

The Freethinker

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WE READ MANY WARNINGS in the New Testament against the power and love of money. The founder, Jesus Christ himself, uttered the notable warning: "You cannot serve both God and Mammon", the latter being the Hebrew ex-angel who was primarily responsible for the more mercenary lusts to which humanity is heir. His apostles emphasised and endorsed this weighty saying of the Master. St. Paul (or his impersonator) warned his young followers, that "The love of money is the root of all evil", while the Holy James, the brother of the Lord, in the general Epistle which bears his name, uses denunciatory language about his contemporary capitalists, from which Christian socialists have quoted from that

day to this. (The 16th century Anabaptists were reputed to know this socialistic Epistle by heart.) And, not content with the merely verbal denunciations of his colleagues, St. Peter, the "first Pope", actually passed sentence of death upon Ananias and Sapphira for practising the "economic virtue" of accumulating worldly goods—to the detriment no doubt, of the Church—a capital sentence which, as we learn from Acts, was immediately executed by the Holy Ghost in person! If, accordingly, there is any one ethical problem upon which both the founder of Christianity and his earliest followers have set down their opinion in clear and unambiguous terms, it is precisely this question of money. A true Christian is one who "sells all that he has and gives to the poor" and "lays up treasure in Heaven", and resolutely turns his back upon the earthly accumulation of base and perishable worldly goods.

The Churches and Property

But how many true Christians are there who live up to their founder's inspired precepts? To judge from the available records, very few, and these mostly in heretical sects on the fringe of Christianity; sects which—or so we may suppose—had failed to jump the bandwagon and muscle in on the contents. Such sects accordingly, continued to preach, as they had to practise, the primitive poverty of Apostolic times. But as far as the more successful Churches are concerned, they appear from a very early date to have honoured the apostolic teaching about the root of all evil in the breach rather than in the observance. One can add that this has always been particularly so in respect of that Church allegedly founded by St. Peter, the merciless judge of those early Christian experts in the primary accumulation of capital, Ananias and Sapphira of ill-fated memory. For the Church of Rome has always been Business—with an extra big B! In medieval Europe and in modern Latin America, it owned half the available land, the real property of these areas. Though the Reformation was caused by its shameless financial extortions by means of Tetzels Indulgences ("As the coin clicks in the box, the soul flies out of Purgatory", proclaimed Tetzels.) Rome has since, apparently found equally profitable alternative investments, for in

1960 the Vatican is probably still the headquarters of the richest capitalistic organisation upon earth. Its dislike of Communism has a solidly material basis!

"The Christian Stewardship of Money"

But our attention has been called to this intriguing theme by a recent publication of the Church of England, first issued in April 1959 and now re-issued. Priced at 2s. 6d. and appropriately published by the Central Board

of finances of the Church of England, this booklet bears the rather unctious title given above. (Had it been issued under the auspices of any merely secular business concern, it would presumably have borne the less pretentious title of "A Modern Means for Raising Money"

or something on similar lines. For there is actually little about Christianity and less about stewardship in the ninety-odd pages of this little book. It simply represents a series of suggestions on purely business lines for inducing the laity, the rank and file of the Church, to part with at least a percentage—a tenth is one suggestion—of their hard-earned savings for ecclesiastical purposes. Apart from its sacrosanct title, there is nothing specifically religious about its phraseology. It represents a normal advertising business document, obviously written by hard-headed men of the world—this world—who, to do them justice, don't indulge in any apostolic cant about money. In fact, far from agreeing with Paul that "money is the root of all evil", they quite obviously agree with the Irishman's comment: "Let's have more of the root". The whole purpose of this eminently capitalistic brochure, is that the Church of England should get its fair share of the available "root", and the whole object of the booklet is to devise up-to-date ways and means of seeing that it does. Evidently Dr. Fisher and his colleagues do not agree with Jesus, James, Paul and Peter, upon the important topic of money. In fact, where God and Mammon are concerned, God is an also ran!

Christianity Incorporated

A large part of this Anglican money-raiser is devoted to various concrete ways of raising money, all couched on strictly business lines. There is nothing particularly original about any of these, and except for occasional pious indications that potential contributors' Higher Interests are at stake, they are the sort of suggestions that might emanate from any competent advertising concern. One notes with interest that the Church of England is still too strait-laced to advocate gambling, whether on football pools, dogs or horses, as one presumes a Roman Catholic appeal for similar purposes would probably have done. The nonconformist conscience is still potent, perhaps, within the Establishment. Perhaps the most original, as well as daring, suggestion made by the anonymous author, is that the Church might seek the help of professional fund-raising Companies, after the apparently very successful methods long employed by the American Churches. To counter possible objections to this practice, for which

VIEWS and OPINIONS

God and Mammon

By F. A. RIDLEY

there is certainly no warrant in the New Testament, we are informed: "If English Church people need to be taught the principles of Christian stewardship—as they do, and if the Church in this land lacks men trained to teach this subject—as it does—we should be sufficiently humble to accept the help which the fund-raising companies offer" (p.50). Humility is certainly a Christian virtue, but it is permissible to doubt how the Jesus of the Gospels would have reacted to this particular form of it! I may add the personal comment that this example of present day Big Business masquerading as Christianity more than ever convinces me that, if Jesus and the early Christians were to return today, they would—to put it mildly—find the greatest difficulty in finding any Church in which their New Testament tenets would be tolerated. Even Jehovah's Witnesses, which is in some ways the nearest to primitive

Christianity, is nowadays quite *persona grata* with Mammon as well as with God and, like our more respectable Church of England, finds this form of co-existence both easy and profitable.

Thirty-Nine or a Thirty-Ninth?

The *Sunday Express* recently remarked that the primary qualification for a bishop in the Church of England is to be a good business man. The publication that we have been considering goes far to substantiate this view. And Karl Marx went on record in the last century with the notable affirmation that the Church of England would rather lose the whole of its Thirty-Nine Articles than one thirty-ninth of its income. We suggest to the publishers of this brochure (the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England) that they place this apposite comment in bold type on the title page of the next edition of *The Christian Stewardship of Money*.

Circumcision

By Dr. V. H. DUHIG

THERE IS NOTHING which irritates me as a doctor beyond endurance more than the rubbish talked about that barbarous mutilation, Circumcision.

It was bad enough for Mr. W. Steinhardt (29/4/60) to take the advice of surgeons, obviously ignorant on the subject, looking for some gullible person to give them a bit of operating practice, but why, in Jehovah's name, listen to sisters above all people, even if they did belong to the staff of the Holy of all Medical Holies, Bart's? What authoritative or original advice could they give apart from the routine of the hospital in which circumcision apparently is just as much routine as in the local synagogue or in the Temple about 10 B.C. in Jerusalem. I have never heard of Lord Amulree but the absolute statement of his on penile cancer is most incautious; what he intended to say, I think, is that, to his knowledge, no case has so far been reported in a circumcised subject.

Let us look at the facts.

Circumcision is a form of sacrifice to Jehovah. I remember once reading in that horrible book the Old Testament a request from the Most High to a tribal soldier to reserve for him a thousand foreskins after a battle against the uncircumcised, and therefore, enemies of Jehovah (and on another occasion he asked for a thousand virgins. Nice people!) To base modern surgical practice on such muck as this is degrading.

As Pathologist to the biggest hospital south of the Equator for nearly 30 years, I examined about half-a-million microscopic sections of human tissue mainly of tumours. I doubt if I saw more than 20 cases of penile cancer, less than one a year and about 1 in 25,000 of the sections examined in a largely working-class community of about half-a-million of mostly uncircumcised men. Even this extremely low incidence of penile cancer could have been avoided if the sufferers had been taught and had practised elementary personal hygiene. There is some scanty evidence that the *Smegma bacillus*, part of the penile coronal flora, may be carcinogenic. I read a paper to that effect in a good British Journal about 20 years ago.

But if circumcision on this basis is to be practised so as merely to avoid cancer arising in unclean areas under the foreskin, then logically we should cut off every school-boys' ears. And if we intend this way to prevent cancer of the order of only 1 in 25,000, we should most imperatively on this logic deprive every woman of her breasts and womb at about age 30. These are favourite sites for the Most High Christian God for his cruel work.

During World War I, I was physician on the staff of an Australian General Hospital (Military), and amongst recruits I saw a few post-circumcisional deformities and mutilations at the hands of unskilful surgeons and, I suppose, rabbis. Plastic surgery was then almost unknown and we just had to leave things as they were. I do not remember if the men suffered any psychic trauma: I was very very young then but I think now I would have felt awkward under the showers after a football practice in the presence of others. From what I saw I think psychic trauma at least possible. The silly operation should have never been done at all anyhow.

In the course of much sex counselling in later life I learnt a lot about many things. One was that at least some women prefer uncircumcised men. The prepuce appears to fulfil two functions: one is that it sharpens the pleasure of the orgasm, possibly because it gives the woman a larger scope for her orgasm. Apparently the uncovered glans becomes hardened and less sensitive. I had only one witness on this point and my recollection is a little hazy but it generally tends to make me regret that Mr. Steinhardt has deprived his two sons of some of their legitimate pleasure in life. The other function of a prepuce, when retracted at the moment of ejaculation, is that combined with the ledge of the corona glandis it serves as a sort of dam to stop reflux of seminal fluid and so promotes conception.

What Two Sisters of Bart's would know about all this will always remain a mystery to me: I am afraid they will not remove my detestation of this barbarous ritual mutilation. And why on earth do people still practise it? It has no real purpose, no justification and no advantage, and it seems to possess real defects.

In spite of Mr. Steinhardt's disclaimer, I feel he is still under the influence of his racial Jehovistic tradition. I hope his next baby boy will have more humane and kinder treatment from his Pa and much better luck than his two elder brothers.

Could Mr. Steinhardt please find out from the two Sisters of Bart's why they gave him this silly advice? I mean, of course, a real reason.

—NEXT WEEK—

SIR LESLEY PLUMMER'S BILL

By COLIN McCALL

Exactly to My Taste

By COLIN McCALL

Brew is a defence of the Open Society against its enemies.

World-stuff is *mind*, held Hegel,
 'Tis *matter*, Marx then said,
 And if, as one or other,
 The cosmos must be read,
 Then either Marx or Hegel
 Is standing on his head.

But Myra realises that she is an uncommon shop-girl, The common shop-girl is like the common man, and:

The Common Man loves dogma
 (It hurts too much to think)
 And so with creeds and "isms"
 He's easy to hoodwink—

"Never before in modern times have uniformity, religiosity, and gobbledygook been so universal; never before have the standards of art, architecture, and literature been so low; never before have the charlatans and 'con-men' who frequent the Cash Nexus 'had it so good.'" Myra's problem, and our problem, is:

How can the name of Beauty be invoked
 When the shaft of the well Pierian is choked
 With bunkum and religiosity?

She is a classicist, responding to Parthenon and Pantheon, but finding modern buildings "mostly lacking in humanity". And who does not agree with her? They may appeal intellectually,

But this is not the answer to *my* prayer;
 I seek a world where *all* of it is fair,
 A world with civic and with private shape,
 Not just an ivory tower for my escape.

Contemporary art, she regrets, has a growing attitude to the world that

Is less and less to modify and shape it
 And more and more to shun it and escape it . . .

As for Space Travel, "Technologically speaking, it is an unimportant by-product of the East-West rivalry in guided missiles, but as a diversion from the problems of this earth it is almost as valuable as religion". And, of course,

The hero who can scarcely read and write
 Longs for interplanetary flight
 To get away from thought's infectious bite.

On the Third Programme "or *Hibbert Journal* level", on the other hand, the anti-Russell campaign has been largely in the hands of the Rev. Father E. Lenkhous, SJ—another pseudonym that readers will break down—and he has "a number of important advantages over Lord Russell". "For one thing, he knows beforehand the official answers to the questions posed, whereas Russell is merely trying to discover the correct ones." And, as Myra notes, he carefully uses philosophical and not theological language. To say that God exists because he is "philosophically necessary" sounds much better "at least to a Protestant audience" than to say that He exists "because the Pope says so". The object of argument, as the Father well knows, "is not to arrive at the truth but to *win*", and "When Russell presses him too hard he utters great names such as Plato, Kant, Heisenberg, Evelyn Waugh, Hilaire Belloc, etc., in a solemn voice which creates
 (Concluded on next page)

"MYRA BUTTLE", as readers of *The Humanist* will know, is a pseudonym that no longer conceals the eminent Cambridge orientalist, Mr. Victor Purcell. She is also, of course, an anagram of "My Rebuttal". But for me she is the delightful Miss Buttle who first won our hearts—and our minds—a couple of years ago with *The Sweeniad*, her satire on T. S. Eliot, and who enchanted us again with *Toynbee in Elysium*. Now she makes her third appearance, giving us *The Bitches' Brew or the Plot Against Bertrand Russell* (Watts, 12s. 6d.). And very badly we needed it too!

The most rewarding satire is that on behalf of common sense, and this is the type of satire we get from Myra Buttle. She is a "shop-girl" of taste, as opposed to "Good Taste"; of the spirit of inquiry as opposed to "Reverence"; and of common sense as opposed to "Immoral Rearmament". For once it may truthfully be said that here is a work of art that may be enjoyed on several levels; and that *The Bitches' Brew* gains from this multiplicity. Here indeed is richness! The literary connoisseur will find much to tickle his palate, with parodies and pastiches of Belloc, Blake, Browning, Byron, Henley, Shakespeare and Shelley among others. Invoking the last named, for example, Miss Buttle looks at the perennial *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and asks:

Watts, is that thy spirit?
 Bard thou never wert,
 That from London or near it
 Trundlest thy old cart
 Of sanctimonious verses, groping after Smart . . .

Like a fat worm eating
 Through a coffin lid,
 Or demon lost souls heating
 On a hellish grid,
 Thou hast the fancies of a mental invalid.

Not surprisingly we have many parodies of *Macbeth* as the *Bitches* prepare their anti-Bertrand Russell brew, and excellent many of them are, but technically harder, perhaps, is Miss Buttle's task in presenting the antidote from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Yet she succeeds remarkably:

Just a trace of sting of ant
 Guards it from all lies and cant . . .
 A pinch of gall against Conceit,
 So it won't be oversweet;
 Lastly into it dispense
 Five brimming jugs of Common Sense.

Myra is the enemy of all cant and humbuggery. She has no time for "religious sceptics who approve of the religious organisation of society as a means of checking subversion and reform". She has no time for a substitute religion with Dialectical Materialism for Jahveh, Marx for Christ, and the Communist Party for the Church. With her Jupiter, she spies

..... two flocks
 Of hapless wights, penned up in rival *blocs*,
 Induced to suffer every known enormity
 To keep them safe for Fear and Uniformity,
 And each bloc arming at increasing pace
 To liquidate the global wooly race.

She knows that the common enemy of religions—and especially the two *bloc* religions—is the individual. And she sees the individual epitomised in Bertrand Russell. She is, in fact, akin to Dr. Karl Popper, and *The Bitches'*

This Believing World

On the radio the other day, a lady gave her reasons for throwing overboard the Christianity of all the Churches except that of the Mormon Church. She declared that this was the only revelation worth having, with God Almighty in direct contact with the Latter Day Saints—beginning with the holiest of them all, Joseph Smith—and she has never been so happy in her life. Just as all good Christians accept every dot and comma in the Authorised Version of the Bible as direct from the Lord—some claim from Jesus—so every word in the Holy Book of Mormon is Divine. This lady no doubt would never believe that the Book of Mormon is merely a rehash of a romance by a man called Spaulding.

★

In any case, Mormonism is spreading in Britain and the *News of the World* published the other week a photo of the “baptism” of a mother and her five children in a public bath in Hemel Hempstead. This pious ceremony has angered other Christians, of course, like the Rev. J. H. Dominey, who, we are told, described the ceremony “as a piece of typical American propaganda” which of course it really is, but quite as religious and quite as effective in the interests of cleanliness (at least) as any of the reverend gentleman’s own baptisms. The religiously-washed lady herself however proudly declared, “They have got me believing in everything they told us”—so very Christian, and so very true.

★

An Italian journalist, Wanda Gawronska, managed to get a half page in *The People* describing her search for religion in Russia “the Communist boast that there is complete freedom of religious worship in Russia”. She admits that one church she visited was “packed with people”, but points out that some “churches are closed as being redundant”, and “the most the Reds can do is to try to discourage church going”. It appears also that “regular attenders” are “regarded with suspicion by the police”. Yet, “nevertheless religion in the Baltic States survives in spite of the Kremlin”. What Wanda seems to object to is that organised religion in Russia as elsewhere is looked upon as mostly credulous belief; and it should be, in her opinion in spite of that, encouraged. She does *not* tell us why?

★

B.B.C.’s television religious offering the other Sunday was a discussion on Christianity and Politics between Dr. Donald Soper and three laymen. There was precious little about politics, however, for Dr. Soper enlivened the proceedings by telling us all about “our Precious Lord” and what he thought and did, quoting even the Gospel of John—the Gospel that has been riddled to bits by Christian writers as a *fake*. Not one of the four disputants—all through believers—agreed on what Christianity really was, and Dr. Soper spent ten minutes trying hard to explain what “our Precious Lord” meant by “the Kingdom of God is within you” (or “among you”). As an example of sheer fudge and futility, this “discussion” deserved one of the big prizes handed out in Quiz programmes for answering infantile questions. It deserved nothing else.

★

Although the Boers or white Afrikanders are intensely Christian and therefore must preach that in Christ there is no colour bar or any difference between white and black, their doctrine of Apartheid gives the lie to their belief. So it is not surprising that as Miss R. Churchill says in an article on the subject in the *Daily Mail*, “Most young

urban Africans abandon altogether the Christianity they learnt in early schooldays feeling . . . it is just a trick to keep them enslaved”. Some are even calling themselves “Zionists”, wear “long white robes”, beat drums at their services, and now have “a Black Christ and a form of ancestor worship tied up with belief in angels”.

★

Of course, Black Christs and Black Virgin Marys are common places in Africa and Asia. A black statue of Isis was in Christian hands easily changed into Mary while one of Chrishna became Jesus in the twinkling of an eye. The *Daily Mail* heads its article, “Christ? That’s a white man’s gimmick”—which is a very shrewd and quite true comment on the way the name of “our Lord” is used on every possible occasion. Miss Churchill links “witch doctors” with superstition—but surely no witch doctor could equal some of the stories associated with Jesus for sheer credulity and nonsense?

The Ten Commandments Modernised

—By An American Friend

1. Thou shall have no other gods before me—except wealth, power, pleasure, fame, knowledge, sport, travel, security, friendship, longevity, etc., etc. . . .
2. Thou shalt not make nor bow down to any graven image—only venerate statues and symbols.
3. Thou shalt not take the Lord’s name in vain—use it profitably.
4. Remember the Sabbath day—was Saturday—to keep it holy—wholly free from work, games and entertainment.
5. Honour thy Father and Mother—on their respective “Day”.
6. Thou shalt not kill . . . time—only cattle, pests and Communists.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery—Keep our food-stuffs pure!
8. Thou shalt not steal—only swindle.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness—when it does not further your interests.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s ox—nor his Cadillac, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s—unless of course his name is Jones.

The Golden Rule—“Do, or you will be done by”.

EXACTLY TO MY TASTE

(Concluded from page 219)

an incense-cloud of authority under which he takes cover until the end of the broadcast”.

No wonder that an august gathering at St. Paul’s Cathedral, headed by the Archbishop of Tooting Bec, should be surprised when the hypocrites and time-servers speak the truth for once. When the Papal Nuncio suggests, “Perhaps his Holiness is not infallible after all”, and General Oldcock admits, “Sorry Old Cock! I was WRONG!” Thanks to a timely intervention by Jupiter, Merlin and Puck, the Brew turns out very different from expected (it’s amazing what a difference those “Five brimming jugs of Common Sense” make!) but you must read the book yourself to find out exactly how. You will notice that I have pretty well confined myself to dispensing samples of *The Bitches’ Brew*. Deliberately so, for satire must speak for itself, and I feel sure that Myra Buttles will, even in such small and irregular doses. Bertrand Russell is reported to have chuckled over this book when he read it in manuscript. Well he might: it is quite brilliant.

THE FREETHINKER

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All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch). — Meetings every Sunday, from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

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), Fridays 1 p.m., Sundays 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, July 17th, 6.45 p.m.: G. BRIDGEN "Scientific Humanism".

Dagenham Branch N.S.S. (214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham), Friday, July 15th, 7.30 p.m.: C. PRASAD, "Nuclear Disarmament".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1), Sunday, July 17th, 11 a.m.: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER, "Common-sense and Crisis Today".

Notes and News

NOT EVERY READER OF THE FREETHINKER will agree with Mr. Bevan's politics, any more than every member of the Labour Party did. But we are not concerned with politics here. Aneurin Bevan was a man of strong character, of critical and independent mind. He was a fighter for what he believed to be right. And these are qualities that Freethinkers admire and acknowledge. Moreover, we understand that Mr. Bevan conscientiously affirmed in the House of Commons instead of taking the oath. Of course he had his faults—he was human like the rest of us—but he was a man of stature, and public life is sadly the poorer for his death. Fortunately, those who heard his oratory are never likely to forget it. We send our deepest sympathy to his wife, Miss Jennie Lee, M.P.

★
IRONY IS A RISKY WEAPON to employ, even in THE FREETHINKER, as F. A. Ridley has recently had cause to note. No doubt most readers realised the ironic nature of Mr. Ridley's concluding remarks on M.R.A. (1/7/60), but quite a number didn't. Making accusations on haunting suspicion, one person told us, "is sinking to the level of the priest or the gutter press of the 1920's when the Russians were depicted as villains with daggers, revolvers, and bundles of red gold". But most of our solemn critics contented themselves with exclamations like "ridiculous!" and "preposterous!" Mr. Ridley is now considering a suitable parenthetical indication to readers that a particular remark is writ ironic.

ONE OF OUR READERS, however, unearthed a cutting from the Winter 1937/38 issue of *Courier*, containing a short item on Frank Buchman in his Oxford Group Movement days. His career as a religious leader "met certain little snags during 1937", we are told. "He asked Miss Margaret Rawlings, who was earning universal acclamation for her work in *Black Limelight*, to speak at a lunch. Margaret Rawlings rose, and in words which sprang out black in the next day's headlines, slashed the Oxford Group to rags for its blatant exhibitionism. She thought that it was indecent to strip your unwashed soul in public. And the stripping of unwashed souls is a main feature of Buchmanism. Public confession—especially of sexual vices—is considered a cleansing. Consequently, there is always considerable support of Buchman meetings, from prosperous followers, who can always be sure of an evening of spicy entertainment". When asked to present balance sheets showing where the money goes—continued the cutting—Mr. Buchman replies, "with a kind of divine simplicity", "But who would be interested?"

★

THE VATICAN, according to the *Sunday Dispatch* (3/7/60), has given "cautious approval" to a declaration by Roman Catholic Bishop Morris Scheenayder, of Lafayette, Louisiana, that he would refuse Christian burial to Roman Catholics guilty of criminal negligence in fatal car accidents. But the Vatican didn't go all the way with its U.S. bishop. It is "seriously alarmed by the dreadful toll of death on the roads" and regards serious motoring offences as sins. A driving offence, however, even if it causes death, "is still not considered by the Vatican as serious as suicide and other sins". So, though a Roman Catholic guilty of such criminal negligence dies in a state of sin and cannot have a full Roman Catholic funeral, the "threat of burial in unconsecrated ground would . . . never be raised".

★

A SMALL GROUP OF SPIRITUALISTS—we read in the *Leicester Evening Mail* (2/7/60)—believes that a nuclear war will have devastated the world on July 14th, and has camped high on the Italian slopes of Mont Blanc, hoping that "their vantage point 6,947 feet above sea-level will be spared". The Turin newspaper, *La Stampa* had reported only thirty people up there, but more expected daily, and "7,000 are expected to descend afterwards to rebuild the shattered world". "Crazy", one might say, but are they as crazy as those at present planning—or fanning a nuclear war?

★

IN WHICH CONNECTION, we may refer to the language of *Time* (20/6/60) in describing Mr. Khrushchev as "The tough, bullet headed little atheist who calls on God to witness that his hands are clean and his heart is pure . . ." Russian references to America and Americans are often, we understand, similarly provocative, and in this instance we must admit that Mr. Khrushchev's hands-to-heaven gesture was melodramatic and singularly pointless. But we do wish a love potion could be administered to political and military leaders, press magnates and the like, as imagined in Miss Buttle's *The Bitches' Brew*. Failing that we just have to keep on doing our little bit for sanity, hoping that time (if not *Time*) is on our side.

★

A LETTER TO THE *South London Press* (1/7/60) from a Mr. Arthur Epps, was notable neither for sense nor syntax, and referred to Charles Bradlaugh's "death-bed repentance of God's forgiveness". The intended meaning of that meaningless phrase is that Bradlaugh repented on his deathbed, which is a lie. But we don't expect to convince Mr. Epps, any more than we expect to teach him grammar.

Church Scandals in Ulster

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

WAS ST. PATRICK A MURDERER? What is the truth about St. Columbkille? How did a mermaid become a saint? Why did The See Of Clogher have to be reprimanded? What is the story behind the Earl Bishop's Temple Of Love? Such alarming questions, and many others of a similar nature, presented themselves to me when I was gathering material for my new travel book, *Thank You Now* (Blond, 25s.).

I was enchanted with the scenery and the eccentrics of Northern Ireland, with castles built by Nash and fishermen who chew seaweed for its intoxication, with pearl fishers and many other unexpected things; but some of the biggest surprises were connected with stories which the Church would like to forget.

The Church, for instance, is not over anxious to publicise St. Lupita, although this lady was a sister of St. Patrick. It will, indeed, come as a surprise to many to learn that the saint had a sister. In fact he had four other sisters besides Lupita, and also one brother; but only Lupita came to Ireland with Patrick, and I saw the site of her grave in Armagh. Someone whispered to me that Lupita had loved too well and not too wisely and that her brother never forgave her, and that the Church had presumably hastened to canonise her in order to hush up the secret. But it wasn't easy to get people to discuss the matter. Research in the local archives shows that Lupita's burial place seems to have been known to the natives down the centuries. Colgan, an Irish writer of repute, states that the body was exhumed in 1633 and that the cadaver crumbled to dust when "touched by profane hands". But it wasn't till I met the country historian, T. F. Paterson, that I really got close to solving the mystery. Paterson has recorded the oral tradition as it is still narrated by the old people, and he let me make a copy of his record:

It was wonderful the way the saints cud curse in the oul' days. The same Patrick was at it be all accounts. He'd ring he's Bell on ye and curse ye for little. An' ride over ye if he tuk the notion. He killed he's sister that way. An' ivery time she riz he turned the horses an' drew the chariot over her again. She soon died of it. But God wusn't always pleased with him for capers of that sort. He tried it once on a man but God raised the groun' an' the wheels did not damage. That should have been a lesson to him.

So!—it was not only on account of St. Lupita's love life that the Church adopted a sealed lips policy, but his sister's story also puts Patrick in the dock as a possible murderer! Maybe that is why, when St. Patrick went back to County Antrim to try to convert the old master who had formally held him as a slave, the gentleman set fire to his own house and threw himself in the conflagration rather than be baptised! Miliuc, for such was the suicide's name, seems to have been one of the genuine early martyrs of freethought.

Maybe, too, the Lupita story explains why some of the St. Patrick miracles seem less efficient than one might expect! The Struell Wells were supposed to have been blessed by the saint and to be great centres of healing; yet they no not appear to play a constructive role in the therapy prescribed for the patients in the large county asylum which has, ironically, been erected close to the wells. Then, when I was in Maghera, I was able to follow up the story of a stone which is supposed to have the indents of St. Patrick's knees when he knelt to pray. The two holes in the stone are supposed to be for ever filled miraculously with fresh water; but, unfortunately, we found

that the holes were bone dry. "Ah", cried the custodian of the place, "and isn't it another miracle? Someone must have wiped the poor man's knees dry with prayers!"

The portraits of the saints of Northern Ireland certainly seem to have been toned down and touched up through the years. One does not think today of "dear St. Patrick" riding his chariot over his sister, and one associates St. Columbkille with the propaganda picture of a sweet old anchorite listening to the birds—St. Columbkille, "The Dove Of The Church." Well, the Dove borrowed from St. Finian a manuscript of the scriptures which St. Jerome had revised, and he transcribed it and then refused to return the original. St. Finian appealed to The King whose verdict it was that St. Columbkille must return not only the original but also the copy he had made without asking permission. "To every book belongs its copy," said the King, "as to every cow belongs her calf". Still, the Dove refused to accept the ruling; and a bloody war resulted in which "many poor souls were sent to perdition".

It's true that St. Columbkille later retreated to a hermitage at Derry and started to compose rustic poems with God's angels singing to the poet from every leaf on every tree. The bishops, though, were not all that impressed by this volte-face; and they censored the saint's pugnacity in a Synod Of The Celtic Church. He had to escape their displeasure by going to Iona where, as a propitiatory gesture to other gods, he had some of his disciples buried alive in the foundations of his new monastery. All of which does not prevent the pious commentators from gushing about "the Darling Dove".

St. Columbkille fought one of his battles near Bangor in a dispute with the monastery there over a church called Ross Torathair. This Bangor monastery, so little respected by The Dove, has been given the grandiloquent title of "The Cradle of Western Civilisation", for the abbots sent missionaries all over Europe during The Dark Ages. But can culture really be equated with the art of illuminating missals, singing plain chant and spreading superstition? Indeed, the annals actually relate that one Abbot of Bangor christened a mermaid which had been caught "in the net of Beoan, son of Inli", a creature who had lived for three hundred years under the sea and was, after baptism, graced with the name of Murigen and entered in the official calendar of saints. At about the same time, "The Cradle Of Western Civilisation" displayed on the altar "the gold tooth of a whale, weighing thirty ounces" for the edification of the simple fishermen who no doubt thought that St. Murigen had something to do with this curious phenomenon.

Another great clerical stronghold in Northern Ireland was at Clogher. The See of Clogher was founded by St. Patrick; but the bishops became so luxury loving that the cathedral was reduced to the rank of parish church. Myler Magarth was the most notorious of the Clogher prelates; for he began life in the 16th century as a Franciscan Friar, and by the time he had died he had accumulated 57 livings, 4 bishoprics and one archbishopric.

On the other hand, I must confess an illogical admiration for the Bishop of Derry who was also the Earl of Bristol. He was such an over-life size character that one cannot help being overwhelmed by the extravagance of his behaviour. The eighteenth century was crowded with eccentrics, but the Earl Bishop had a particular naughtiness which is surely endearing. He built the most staggering

palaces for himself; and then invited his poor curates to banquets and, when he had got them thoroughly tight and replete, he made them run races and promised preferment for the winners. With a mischievous gleam in his eye, he would sprinkle flour in the vast corridors of his houses at night, and so observe in the morning if anyone had illicitly visited anyone else's bedroom. He would chuckle about sitting a church on an island, finding it pleasant to think of the poor congregation's struggles to reach their services. He created special gorgeous uniforms for himself and bedevilled local politics, and generally lived up to his income of £20,000 a year in tithes plus a personal fortune. Then at Downhill he designed a temple to the memory of

the daughter of the Reverend Patrick Bruce. She, poor faint-hearted, had not been able to brazen out the scandal which linked her name, in amorous connotation, with the Earl Bishop's; and she had fallen into a decline and had died in her twenty-first year. The Earl Bishop's Temple of Love is a thing of great beauty.

I have collected many other tales about saints and priests in *Thank You Now*; unfortunately, however, I learnt too late of the tradition which suggests that John Wesley became a mason at Downpatrick. It would certainly have been worth an investigation. John Wesley—a mason! Why not? for when you think of the things the holy men have done in Northern Ireland, anything is possible!

Tolpuddle—Yesterday and Today

By ALAN O. SNOOK

(Concluded from page 223)

Tolpuddle today is much as it was in 1834, as I discovered during a visit in January of this year. As I approached the village, rain-laden clouds hung low over the valley of the Piddle—or Trent, to the squeamish. If you enter the village from the east the seventh building on the left is the Methodist chapel, erected in 1861. It was built at a cost of £192 3s. 4d. by the descendants of the Martyrs. The gateway is a memorial arch to the village unionists, and was unveiled on 27/5/12 by Arthur Henderson, M.P. The memorial informs the wayfarer that the six men "suffered transportation in the cause of Liberty, Justice and Righteousness, and as a stimulus to our own and future generations".

After reading the inscription I noticed an old man up the village. Approaching him, I got into conversation. He was Mr. Puckett, aged eighty-one, a retired gamekeeper, and I was most fortunate in this chance meeting on account of what he told me of his personal history, and also because of his detailed knowledge of local history, old and new. The old man was a typical independent countryman, and informed me that in quite recent times he had been obliged severely to reprimand the then incumbent for sneeringly referring to Loveless & Co. as "the so-called martyrs". He also informed me that his mother's maiden name was Jane Hammett, of the same family as James Hammett, the only one of the six men to end his days in Tolpuddle churchyard.

Sitting in the silent chapel discussing old times, my new-found friend gave me a piece of information of such interest as to be hardly credible. My great-grandfather was born within hail of Tolpuddle in 1828, and in his forties led the Dorset labourers in their struggles of ninety years or so ago. Mr. Puckett informed me that less than two years ago he had received a letter from London, Ontario, from George Loveless, a direct descendant of the original George, informing him that he, the writer, had just discovered that his famous ancestor had married one of my forebears of the same name. The chances must have been about a million to one against my meeting Mr. Puckett and obtaining this piece of family history; Mr. Puckett has allowed me to borrow the letter. I later met Mrs. Puckett in her village shop, once the village temperance hall, and I trust she will not be offended if I say it reminded me of a scene out of Dickens. I was delighted to find that she stocked herbal tablets, a sweet I have not met with since schooldays in a Somerset village.

Bidding my old friends farewell I set off through the village, noting the cottage in which the martyrs held their secret meetings, also the old building which once served

as their chapel. It is now used as a fertiliser store, as I discovered by peering through a crack in the door. On past the Martyr's Tree, and so to the church, where Owen Graye was clerk of the works in *Desperate Remedies*. In the churchyard I discovered many of the old headstones bearing the names of Loveless, Hammett, Brine and Standfield, all family connections of the six men. The first snowdrops were timidly appearing here and there, their delicate heads shivering in the bitter wind sweeping through the lichened tombstones. An introspective observer might well have wondered if James Hammett missed his comrades, lying in his narrow cell here at Tolpuddle, far from the other five overseas. It was a chastening and melancholy experience, standing by this almost forgotten fighter's grave, whilst the indifferent world rushed by in high-powered cars, only a few feet away, outside the churchyard wall.

Going into the old church, I had a brief conversation with a pleasant little lady engaged in cleaning the building. She informed me that congregations were small in the mornings but fair in the evenings. I also spoke to a youth preparing to light a huge stove. He told me that the incumbent of Tolpuddle is responsible for the care of souls in Tolpuddle, Affpuddle, Briantspuddle and Turner's Puddle.

Dusk now approaching, I left the silent ones of Tolpuddle and set off for Moreton, via the narrow lane to Affpuddle, in whose church Eustacia Vye and Clym Yeobright were married—that marriage with such tragic consequences for all concerned. I noticed men ploughing in some nearby fields, and the sight brought to mind some lines of Bacon's, most appropriate in the circumstances:—

We may talke what we please of Lilies and Lions Rampant, and Spread Eagles in Fields d'Or or d'Argent; but if Heraldry were guided by Reason, a Plough in a Field Arable would be the most Noble and Antient Armes.

Wending my way through the twisting lanes, I eventually arrived at Moreton. Parking my vintage Ford by the tiny cemetery where T. E. Lawrence lies, I walked down the village street to the church. Though January was not yet out, clamorous rooks were busy at their nests by the church, and the increased clamour as I walked beneath their homes seemed to suggest their resentment at the presence of a stranger. Entering the church, I search for and found my objective—the memorial of James Frampton, the brutal and vicious persecutor of the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

In memory of James
Frampton Esq. of Moreton,
Dorset, many years Lieut'
Colonel Commandant of
the Regiment of Yeomanry
Calvalry in the County.
Born 4 September, 1769,
Died 8 February, 1855.
Sincere in his Religion,
Upright, Honoured Beloved.

LECTURE REPORTS

MR. JIM RADFORD, Hon. Secretary of Slough Humanist Group, spoke at Slough Youth Forum on July 1st, on "The Necessity of Freethought". Interested youngsters stayed for informal discussion long after the meeting had closed.

THE "HOUSE FULL" notice went up and quite a number were turned away when the National Secular Society Secretary, Mr. Colin McCall, spoke to the Jewish Society in the Y.W.C.A., Baker Street, London, on July 6th. Mr. McCall's subject was "The Case for Athesim" and, although not all his listeners agreed with him, they certainly had a stimulating evening. Their interest was demonstrated by the many questions they asked and the many more they obviously wanted to ask but couldn't because of the time. We have it from a FREETHINKER reader who was present, that this was one of the most successful meetings he has attended. He described Mr. McCall's replies to opposition as "crushing".

Open Letter

To Father Paris, O.P.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you for your letter and your article on "Science and Philosophy On the Existence of God" from the October issue of your magazine *The Faith*. I wish that it were for publication in *THE FREETHINKER*, that it might have been answered in detail, by abler pens than mine.

I note, with interest, that though using the proposition of the Pope, you find it necessary to dot his i's and cross his t's, and extend his arguments on the lines of Viscount Samuel's assertions.

As the materialist does not assume either a "first", or an "efficient" cause of the universe, but simply affirms its self-sufficiency and *eternity* the arguments you supply from Viscount Samuel, the Angelic Doctor and the Pope require no answer. First cause and eternity are irreconcilable. It is true that man's mind balks at the conception of eternity, but to substitute the word "God" for "universe" in no wise renders it more comprehensible. To attribute "intelligence" to that God, at once renders the idea ridiculous and brings it within the domain of science and commonsense to supply the requisite rebuttal.

Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Socrates, etc., as you remark, yes even Viscount Samuel, may accept this conception of a Supreme Being, but your problem as a Catholic is more difficult than that. You have to prove a deity that has manifested itself in fire and smoke on Sinai, as a Ghost that caused a Virgin to conceive, as a man who died and a god that rose again. A deity who inspired the Old and New Testaments, with their absurdities, mistakes and contradictions and dubious moral teachings. A deity who is manifested in bread and wine whenever a priest recites the correct incantation. A deity who manifests himself through Ecumenical councils, and whenever the Pope speaks "ex cathedra" on faith and morals. A deity who has a legion of angels as his messengers, but is continually being thwarted in his will by man. You quote the Pope as saying, "Science and Philosophy can lead us to God". All I ask is—"Can Science and Philosophy lead you to that God?"

Anent your letter; you say: "in our schools we have two years course of the History of the Church, with all its impacts". I do not doubt it. I have read Catholic history, I have also read Protestant history, I have also read history which is balanced, weighed and authenticated. It reminds me of our Freethought platform, it used to stand between that of the Catholic Truth Society and that of the Protestant Truth Society, with our motto, "We seek for truth" adorning it.

This is not an empty boast. It was Freethinkers, in England, who led the fight for Roman Catholic rights and emancipation in the last century.

"Let truth and error grapple."

EVA EBURY.

CORRESPONDENCE

HELEN KELLER

I have the greatest possible admiration for that amazing woman, Helen Keller. But I fail to appreciate the eulogistic

lines written to her by Bayard Simmons in *THE FREETHINKER* (8/7/60). After all, she is, I fancy, a believer and, in our own paper, we readers would rather have something more in our line—particularly in view of space limitation. F. K. HAYES.

FUNNY?

The excerpt reprinted by Oswell Blakeston from Jack Lindsay's *The Roaring Twenties* (8/7/60) may amuse some people, but it certainly doesn't amuse me.

Does Mr. Blakeston find it funny to behold a drunken sot running up and down the gutter, "shouting with laughter and peering into the faces of the men, pointing them out to the rest of the world", because the men happen to be parsons? I find it revolting. ROBERT DENT.

SENATOR KENNEDY

Mr. McCall is, I fear, a little too complacent about the prospect of Kennedy for President. The flouting of ecclesiastical pressures could easily be a pre-election stratagem for quelling the fears of Protestants and the American Mr. McCalls. Once elected, Senator Kennedy's Romanism might really rear its head. OLIVER PALMER.

[Mr. McCall writes: *Of course it "could" and it "might" respectively, but I don't think so. Senator Kennedy has continually declared that if elected he would honour the Constitution, and I believe he would.*—ED.]

MR. RIDLEY AND PLUTARCH

Mr. F. A. Ridley cites Plutarch that "the Roman Catholic General, Crassus, crucified alive the whole 6,000 survivors" of the Spartacus rebellion "on the road from Capua". I should like to know whether Mr. Ridley accepts Plutarch on this matter. To me it seems quite ridiculous and almost certainly unhistoric. If Mr. Ridley agrees with me he might have expressed a doubt about the statement when he wrote the article. Otherwise he appears to be accepting the story. J. B. BAILEY.

FATIMA

May 13th has now long gone but what of the breath-taking revelation of Fatima? Are we to take it that the Summit fiasco was the prelude to the world catastrophe forecast? The national newspapers said nothing. Have the Roman Catholic newspapers commented? I should like to know because I shall never rest until my mind is put at ease! G. H. HEY

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