. N. Leslie Stokes, to publish a note regarding the Liberation Society, of which he was the Secretary. Founded in 1844 to free religion from State patronage and control, the Society has now been officially dissolved, and its assets and work for Nonconformist rights have been taken over by the Free Church Federal Council.

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LAST WEEK'S OF THE FREETHINKER, containing the Spanish Teacher's protest against President Eisenhower's visit to Generalissimo Franco, was sent with a covering letter, to the United States Embassy in London.

What is the Christian Case?—3

By H. CUTNER

THE THIRD MAJOR LINE of our attack on Christianity is, says Mr. Ashe, "on the New Testament as history." In this, he is perfectly right — we certainly attack the New Testament not only as history, but because its whole conception of Man is (to put it very mildly) pure nonsense. Freethought does not allow any room for a "Saviour," or a "Messiah," or a "Son of God" or "Original Sin," or for anybody dying to "save the world." Not only is there no "evidence" for any of these things, but the world would never have known anything about them if it had not been for some writings which we are told appeared in the first century but which are undoubtedly edited versions produced for the first time in the second century. Outside them, there is nowhere a line in ancient writings of Rome or Greece, for example, that anybody knew about a descendant of the Hebrew King David dying to save the souls of everybody then living, and all the souls which were to come in future ages. The whole conception is simply silly.

Think of it — Mr. Ashe asks in 1959, 'If the Incarnation did not happen, what did?' The "Incarnation" is a made-up piece of utter credulity born in an age of fear, ignorance, and superstition, for which of course no evidence could possibly be given, detailed in some writings which are hopelessly anonymous, and packed with similar stories not one of which has any more credibility than those in the *Arabian Nights*; and Mr. Ashe asks if it didn't happen, what did? It is just as if I asked him if Aladdin didn't find his Wonderful Lamp in the cave to which his uncle sent him, what did he find? The evidence for the "Incarnation" is just as strong as the evidence for the cave in which the Wonderful Lamp was stored.

Where do we find the story of the Incarnation? In two documents called Matthew and Luke known as Gospels, and they have been examined in detail almost from the year in which we heard of them. That year is about 180 A.D., and no matter how hard Christians have worked to find traces of them before that date, they have utterly failed.

But let us not be deceived by any plea that they would be any more authentic or credible if the dates given by the Christian Churches could be backed up by evidence which could not be disputed. For example, let us take that edifying story of Jesus flying up to Heaven as given by Luke. We Freethinkers say Luke's Gospel was unknown before 180 A.D. — that is, this particular story was written about 150 years after the incident. Upon what did he base it? On other Gospels? Where are they, who wrote them, and when were they written? Does he guarantee that they were relating something they had *witnessed* or what? How did he know?

Now, there may be sillier stories in the *Arabian Nights* than the aerial flight of Jesus, the Son of God Almighty to Heaven related in Luke, but I do not know them. So let us take the date given by the Churches for Luke — about 64 A.D., and ask ourselves if this story is therefore more credible. Is a "miracle" less impossible because it is supposed to have taken place a little earlier than some people thought?

Let us look upon the "Ascension" of Jesus more closely. Who should have recorded it — someone who actually *saw* it, who was on the spot, so to speak, or someone who was merely repeating a "hearsay" who *never* saw it?

The Churches are unanimous about this — Matthew and John were actual *witnesses* of the Ascension for they

were with Jesus when he flew to Heaven. Mark *may* have been there, but he was never one of the "Twelve" or "Thirteen" like Matthew and John. In any case, the verses recording the Ascension in Mark have been "suspect" for centuries as a "fraudulent" addition — though naturally they have also been strenuously defended as "authentic." Our Revised Version states that the last twelve verses of the 16th chapter are omitted from "the two oldest Greek manuscripts and some other authorities," while "some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel." Mark then is at least suspect. As for Luke, he was certainly not with the Apostles when Jesus left them, "and was carried up into Heaven." Thus all Christians believe in the Ascension of Jesus, as indeed so many of them believe in the Assumption of Mary, not from the evidence of witnesses, but upon the "evidence" of someone who *never* saw it. And I am sure that this is one of the "miracles" of Jesus which Mr. Ashe must have thought about when he wrote to me that he found so difficult to disbelieve!

In other words, Matthew and John who actually *saw* the Ascension *never* mention it; Mark's account is very dubious; while Luke, who *never saw* it, tells us all about it!

But let us look a little closer into the "history" of the Gospels which Mr. Ashe believes are really true. I have pointed out that they were quite unknown before about the year 180 A.D. — but, of course, this is not admitted by the Churches. For example, before me I have a work entitled *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* written by The Most Rev. M. Sheehan, D.D., as a two-year course of religious instruction for schools and colleges. Dr. Sheehan, in chapter 3, deals with the historical value of the Gospels and their "genuineness" and admits that Luke was written "somewhat later" than "between 50 and 60 A.D.," the dates he gives for Matthew and Mark. John was written, he tells us, about 100 A.D. And how does he prove all this? Very simply. "Numerous texts" he tells us, "from the Evangelists are quoted in the letters of Pope Clement (95 A.D.), St. Ignatius of Antioch (107 A.D.), St. Polycarp . . ." and of course the inevitable St. Justin and Papias. It would be safe to say that not one of Dr. Sheehan's students or even any of his readers would take the trouble to test these statements. I would be greatly surprised if Mr. Ashe would.

But what does the eminent Catholic Encyclopedia tell us about Clement and his letters quoting the Gospels? It says: "The New Testament he *never* quotes verbally. Sayings of Christ are now and then given, but *not* in the words of the Gospels. It cannot be proved, therefore, that he used any one of the Synoptic Gospels." (CE iv, 14 — my italics.) And note — not another Pope is quoted until after 180 A.D. as knowing the Gospels. Mr. Ashe would strongly object if I called Dr. Sheehan a liar, but what else is he?

Here is another quotation from the very Catholic Encyclopedia: —

It is indeed impossible at the present day, to describe the precise manner in which out of the numerous works ascribed to some Apostle, or simply bearing the name of gospel, only four, two of which are not ascribed to Apostles, came to be considered as sacred and canonical . . . Eusebius . . . Clement of Alexandria . . . and Tertullian were familiar with our four Gospels quoting and commenting on them. (CE, vi, 657.)

Of course — the three gentlemen named all wrote *after* 180 A.D. But what about the 'numerous works ascribed

to some Apostle" — in what way did they differ from the others? I have never found any relevant difference and I have read some of them.

I would like to deal fully with the alleged quotations from the Gospels in Papias, Ignatius, Justin and the other "Apostolic" Fathers who are always quoted in this connection. All these quotations can be found in W. R. Cassels's *Supernatural Religion* side by side with those from the Gospels, in Greek, so that readers can check the "similarities." Suffice it here to say that, with one or two exceptions, they all differ in some way. But of course, we do not say there were no "sayings" attributed to Jesus floating around afterwards incorporated into various Gospels ascribed to some Apostle. What we here maintain is that the present four were *unknown* before about the year 180 A.D.; and further, even if they could be dated 100 years earlier, this would not make the Gospel "miracles" a whit more credible.

In my next article I hope to deal with "the most authenticated event in the history of the world" — the Resurrection. Mr. Ashe may find my criticisms not very palatable.

Religion of Criminals

By P. G. BAMFORD (New Zealand)

I WAS INTERESTED in an article by Colin McCall in THE FREETHINKER of August 7th 1959, on the difficulty of obtaining from the authorities information on the religions of prison inmates. Difficulty is also experienced here. Up to 50 years ago, the information used to be published every year in the *New Zealand Official Year Book*; the Year Book still contains 23 pages of information concerning courts and prisons, and the religions of prisoners are noted in the prisons and chaplains provided, but this vital information is no longer printed, presumably because of Roman Catholic pressure. A Roman Catholic member of the New Zealand Parliament has recently introduced a bill to make religious instruction in schools compulsory on the ground that religious instruction would raise the moral standard of the community. The Government pretends to be concerned about juvenile delinquency, but nevertheless refuses to publish figures that would throw some light on the alleged benefits of religious instruction. A year ago I wrote to the Government Statistician for this information, and received the following reply: —

Department of Statistics,
2nd October, 1958.

Dear Sir,

I have received your letter dated 27th September asking for the last published statistics relating to the religion of prisoners in New Zealand. These now follow —

PRISONERS — RELIGIONS, 1927-1931

Table showing the proportions, in every 100 Distinct Prisoners received under sentence, of Persons belonging to each of the four Principal Religious Denominations, for each of the Five Years 1927 to 1931.

Denominations of Convicted Prisoners	Proportion per 100 of convicted Prisoners					Proportion of Denomination per 100 of Population at Census of 1926
	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	
Church of England ...	41.50	41.33	42.37	42.00	40.02	43.45
Roman Catholic ...	30.62	30.53	28.43	31.01	29.16	13.60
Presbyterian ...	16.60	16.37	16.06	15.64	17.02	25.93
Methodist ...	3.06	2.82	3.74	2.45	3.09	9.51
Others ...	8.22	8.95	9.40	8.90	10.71	7.51
Totals	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

It will be seen that the religions shown do not cover a very wide range, but I hope they will be of some assistance to you.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) B. Tossman,
for J. V.T. Baker,
Government Statistician.

From the table as given above I have compiled the following: —

Denomination	Percentage in the country	Percentage in the prisons (5 years average)
Church of England ...	43.45	41.44
Presbyterian ...	25.93	16.34
Methodist ...	9.51	3.03
Others ...	7.51	9.24
Total non-Catholic ...	86.40	70.05
Catholic ...	13.60	29.95

What a tribute to the moral effect of religious instruction in schools!

Two Books

I KNOW THERE ARE SOME Freethinkers today who believe that the menace of the Roman Catholic Church is a thing of the past. Living in countries like Great Britain, they see little of the real Rome. I tell you that you are living under a great peril. The Vatican is in some ways in the ascendant in this mid-century period. The danger is real.

Freethinkers have published several good books on the most terrible enemy of our time, the Roman Catholic Church, and these books have been quite widely read. But the people still remain unconscious of the danger before them. The Vatican, as Mr. Avro Manhattan has shown us, honeymooned now, with the Dollar. This is a dangerous liaison for humanity, for liberty, for freethought.

I am a Spaniard and I can speak with the deepest feeling in this matter. I speak from my bleeding heart, and I tell you: Where the Catholic Church gains power, liberty is murdered. Where the Catholic Church gains power there is a new Canossa.

For those who read French, I recommend two recent books published by Librairie Fischbacher, 33 rue de Seine, Paris: *Le Vatican contre l'Europe* by Edmond Paris (reviewed by Mr. Ridley in your issue of November 13th) and *L'Equivoque Catholique* by Frédéric Hoffet.

These books are well documented and well written, and they remind us of the battle which Freethinkers all over the world must fight indefatigably. I hope they will be read and digested

A SPANISH TEACHER

CORRESPONDENCE

MYTHOLOGY AND MORALITY

Geoffrey's Ashe's "What is the Anti-Christian Case?" is "much ado about nothing." After such careful marshalling of so many words, the cold fact still remains that we know neither whence, whither nor anything of a certainty except that we are here.

History clearly indicates that the feudal monarch and the institutionised Church were merely projections in a more complex society, of the earlier tribal chief and medicine man. They functioned in close partnership to keep the populace docile and free

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from "dangrous thoughts." Each sought supremacy in their own particular field but recognised that they needed each other to maintain and extend their power. Would Mohammed II's hordes have succeeded in scaling the walls of Constantinople without the stimulus of the fanatical faith of Islam? Was not the Spanish Armada gathered together, as much as for anything else, to destroy a rebel against the sovereignty of "the one true Church"?

It is a travesty on human intelligence that the crude religious concepts of the childhood of mankind should continue to have meaning for so many. Mythology, be it Greek, Roman, Moslem or Christian, is still mythology and efforts to match it with reality are meaningless. Because various religions have latched onto our principles of morality, ethics and human relations and claimed them as their own does not establish their copyright. These principles have been formulated out of centuries of bitter human experience and institutional religion has contributed precious little toward crystallising them.

ARTHUR B. HEWSON (*American Rationalist*, Chicago.)

ATHEISTS AND THEISTS

What exactly does Mr. Bennett want unbelievers to do?

He commences with the statement that there is nothing wrong in a person imparting what he thinks is the truth, goes on to say that freethought militancy is wrong and concludes that this does not mean that "we should soft-pedal our unbelief." How it is possible to do both these things I entirely fail to see! Are we to stand meekly by while Christians tell us, and others, that they have historic evidence of Jesus and the miracles? Has Mr. Bennett ever known a Christian who is at all backward in telling of the wonderful deeds and promises of the "saviour of mankind?" Personally I hold it just as much my duty to knock down the rubbish put up by believers as the Christian considers it his duty to preach it.

I hope in the final part of his article that Mr. Bennett is not suggesting that it is the atheist who has "faith in nothing" — if so, I can only say it is a most stupid suggestion. It may well be that I am a little dense, but if Mr. Bennett had not definitely stated that he is an atheist I should never have believed it.

C. STANLEY.

While in substantial agreement with friend Bennett "An Atheist's attitude to Theists," I see no justification for his regret about the "Modern tendency to use the term Secularism as a synonym for Atheism."

Generally speaking, Secularists are Atheists, and only Atheists are entitled to use the term Secularist. Presumably all members of Secular Societies are Atheists, and so looked upon.

I regret the "Modern tendency" if such it be, of parsons, and other believers in God, and other-worldism calling themselves Secularists. To do so is misleading and confusing.

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

"REALITY"

A reply to Mr. McCall's reply to me! Mr. McCall asks me how I know "life" apart from its manifestations. The answer is, of course, that I do not. What I am arguing is that whatever it is that causes motion and response to stimuli and intelligent awareness in those manifestations did not just arise haphazard, but was produced by an adequate cause.

"What does he mean by 'attributes' being present to start with?" asks Mr. McCall. I mean that you can't get something out of nothing. I mean that, just as objects made of wood possess only those qualities inherent in the timber and chemicals stuffs used in their manufacture, so living beings must possess qualities inherent in Nature from the beginning.

Why "blind" chaos? Just a poetical metaphor, Mr. McCall! Have you never spoken of a "gloomy" day or a "happy" thought? I agree that "mental processes are dependent upon a physical organ, the brain." All I would add is, brains and mental processes are aspects of a reality which is dependent upon neither, nor anything.

S. W. BROOKS.

P.S.—I am back on the old Spinozistic formula that there exists a purposive, intelligent "cause of itself," which may be described as "God" or "Nature" or "God/Nature," or as far as I personally am concerned, anything you may consider appropriate!—S.W.B.

[Mr. McCall writes: Mr. Brooks acknowledges that he only knows "life" through its manifestations. How is it "much more realistic," then, "to suppose that life is eternal and that only its manifestations and outward forms are subject to evolution?" The answer is simple: it isn't. It is realistic to deal with what we know, namely, living things, not some abstract "life." Mr. Brooks persists in referring to a "reality" beyond what we know: I use "reality" to mean all that we know. Poetry has high emotional content and so is out of place in a philosophy that aims to be analytic and

descriptive in a scientific manner. "Blind chaos" is emotionally-charged and scientifically meaningless. So, too, is "haphazard," as Mr. Brooks uses it. Used as a synonym for "random" it has validity in a certain context: used as an antonym for "caused" (above) it has none. In any case, no Materialist that I know talks of the properties of living creatures as uncaused. The main point of my original article was to substantiate Morgan's statement that they were "the outcome of their chemical and physical composition and configuration": i.e., the chemical and physical composition of living things causes them to act in the manner we call living. This is meaningful language: to refer to "life" and "mind" as "aspects" of an unknown "reality" is not. In short, Mr. Brooks's language is not only poetic, it is anthropomorphic; and no scientific pretence could survive that postscript.]

VITALISM

"Where Biology and Physics Converge," by Mr. Colin McCall, which appeared in your issue dated 13/11/59, calls for an answer from the Vitalist standpoint. Personally, I can think of no better answer than that given by physicist R. C. Johnson, D.Sc., Ph.D., in his well-known work *The Imprisoned Splendour*.

Johnson says (p.58): "When the chemistry of growth-promotion and growth-control will have been fully unravelled the central problem will remain the same. What organises the organisers in space and time?" He continues: "We cannot have a plan without a planner. Mind is the only thing known to us with purpose, memory and intelligence, and we may infer it is the source and sustainer of the plans."

Having spent many years studying biological phenomena (and from it obtained a religious belief), I completely agree with Johnson's conclusions. However, knowing THE FREETHINKER for a long while, I realise that this letter — which could be extensive — will be about as welcome as an Atheist's letter is to the national Press. Perhaps one day we shall have a real freethought paper in Britain.

J. W. T. ANDERSON.

[Mr. McCall extends his sympathy to Vitalists Dr. Johnson and Mr. Anderson if that is the best "answer" they can produce between them.]

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