

The Freethinker

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ON DECEMBER 25TH, the professedly Christian world celebrated the traditional birth of that versatile person, Jesus Christ, who managed in the course of a short life (traditionally estimated at 33 years) to combine the at first sight incongruous roles of, Second Person of the Trinity, Jewish Messiah, Miracle-worker, religious reformer and a worker in wood (and we hope, a trade unionist!). Whilst upon January 1st, as usual the cold dreary and uninviting opening day of the bleakest and the most unfriendly month of the Winter season, we followed up the mythical birth of the Son of God by proceeding to celebrate the certainly mythical birth of the New Year. For a new year to begin in the depth of Winter would appear to be an even more obvious miracle than for the Son of God to be born a week earlier. A feast of the Sun-god when there is no sun, and a new year with nothing new about it! Evidently this is the season for miracles—or perhaps, the “silly season”.

The Unconquered Sun

As is known to students of comparative religion (and so presumably to the readers of THE FREETHINKER) that great Winter festival which we have recently celebrated did not actually begin in the year 1 AD, for this now current Christian chronology did not originate until several centuries of our present Christian era had run their course. For traditionally, the present era was first evolved as a result of an intensive piece of theological reasoning by a Scythian (Russian) monk, by name, Dionysius (or Denis) Exiguus (“the Small”). Why this diminutive Russian monk, writing in Rome towards the year 600, should have picked on December 25th may well appear to be a theological mystery, as also is the inscrutable reason why divine providence should have in its divine wisdom permitted so important a discovery to have been made in so obscure a fashion.

However, historically, if not theologically, there were relevant chronological reasons for selecting December 25th, in the depth of Winter, for the unique honour of being the birthday of God's only Son and, presumably heir, the Second Person of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. For, long before Christianity emerged within the antique Pagan world, December 25th, the then shortest day of the year (that is, the day upon which the sun began to turn towards its midsummer zenith) the feast of the Winter Solstice had been celebrated in particular connection with the solar cults of pre-Christian times. As such, the Druids no doubt celebrated the Winter solar festival as, probably long before, did the pre-historic priesthood who held their primitive solar ritual within the ghostly aisles of Avebury and Stonehenge as the sun rose in fiery splendour over the horizon of Salisbury Plain. At a later date contemporary with the Roman Empire, the Oriental cult of Mithras adopted the ancient solar date for its own solar cult, and Christmas Day emerges into the light of history under Mithraist, not Christian auspices; as the traditional birth-

day of Mithras and as the Feast of the Unconquered Sun (*Sol Invictus*).

Aurelian

Actually, on which precise date Jesus was born (assuming that is, that such a person and such a date existed), the real author of Christmas was a now long dead and forgotten Roman Emperor—who reigned, not unsuccessfully, and who like so many Roman Caesars eventually died violently at the hands of his mutinous legions—Aurelian (270-275). He it was who first officially constituted December 25th as a Roman public holiday sacred to the solar deity, Mithras. For Aurelian was a professional soldier before

ascending the Imperial throne, and no doubt had been reared in the essentially military cult of Mithras, the surviving archaeological remains of which are usually found in the vicinity of excavated Roman barracks and similar military establishments.

The Godfather of Christmas

Having ascended the throne in a period of storm and stress, of barbarian invasion and of endemic civil war, Aurelian invoked the powerful aid of the “Protector of the Roman Empire”, the “Unconquered Sun”, to whom he dedicated a temple, and whose celestial birthday into this terrestrial world he ordered to be celebrated as a perpetual holiday. Modern celebrations of Christmas still commemorate Santa Claus along with other mythological figures, but few nowadays spare a thought either for the divine Mithras in whose honour the feast first assumed its present form, or for the old Roman emperor Aurelian who, historically, was the original “godfather” of our Christmas Day.

Constantine

During the brief reign of Aurelian, there was born about 272, another Roman emperor, also of military antecedents who, more lucky than his imperial predecessor, has left behind him a permanent historical reputation. This was Constantine, later to be styled by the grateful Christian Church as “the Great”, and even as Saint Constantine, “the equal of the Apostles”—a title that he still bears in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Constantine owes this pre-eminence, not primarily to his considerable military and political talents, but to his adroit and timely change in religious faith. For Constantine, like Aurelian, started his life and reign as an ardent Mithraist, and it is at least possible that he remained such until the end of his (306-337) reign, since in the triumphal arch which still stands in Rome to commemorate him there are inscriptions in honour of the “Unconquered Sun” Mithras, whilst references to Christ, the Son of God, are conspicuous by their absence.

The first Christian emperor, as Constantine later became, never took the trouble to erase these votive offerings to Mithras. But whatever his personal convictions, he later changed his religious (or perhaps really political) line and shifted his allegiance, along with that of his empire, from

IEWS and OPINIONS

Two Myths: Christmas and New Year

By F. A. RIDLEY

Mithras, the Sun-god, to Christ, the Son of God. Evidently December 25th soon became involved in the theological *volte face*, for at the end of the 4th century, St. John Chrysostom, then Patriarch of Constantine's own city, Constantinople, went on record with the valuable piece of information to the later science of comparative religion that, "it is only recently that we have found out the precise date of Our Saviour's Birth". This, in the religiously epoch-making 4th century, in my submission by far the most important century recorded in the annals of Christianity. (cf my book *Julian the Apostate and the Rise of Christianity*.)

The Myth of the New Year

The evolution of Christmas Day, as bound up with the religious revolution that established Christianity, is well-known to students of comparative religion. But the silent transformation that has pushed the New Year back from the Spring, the Vernal Equinox where it naturally belongs (as corresponding with the natural seasons) and where until a few centuries ago it was always celebrated, is not nearly so well-known. However, even as late as the 17th century, the New Year was always held to begin along with Spring in either March or April (March 21st the first day of Spring was a common New Year's Day) when the processes of nature began to revive after the long sleep of Winter. The eventual unnatural and entirely irrational substitution of January 1st for the traditional date in

Spring appears to have been originally due to some obscure political intrigue, the precise motives for which cannot now be clearly discerned. At any rate, the contemporary result, viz. that December 31st represents the last day of one year whilst January 1st equally represents the first day of another, a "new year", represents as obvious a chronological absurdity as it is possible to imagine. The year 1962 ended on a bleak, snowy Winter day upon December 31st and January 1st, another equally snowy unacceptable Winter day, marked the legal beginning of 1963, but the division is legal only, and corresponds with no natural change of seasons such as might reasonably be held to justify such a natural division as appears to be obviously implied in the passage from one year to another. Our contemporary chronology is regulated, not by any known natural process, but simply and solely by Act of Parliament. One dreary Winter's day, January 1st, succeeds another similar one, December 31st—a legal distinction without any noticeable natural difference.

Two Myths

It is my hope that when we do eventually get our secular state, it will attend without undue delay to two urgent and overdue reforms. I hope that it will simultaneously abolish two current myths: the religious myth that December 25th must be kept as a public holiday because Christ was born upon that date and the legal myth that the New Year begins upon January 1st in the very depths of Winter.

A Convert to Anglicanism

By COLIN McCALL

ON OCTOBER 12TH, 1962, we printed a letter from Miss F. Neal, of Bromley, Kent, "a former Atheist" and still a regular reader of THE FREETHINKER, who by "the grace of God . . . was converted by an Anglican mission . . .". In an editorial comment on the letter, we said we should be interested to learn Miss Neal's intellectual reasons, if any, for relinquishing Atheism in favour of Anglicanism, and we have since had a letter from her ostensibly giving these. It is too long to print in full, so I propose to summarise and comment.

Miss Neal tells us rather surprisingly that the main reason for her conversion was the First Cause argument. Surprisingly, because no Atheist who has thought out his position can be unacquainted with this argument, as no Atheist who has defended his position can have avoided dealing with it. Judging from her letter, Miss Neal seems to be easily carried away by high-sounding verbiage that, frankly, withers before critical examination.

"Without a First Cause", she says, "there are no secondary causes within the sphere of experience". We may go further and say that without a first anything there cannot possibly be a secondary anything. Clearly the very word "secondary" implies a primary or first. But what justification have we for calling the "causes" we see at work around us, "secondary"? The answer is quite simply, none whatever.

Without going too deeply into the concept of "cause", we must distinguish between two different uses of the term. "What caused Miss Neal to turn Anglican?" we may ask; and we may then list the reasons (as we see them) for her action. It is quite likely, in these circumstances, that we should find one or more "primary" or major causes and several "secondary" or minor ones. It is only in such a limited context, I suggest, that "secondary cause" has meaning.

When used scientifically, "cause" denotes the sum total of relevant factors that produce an "effect". I think we can dismiss the extreme sceptical position which disputes the "necessary" connection between cause and effect. It is of no use to Miss Neal or any other advocate of a first cause—with or without capitals—for quite obviously, if there is no necessary connection between what we are in the habit of calling a cause and an effect, there can be no necessary connection between a first cause and subsequent effects. In any case, I consider it a logical inference that there is a necessary connection between causes and effects and it is certainly essential for us to assume so in daily life. To take two simple examples: I believe it is correct to teach a child that there is a necessary connection between placing the hand in the fire and what we call burning; and between the combining of hydrogen and oxygen and the forming of water. But there is no valid reason for calling such cause-effect connections "secondary". There can indeed be only one motive for the use of this adjective, and that is to prepare the way for the First Cause.

We may agree with Miss Neal that, "Everything in the universe is dependent and conditioned in its turn by its relations to other things. No single causal agency known to science is self-subsistent". But she then says: "Every universe so dependent and conditioned must have a cause independent to it and self-existent" (my italics). "Every thing in the universe" thus casually becomes an entire "a universe". Needless to say, a distinction must be made between the "things" or events which we concede are "dependent and conditioned" and a hypothetical universe or integrated system. We are not at all justified in describing the latter as "dependent and conditioned". This again is linguistically preparing the way for God.

(Concluded on page 12)

What I Believe

An Imaginary Television Interview between Roland Ruggeridge and an Atheist

By JAMES HENDREN

Mr. Ruggeridge—Let me begin, Sir, by asking you does atheism make one a happy person?

Atheist—Yes.

Mr. R.—I mean, when you found Atheism, did you find happiness?

A.—This is double-barrelled—to the first question I would say—one does not find Atheism, it finds one, when one becomes evolved to that extent. To the second part, I had never lost happiness, happiness is a state of being which one has or has not, according to one's nature. And I have always been a happy person.

Mr. R.—What I mean is, I presume you were brought up in a Christian environment—was there, or did you miss something in its teaching that left a void which you thought must be filled and so you sought elsewhere and found Atheism?

A.—I think in this question you have stated a fundamental misconception of human nature, an unnatural environment—yes, I was brought up in a Christian environment. To the second did I miss something?—this is the fundamental misconception. It is to my mind totally unnatural for a human being to begin life with a desire to know why and whither, etc. A human starts life like any other animal, contented and happy to be living, he needs no theology or philosophy. To be alive is the total answer. At an early period this equilibrium is disturbed by the pressure of adult misconceived philosophies of the ages. Vague philosophies and superstitions are taught to him as fundamentally proved truths long before the ability to discern or evaluate is evolved, consequently the balance of thought is perverted and valuations are impaired probably for life.

To teach thus prematurely is the fundamental sin of religion and that is its crime against humanity.

Mr. R.—We are straying far afield. Shall we get back, let me ask you what do you find is the chief difference between Christianity and Atheism, I mean, why is Atheism better.

A.—Christianity teaches that man is a degraded creature, born in sin and evil, whose natural procreative activities are evil and who can only be saved from all this by the intervention or superimposition of Christ on his nature. Atheism teaches that man is the highest of the animal kingdom with ever increasing mental and cultural aspirations, and that those who fall by the way are not evil criminals but casualties of the cultural evolution who need special attention or elimination according to the degree of failure.

Mr. R.—If this is so, what improvement is this on the Christian outlook?

A.—In Christianity, a man who is criminal, lecherous, deceitful, degenerate, is only being his natural self and needs raising to some unattainable standard by the intervention of a saviour. In Atheism, man stands alone, with self respect and independence, something to be proud of, with a history of proved ascent behind him and ever increasing attainment ahead—no gloom, all joy and belief in his fellowmen and compassion for their failings.

Mr. R.—To finish this conversation, how would you epitomise the difference between your teaching and the teaching of Christianity?

A.—I would include Christianity in the word "religion"

and say: Religion in practice is impractical and often evil. As a pursuit of learned discussion it is the art of disguising nonsense as inspiration. Of Atheism in practice, it is practical and down to earth. As a pursuit of learned discussion, fruitful and factual, scientific and satisfactory. It is natural of growth and can only be checked by deliberate suppression.

Mr. R.—As we have a little time left, may I ask one final question: Why, if evolution is right and Atheism, Secularism and Freethinking are right, why do people ignore this and continue with what you would term outworn shibboleths?

A.—I would here liken the human mind to the eye of the honey bee inasmuch as both are multifaceted. Any one facet of which can and may be activated and at the same time all but a few may remain dormant without any awareness of loss or discomfort to the honey bee or the mind. When phenomena impinges on a new facet, this involves the opening up of a new department to receive and evaluate the new media, with consequent use of extra energy, this in turn involves a rationing of the supply of energy consumed by the brain as a whole, until such times as the new department is made permanent and the extra fuel is laid on. This causes dissatisfaction and even rebellion amongst the other facets or departments which feel the temporary loss; this is crystallised in the person in the form of mental fatigue and in order to avoid all the discomfort, is often rejected out of hand and the matter dismissed.

It is often necessary to have the reinforcement of strong emotional feelings to overcome lethargy or the cold emotionless scientific urge to demand the immediate set up of the evaluation centre, or the innate curiosity of the restless questing mind to overcome the barriers against new experiences. It could also be called the mental melanism of natural selection, wherein those minds capable of adjusting to the light from the new facet go forward and survive, whereas those who cannot do so, are slowly blotted out or are cast aside and ignored.

We find this mental rejection has taken form in the outcrop of extreme religious sects. This is a "last ditch effort" of mental laziness, often involving greater effort in the avoidance than in the acceptance of the new experience. Like the workshy who uses more energy in dodging work than he would in doing work.

Thus mental melanism extracts a similar price in the evolution of the mind as the physical does in the metamorphoses of evolution.

And like melanism in nature, it is of no consequence to ultimate results that the process is imperceptible to man and the period of operation timeless.

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This Believing World

The way the Churches captured the radio and TV this past Christmas was of course exactly as in former years, with a surfeit of all the carols that could be roped into the holy work, and religious services galore to bring home more than ever the wondrous story of the Babe of Nazareth. That there is very little evidence for the Babe, and no evidence whatever of any Nazareth at the time, only makes glorious Faith all the more piquant. As for most of the TV and radio *secular* shows (designed to make us all merry) they seemed singularly deficient of any real humour. We have an idea that nearly all Christians enjoy the good things they can eat at Christmas more than belief in Angels and prayer.

★

It seemed to us purely a waste of time for Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge to discuss with Dr. Heenan on ITV what that eminent Roman Catholic really believed. Dr. Heenan stands out in this country as a sturdy believer in everything the Vatican believes, and Mr. Muggeridge must have known this. In any case, half way through the interview, he appears to have changed roles, for it was he who told Dr. Heenan what he believed—which was, briefly, that he (Mr. Muggeridge) was *not* a Christian, but had a great admiration for Christianity. Whether this was a brand known or unknown to Dr. Heenan was not made sufficiently clear. However, the interview passed off with smiles and good humour on both sides.

★

The "Daily Mail" (December 24th, 1962) has discovered in Miss Monica Furlong the latest exponent to tell us exactly what is "true Christianity". It is truly astonishing how many people have told us precisely the same thing for nearly 2,000 years, and yet we have to have it told all over again every month or so. Naturally, she has found "Freud's explanation of religion truly laughable". But among the things she does not believe about true Christianity is "thundering out denunciations about other people's moral conditions". Yet this is exactly what Christ Jesus did over and over again. His divine attack on the Pharisees was, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

★

Hell appears to have been the "place" to which Jesus was always consigning people who did not agree with him on "moral conditions". At the Judgment to those "on the left hand", he would say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels . . . into everlasting punishment". And there are plenty more "thundering denunciations" on the part of "our Lord" which obviously Miss Furlong knows nothing about. But of course she knew almost everything else about Jesus who is always represented as full of "love for other people"—always the biggest nonsense written about him. Did he ever show any love for his own mother? If so, where?

★

We always were under the impression that genuine ghosts eschewed such common places as a prosaic council house and concentrated on ancient and modern castles and more or less middle-class residences. Moreover, all or nearly all the spooks we have read about go clanging their way up and down the stairs with heavy chains attached to cannon balls. Our ideas on this fascinating subject have had a rude shock. It appears that in a council house acquired by a young couple (*News of the World*, December 18th, 1962), a very naughty ghost has been throwing ashtrays about, moving chairs, slamming doors, and even

walking across the bedroom's "cold lino". Not a mention of clanging chains!

★

However, all's well that ends well. The Rev. W. Winfield was called in on several occasions, and after always blessing the house, it is hoped to be quite habitable again. The lady of the house heard the spook "packing up" (so to speak) "its ghostly possessions"—whatever they were—and no doubt the house will no longer have any more "hauntings". That is—if there really were any!

A CONVERT TO ANGLICANISM

(Concluded from page 10)

It is in no way deducible from the statement that "Everything in the universe is dependent and conditional in its turn by its relations to other things", that the "universe" must have an independent cause; but merely that everything in the universe is interdependent. One cannot logically argue from a world of interdependent causes to an independent cause; from no known self-subsistent cause to a self-existent one. "Everything points to the world being an effect", Miss Neal continues, "and causal agency can be inferred without the need of being observed". The change of portmanteau terms ("world" for "universe") in no way improves matters. "Everything does not point to 'the world being an effect'; the world is simply a convenient term we use to include an apparently limitless series of interrelated events. But even if we allow Miss Neal her own assumptions that 'the world is an effect' and that 'causal agency can be inferred', there is still no valid ground for regarding that causal agency as self-existent. It, in turn, might be an effect.

Miss Neal moves on to the problem of evil, agreeing that suffering is "irreconcilable with an All-Benevolent Deity" but apparently failing to see that the fact that "much pain and suffering can be avoided by man himself" is quite irrelevant to the issue. As Hume indicated, if all but the very slightest evil in the world were abolished, that tiny fraction would still make a beneficent god impossible. Here, at last, Miss Neal gives up her philosophical pretence. "God does not stand aloof from suffering", she tells us, "but came to earth and hung and suffered and died. On the third day He rose again from the dead to prove the triumph of love over pain and suffering".

What we suspected, then, was true. Miss Neal was not converted by any First Cause argument. Even she must admit that that has no bearing on the story of the Incarnation. It was not the First Cause, but the conversion that came first. Having accepted Christianity from the Anglican mission, Miss Neal then sought philosophical justification for her belief, and found it to her—but not our—satisfaction.

NEW PENGUINS AND PELICANS

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mount).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, January 15th, 7.30 p.m.: PROFESSOR T. H. PEAR, "Status Symbols".
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 13th, 6.30 p.m.: D. H. TRIBE, "Freethought in 1963".
Marble Arch Branch (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, January 13th, 7.30 p.m.: STANLEY MAYNE, "The Changing Scene in South America".
Nottingham Branch NSS (People's Hall, Heathcote Street), Thursday, January 17th, 7.30 p.m.: Discussion on the History of Nottingham, introduced by MR. HALLAM.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 13th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "New Worlds for Old: Civilisation, its Cause and Cure".

Notes and News

EACH MONTH we read with interest the American Protestant magazine, *Christian Heritage* (published by Christ's Mission Inc., New York), for although we cannot share its religious views, we do share its opposition to the Church of Rome. Moreover, we admire the work it does in helping ex-Roman Catholic priests to rehabilitate themselves. One such, Francis J. Kieda, is on the staff of the magazine, and this week we have pleasure in reprinting part of his recent survey of Roman Catholic schools around the world.

★

THE TOWN CLERK of Thetford, Norfolk, informs us that the Council has definitely accepted the offer of the Thomas Paine Foundation (New York) of a statue of Thomas Paine. The town centre of Thetford is to be redeveloped during the next few years, so the statue will be temporarily erected in the gardens of Kings' House, pending the selection of a permanent site. No arrangements have yet been made concerning an unveiling ceremony. Indeed, as the Town Clerk says, the whole project is in its very early stages. We shall report details when received.

★

THE BBC New Year's Day programme "A Year of Science" (introduced by Raymond Baxter) was excellent.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

J. Telfer, 10s.; E.C.R., 5s.; Wm. S. McNeil, £1; T. Shapps, 4s.; O.A.P., £10; A. Fenton, 2s. 6d.; W. Craigie, 7s.; W. Steinhardt, £2 2s.; A. W. Coleman, £10; D. W. Coleman, £10. Total to date, January 4th, 1963, £34 10s.

We should like to express our special thanks to the three people who have already responded to the offer by an anonymous reader (Notes and News, 21/12/62) to give another £10 to the Fund if 49 others will do so.

And, like *The Guardian* television critic, Mary Crozier, we agreed with Mr. Baxter's description of Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Francis Crick as "scientific television personality of the year, perhaps". How clearly, Miss Crozier said, "this tremendously intelligent and vigorous-looking man was able to talk about his work so that anyone could understand what he was getting at".

★

BUT MISS CROZIER is, we believe, a Roman Catholic, and the programme led her to ask: "Who could ever say that anything in the universe was accidental after seeing how all things play their part, from the tiniest cells determined to keep out the invader to the galaxies which begin to reveal secrets hitherto only conjecture?" (*The Guardian*, 2/1/63). We do not, of course, describe phenomena as "accidental", but neither do we consider them purposive (apart from certain activities of thinking animals): we regard them as natural. However to take Miss Crozier's example, the tiny cells referred to (the lymphocytes) cannot distinguish between harmful and beneficial "invaders". It is this fact that handicaps the surgeon in skin-grafting and kidney-grafting. The graft is attacked and broken down by the lymphocytes.

★

OUR CANADIAN correspondent, Lanje Gardyen, reports surprising but welcome support for neutral non-confessional schools in Quebec from Raymond Lanclot of the Chamber of Commerce of the Province. "We realise we have to drop some of our conservatism if we are going to keep up with modern thinking", said Mr. Lanclot, who was chairman of a committee that prepared the Chamber's brief to the Royal Commission on Education. Interviewed after the brief had been made public, Mr. Lanclot said that the Chamber's thinking was "in line with the revolution that is taking place in the province" (*The Montreal Star*, 20/12/62).

★

"WELL, PRETTY CLEARLY, 'hell' is not the word it used to be. All the blasphemy seems to have cozed out of it," wrote the *New York Times* Washington correspondent in his report dated December 27th, 1962. He was judging from "the national uproar that failed to occur" after President Kennedy had used the word on all three television networks ten days before. "Until this non-occurrence of protest", the correspondent wrote, "it had been accepted law of American life that one of the few things no politician could get away with was cussing in public".

★

LAST WEEK we printed one of Charles Bradlaugh's "Doubts in Dialogue", originally published in *The National Reformer* more than eighty years ago, and we hope to follow with other selections from this famous and we think valuable, series. This week, though, our dialogue, or rather, imaginary interview, is by James Hendren who, it will be recalled (Notes and News, 28/12/62) protested against Ulster Television Ltd.'s cancellation of Malcolm Muggeridge's interview with Professor A. J. Ayer in the series "I Believe". Similarities with Mr. Muggeridge's interviews are not entirely coincidental, Mr. Hendren informs us.

Catholic Schools in the Commonwealth, Latin America, Africa and Asia

By F. J. KIEDA

ALL THE PUBLIC [state] schools in Canada are either Catholic or Protestant. A glance at the various provinces will throw some light on the over-all situation.

Quebec has a dual educational system—one branch called "Catholic," the other "Protestant," although Jews are accommodated also.

Education below the college level in the heavily Catholic French-speaking province is carried on by taxes levied on individual wage earners and on businessmen, the revenues from these latter going into a common fund to be divided among the schools.

Catholic elementary schools in Ontario are part of the public education system and receive help from taxes. Catholics, comprising about one-quarter of the population and operating "separate" schools, claim that present distribution methods deny them a fair share of tax revenues.

In February of 1961, Monsignor J. N. Gelineau, Vicar General of the Ottawa Roman Catholic archdiocese, warned Catholic public school trustees in the Ontario Province that the Church would deny them absolution if they insisted on Catholics paying taxes to public school boards instead of to separate (Catholic) Boards. Educational officials in Ontario investigated the situation, without any definite results. Msgr. Gelineau maintained his stance by declaring: "It is not permissible for Catholics to pay school taxes to benefit public schools. Persons going against Directive 268 of the archdiocese will not be worthy of absolution". In February, 1960, the same prelate told Catholics that failure to switch tax contributions to separate schools would be considered "aggression against their fellow Catholics and contrary to the faith".

Catholic parochial schools in the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area have demanded public financial support in accordance with recommendations of the Royal Commission on Education. Representatives of 25 Winnipeg parochial schools have indicated that higher salaries for public school teachers had affected Catholic parents two ways: By making their taxes higher and by forcing them to pay higher salaries to lay teachers in parochial schools.

In both Saskatchewan and Alberta Provinces Catholics enjoy tax support for their schools. But in both places this situation is threatened.

Catholics in Saskatchewan have a right by law to their "separate" schools and allocate their taxes to them without having to pay toward the upkeep of the public schools. Both separate and public schools also obtain grants.

Recently, however, there has been concern over the implications of a proposed administrative centralisation. This could in time subvert the educational arrangement not only in Saskatchewan, but also in Alberta where a similar situation exists.

Alberta has one school system, but with two branches—public and separate. Separate schools may be established by a minority group wherever such a group is able to support them.

Taxpayers who support separate schools are not obligated to finance the public schools. The curriculum and the textbooks are controlled by the provincial government which also extends grants to the respective school groups.

In Newfoundland, the legislature has exclusive authority to enact laws regulating education, which is denominational

in character. Catholics, Anglicans and members of the United Church make up 90% of Newfoundland's population, with Catholics comprising the majority. Other religious groups include the Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostal Churches. The government supports all the schools.

Australia

The largest system of education in Australia, other than the government systems, is that administered by the Roman Catholic Church. It includes both primary and secondary schools, many of which are boarding schools.

A director of Roman Catholic education is responsible for the general organisation in each State, but each bishop has control in his own diocese and has the power to appoint his inspectorial staff. Fees are charged and further funds are provided by endowments and grants from Church authorities.

Currently Catholic schools in Australia face a growing problem in providing additional space for the thousands of new students registering in the schools each year. As a result Catholic prelates and laymen are clamouring for State aid.

Archbishop James Duhig of Brisbane, Australia, declared: "There should be no controversy over equal rights of children of all creeds with regard to government assistance for their education wherever and by whomsoever that education is imparted. He pointed out that Catholic education "is a heavy burden on our people, as our schools receive no direct state aid. (*The Register*, Denver, Colo., August 28th, 1960.)

Auxiliary Bishop Leslie Carrol of Sydney attacked the policy of no State aid to private schools as "un-Australian in operation and un-British in concept." (*The Presbyterian Journal*, September 21st, 1960.)

On July 13th, 1962, the Roman Catholic schools in Goulburn, New South Wales closed for six weeks to draw public attention to their demand for State support. However, after one day the strike was called off. Archbishop Eris M. O'Brien of Canberra and Goulburn stated that the Catholic schools were closed to show they are "integrally associated within the effective state pattern of education." (*The Register*, August 5th, 1962.)

This integration of schools, said the Archbishop is with in a pattern "that does, and should envisage private and state schools acting together." He made his comments after the parents of the 2,200 Catholic school students voted 1,000-100 to reopen.

The meeting of the parents lasted an hour and a half. One speaker argued that the effect of the strike would have greater impact if the schools remained closed for the full six weeks. Then a father of seven asserted that it would be a poor parent if he did not "complain about children being used as front-line troops".

In his statement, Archbishop O'Brien renewed his plea for government aid to Catholic schools, adding these words, "Having that essential usefulness and wishing to be nationally cooperative, Catholic schools will endeavour to continue their work, regarding it as being significant to the nation as well as to their Church". (*The Register*, August 5th, 1962.)

Norman Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, remarked that the school closing in Goulburn was a drastic

action but it was indicative of the sentiment of the Catholic citizenry all over the land. The Cardinal also asserted, "The financial burden for education to which they have been subjected has become almost intolerable".

On the other hand, Rev. H. MacNeil Saunders, president of the New South Wales Council of Churches, said, "If it [the strike] was done with the deliberate intention of bringing pressure upon the government, it will prove a bad tactical blunder". (*The Tablet*, Brooklyn, New York, July 14th, 1962.)

At the beginning of July, 1961, the government in British Guiana, South America, took over fifty-one primary schools operated by various denominational bodies, and at the same time voiced a threat to the country's Catholic secondary schools. Three Catholic primary schools were among the 51 seized.

These schools were institutions rebuilt by the government on land provided by the Christian communities.

British Guiana (former) crown colony on the northeast coast of South America, has a population of about 560,000. Approximately 260,000 people are East Indians, mostly Hindus. There are around 160,000 Protestants and 79,000 Catholics . . .

Latin America

The Mexican government does not grant any financial assistance to non-governmental schools in Mexico. Private schools operate at all levels, but only with the permission of the State. They must conform to the principles of education as set out in the Constitution and must study the programmes followed by State schools.

Religious groups, ministers or any society closely connected with the propagation of a particular faith are not allowed to engage in activities connected with primary, secondary or normal education, or education of labourers or peasants.

A great number of private schools, both religious and non-sectarian, exist in Mexico. They are maintained by fees and by contributions. In some cases subsidies and scholarships are granted to them by public authorities.

In Guatemala education in the public schools is secular. Private schools are permitted but must follow official curricula. In some parts of Guatemala there are no public schools, but only missionary schools of various denominations. Some of these obtain slight government assistance.

Government aid is given to some denominational schools in Nicaragua, but it is also small. There is not state aid to private schools in Honduras, unless they become undenominational. Some slight assistance is rendered to private schools in El Salvador.

The Constitution of Costa Rica, in articles 79 and 80, guarantees freedom of education, and private schools exist at both primary and secondary level. Private primary schools are supervised by the Ministry in the same way as public schools and follow official programmes. Private secondary schools must be registered and approved before they can confer the final certificate. Funds for education are derived from the national budget and from local rates and taxes.

In Ecuador municipalities may grant certain subsidies to free private education. The State authorises private schools provided that they have adequate premises and school equipment and the necessary amount of certified teachers. There are numerous private educational institutions, many of which are operated by Catholic monks or Protestants. Every private institution must make use of official plans and curricula and is subject to the control of the Ministry of Education.

Public and private education in Argentina are under the direct or indirect control of the State, since it takes charge

of plans of studies and examinations. If private secondary schools wish to prepare their pupils for national examinations, they have to permit inspection by the State and adopt official study plans. Some of the text books in use in the public schools in Argentina have been prepared by the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic schools are state-subsidised.

Education in Bolivia is directed by the Ministry of National Education. Private schools are maintained for the most part by religious bodies and are found at every level of education.

Public authorities dominate the educational scene in Brazil according to the 1946 Constitution. Private schools may be established, provided that they conform to the provisions of the educational laws, but no state aid is accorded. Religious instruction is included in the curricula of the public schools. It is optional and is given in accordance with the religious faith of the pupil.

Freedom of education is guaranteed in Chile by the Constitution. There are many private schools in addition to the State schools. Under a law passed in 1950, all eligible private schools receive, on request, a grant per pupil amounting to half the cost of maintaining a pupil in a State school of the corresponding level.

Article 11 of the Constitution (February 16th, 1945) of Colombia guarantees liberty of education. The State has the supreme inspection and care of public and private schools. Considerable subsidies are given to Catholic schools, but Evangelical Christian schools receive no aid. Private schools are subject to State supervision, and must maintain a minimum official curriculum.

In Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela education is state-controlled. Private schools must follow official curricula.

A special corps of inspectors supervises the private schools in Peru. Curricula are the same as for public schools. The government encourages private schools to render its own work of education easier and enable the benefits of education to be extended to a large section of the population. Subventions are accorded the private schools in Peru.

Asia

Although Roman Catholic missionaries have been visiting various countries of Asia since the 16th century, Catholic expansion was negligible. Very few schools were established.

In recent times Catholic voices have been increasing in volume. In the Andhra Pradesh State the Catholic Education Council protested to the State's education department regarding the textbooks which must be used in Catholic schools but which contain Hindu prayers and lessons on Hinduism.

In Kerala, India, the Catholics were victorious after a bitter struggle in 1959, securing certain concessions.

All the schools in Ceylon were nationalised in January 1961. The only way a school may remain private is when 75% of the students, parents and teachers sign a petition requesting it; no state aid is given, and no tuition is charged.

There is no restriction on the opening of private schools in Indonesia, but in order to obtain a government subsidy the schools must comply with certain conditions.

In June, 1962, acting on the recommendation of the Federal government Sivasankar, the Indian lieutenant governor of Goa, has banned religious instruction in the former Portuguese possession's government schools. He also decreed that private schools could give religious teaching only after regular hours and with the written consent of a student's parents or guardian. About half of Goa's population is Roman Catholic and Church-operated schools form an important part of the educational system.

In Africa, in the various territories, Catholic missionaries maintained schools for their converts. Today the situation is in a state of confusion. According to a report of *Fides* a mission news service, on June 20th, 1961, Catholics in African territories numbered about 22 million.

The report mentions that Lovanium University in Leopoldville, the Congo, the only Catholic higher education institute in Africa with international standing, has increased its student body from 33 in the first academic year in 1954 to 700 at the present time.

"The Catholic school system in independent Congo, despite difficulties of finance and personnel", according to the report, has about 1,440,000 pupils in primary and secondary schools that are administered by the missions".

Recently in Uganda the Archbishop of Rubaga has expressed alarm at "talk in certain quarters of making all our schools into government or state schools".

Archbishop Joseph Kiwanuka informed the annual conference (1961) of the Uganda Education Association that there was also talk of depriving denominational schools of government support.

A member of the White Fathers, the Archbishop said that parents "have the God-given duty to obtain the education of their children, and that they have the right to be helped to that end.

"Therefore schools in which children can be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents—that is, denominational schools—should be allowed to exist.

"One reason why the State should be prepared to help these schools to run efficiently is the fact that these schools are educating future citizens." (*The Catholic News*, August 26th, 1961.)

A new departure from the accustomed procedure in mission work has been undertaken by the Catholic Bishops of Nyasaland, who announced in May, 1962, that non-Catholic clergymen may be welcomed to Catholic schools to teach religion to students of their faith. It was understood, of course, that priests would be allowed to teach religion in non-Catholic mission schools. This move was taken to combat the encroachments of Communism. The main sources of education in Nyasaland are the Christian mission schools, Protestant and Catholic.

In Egypt the dispute over schools is still smouldering. In 1955 Christian schools were threatened with complete nationalisation by a bill which decreed that all schools on Egyptian soil must teach the Koran. After much debate, a compromise was finally reached whereby Muslim students attending such schools would be instructed in their religion, but at special hours and in separate classrooms.

A formidable threat to Catholic school administrators is the Special Education Act. Under the terms of this law, all schools operating on Egyptian soil must be owned, administered, and staffed by Egyptian nationals and follow only the courses of study officially approved by the government. At the present time, this legislation is still not being enforced, but its presence on the statute books poses an ominous threat to Catholic schools in Egypt.

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CORRESPONDENCE

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN HISTORY

A fact scarcely ever mentioned—and certainly never in French historical records—is that Napoleon's ill-treatment of his wife, Josephine, was almost certainly the cause of his defeat at Moscow.

Josephine had a sister, Aimee de Rivery, who became the wife of Abdul Hamid of Turkey, to whom she bore a son, who later

became the Sultan Mahmoud. On the death of Abdul Aimee became confidante and chief adviser to the new ruler, Selim III, whom she induced to enter into a treaty of alliance with Napoleon. Shortly afterwards Napoleon violated this treaty by his invasion of Egypt, then a Turkish dependency. However Aimee managed to persuade Selim to make peace and renew the treaty on the understanding that the French evacuate Egypt. Napoleon sent to Turkey as his envoy a fellow Corsican, Marshal Sebastiani, who quickly teamed up with Aimee. Together they plotted the course of Turkish foreign policy, determined to unleash a Franco-Turkish onslaught on Russia. An attempt by Britain to intervene in Turkish affairs was defeated.

Napoleon had every reason to believe that, with Turkish aid, his invasion of Russia would be successful. Several Tsarist divisions were kept occupied on the Russo-Turkish border.

Then, on December 16th, 1809, Napoleon divorced Josephine. At once Aimee de Rivery changed from friend to implacable enemy of the French emperor. By this time her son had become Mahmoud the Second, and at Aimee's behest he made peace overtures to Russia. "On May 28th, 1812, one month after Napoleon invaded Russia, Mahmoud signed the Treaty of Bucharest, ceding Bessarabia to Russia and freeing the Russian Danube army to march north against Napoleon, now standing before Moscow". "Without the army of the Danube, Russia could not have struck the deadly blow which hurled Napoleon into retreat at Beresina, sending him on his gruesome retreat through the winter snows".

The flower of Napoleon's army was destroyed, and the course of history changed. One cannot of course say just what events would have taken had the French army remained intact, but it assuredly would have been very different from what it has been.

UNFAIR?

I wonder if F. A. Ridley is quite fair to the "Age of Progress" when he selects "those architectural monstrosities and offensive eye-sores", Euston, St. Pancras and Paddington stations for comparison with the majestic cathedrals of the ages of faith (*THE FREETHINKER*, 28/12/62).

Numerous objections spring to mind, but the chief one is that Mr. Ridley is making very selective comparisons: choosing the unaesthetic of one period and contrasting it with the aesthetic of another. By all means let us be fair to the ages of faith, but not by being unfair to other times.

If I might make another comparison, I should suggest that the Forth Bridge, for instance, is as remarkable (aesthetically as well as functionally) in its way as Durham Cathedral. Opinions on this point will obviously differ, but the test I suggest is: does the Forth Bridge make you gasp when you first see it? It certainly did me.

ROBERT DENT

OBITUARY

P. de la Cherois Crommelin writes: "I have heard recently of the death of Mr. Blewett of Ledbury, Herefordshire. He has been a regular reader of *THE FREETHINKER* for many years. He has read about me in that paper, he wrote to me. He then paid me a visit, and my wife and I went to see him a few months ago. By a curious coincidence he had met my father some years before I was born, about 1896. He was a member of the crew in a vessel which took my father and other astronomers to the north of Norway to observe a solar eclipse. Mr. Blewett died at the age of 86, and was a very honest and sturdy kind of Freethinker."

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