

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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A FEW WEEKS AGO I wrote an article on the little-known but intriguing Anabaptist "Kingdom" of Munster (1534-5); an event that made a European sensation in its day, echoes of which are still to be heard in the thirty-eighth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, as probably also in John Bunyan's *Holy War*. Since then, a correspondent has asked me to follow up this fascinating theme with an article on the equally intriguing (though much better documented) Jesuit "Utopia" in Paraguay during the 17th and 18th centuries.

As I have always been extremely interested in this also out of the way subject, I am very pleased to comply with this request.

## Two Communist Experiments

Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the two most famous communist experiments in modern history were in 16th century Germany and 17th century Paraguay. (In antiquity there was the bizarre episode of the "red kings of Sparta", the communist descendants of the god Hercules; and in the 18th century there was the fantastic "Republic" of Gilberta—the Land of the Free—set up by pirates in Madagascar upon a co-operative basis, a miniature rehearsal for the French Revolution.) However, whilst Anabaptist Munster (probably) and the Jesuit "Republic" of Paraguay (certainly) were communist states, that was about all that these two bizarre social experiments actually had in common.

## Stranger Than Fiction

For the Anabaptists were revolutionaries, and orthodoxy in church and state—including pope and emperor, Calvin and Luther—combined to denounce and where possible exterminate them, whereas the Jesuit Republic of Paraguay (which also made a European sensation during its much longer day) was born at the foot of the altar. Its founders and administrators were the Society of Jesus, the "old guard" of militant Catholicism, the crack *corps d'élite* of the Papacy in its agelong battle with subversive forces in both church and state. Truth is stranger than fiction. Certainly the spectacle afforded in South America of a state actually far more communistic in practice than present-day Russia, founded and administered for a century and a half by the great counter-revolutionary order of ecclesiastical fascism (as I have elsewhere termed it) is as striking an illustration of the above proverb as any to be found.

## The Jesuit Republic

It is well known that the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors derived whatever legal right they had to conquer and to colonise South America from a bull issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493, by which the Borgia pope himself a Spaniard, divided the then just discovered New World of America between Spain and Portugal. It is also common knowledge that the Americas were conquered in the name of the cross by the soldiers of the "Most Catholic" kings of Spain, and that the Spanish conquistador and the Spanish missionary were, so to speak,

"Siamese twins" during the conquest and occupation of the sub-continent.

The first Jesuits arrived in America in 1569. By the beginning of the 17th century, they were firmly established in Paraguay, inhabited by savage Guarani Indians, whose language is still the national dialect. The beginnings of the Jesuit republic derived from the intervention of the missionaries amongst these simple woodland folk whom,

from about 1600 on, the Jesuits began to assemble into regular settlements. Though nominally subject to the Spanish Crown, the Jesuits seem finally to have established a kind of state within the state, consisting at its zenith of 31 settle-

ments, and (approximately) 150,000 Indians, and two Jesuits, a rector and curate to each settlement.

The French sociologist, Charles Gide, estimated that the largest of these Jesuit colonies set up in the heart of the primeval American forest contained about 8,000 inhabitants, but that the average was some 3,000 at its zenith. And until their forcible suppression by order of the Spanish crown in 1768, these Jesuit reservations appear to have acquired most of the functions of an independent state though nominally subject to the Spanish crown.

## Totalitarian

The Jesuit fathers even exercised the most important of all governmental functions, those of defence and taxation. To resist the incursions of slave raiders from Sao Paolo (Brazil), they organised a regular army which completely defeated the slave raiders. It is true that they did not levy taxes for the simple reason that money did not exist in Jesuit Paraguay, but they organised production on a compulsory basis, and every Indian belonged to what would now be called a labour battalion, and was obliged to earn his living in this collective way. For, as in modern communist states, the right to work was universal—and compulsory. Though the Jesuits themselves always claimed that their functions were primarily spiritual, and that they journeyed to the far-off forests of South America purely to save souls, they exercised so many secular functions that European opinion was justified in dubbing the colony as for all intents and purposes a sovereign and independent state. One could accurately refer to the Jesuit republic as a totalitarian régime as in fact, probably the most apt historical example extant of Catholic totalitarian ideology entirely free from any inhibitive checks or external control.

## The Jesuit Utopia

It was perhaps from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* that the Jesuits derived the most unusual feature of their republic—the total prohibition of money, the apostolic "root of all evil". For the only gold and silver were kept under lock and key by the clerical supervisors for the purpose of foreign exchange. Another possible source may have been the collectivist system practised by the Incas of Peru before the Spanish Conquest which the Jesuits are known to have studied. (Loyola's nephew

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Communism Under Capricorn

By F. A. RIDLEY

actually captured the last Inca.)

A totalitarian regimentation seems to have been the rule in this ideal Utopia. The towns were planned, workers planned, even the holidays and amusements of the Indians were planned. It was also most certainly not a democracy, and one Voltairean critic made the sharp comment that "in Paraguay, perfect communism existed, for the Jesuits shared the wealth and the Indians the work". However, this *bon mot* seems a trifle harsh, since the Jesuits worked hard *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. Nor do their Indian subjects appear to have been particularly unhappy under their paternalistic despotism. A more damaging criticism is that of Gide: "Their educational system stands self-condemned. For during the whole of the 165 years that it lasted, it never succeeded in turning these children into men". The Jesuit fathers in Paraguay have been also compared with the communistic guardians in Plato's *Republic*, but they were only so because their wards remained perpetual minors. However, be that as it may, the

Jesuit state was a unique experiment in colonisation and speaks volumes not only for the administrative ability, but also for the adaptability of the "Sons" of Loyola.

#### From the Jesuits to the Bruderhof

The Jesuit Republic was forcibly suppressed in 1768 by an anti-clerical Spanish monarch, aided and abetted by the Spanish and Portuguese capitalists, who appear to have disliked the Jesuit socialist state for very similar reasons to those that motivate the USA with regard to Castro's present Cuban socialist state. But even today Paraguay is still the headquarters of the German-derived *Bruderhof*, the also communistic offspring of the Anabaptists. Munster and the Jesuits meet by the banks of the Parana. But a modern traveller, Julian Duguid, has described impressive remains of Jesuit churches, still surviving memorials amid the forests of South America.

[cf. R. Cunningham Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia* and R. Fuelp-Miller, *The Power and Secret of the Jesuits.*]

## The Flood

By D. M. CHAPMAN

ONE DAY God repented (Gen. 6, 6) that he had made mankind because 99.9 per cent were bad. Although God loves sinners, he decided to drown them all, including the babies. Exception was made for Noah, his wife, his sons and their wives. Noah you will recall was a "just" and "perfect" man (Gen. 6, 9) who planted a vineyard, got drunk and passed out bare naked in his tent (Gen. 9, 20/1). Because his youngest son happened to see him minus his clothes, Noah cursed him and his posterity forever. Instead of killing the sinners simply by sending a plague as He learned to do in later times, or by sending a Death Angel, God chose to send a deluge.

To escape this fate Noah was instructed to make an ark to house the remnant. The collection of the animals was a tremendous undertaking in that there are about 700,000 insects alone. Allowing a short five minutes for the servicing of each animal species, and working twelve hours per day, it would have taken twenty years to complete the task, but it was done in seven days (Gen. 7, 2). Not only was the collecting done during this week but also the ark was built. It was 150 yards long as compared with the *Queen Elizabeth* which is 300 yards in length. For some reason best known to God, Noah also took on board the locusts, rattlesnakes and lice, etc.

In one place it says that Noah brought in the animals by twos (Gen. 6, 19), while in another in sevens (Gen. 7, 2), but the point is not too important, since it just means having 14,000,000 animals on board instead of 2,000,000. Also included in the menagerie were dragons (Psalm 148, 7), satyrs (Isaiah 34, 14), cockatrices (Isaiah 11, 9) and fiery flying serpents (Isaiah 30, 6), because these beasts are mentioned in the Bible after the flood. To keep the three stories of animals well ventilated there was an 18" x 18" window provided in the ark. Feeding presented a major problem as silkworms only eat mulberry leaves, koala bears eat just eucalyptus leaves, and the elephant puts away 1,000 lbs. of vegetation per day. The eight did well to tend to 14,000,000 animals. If each did his share then  $14 \times 10^8 \div 8 = 1,750,000$  animals were allotted per person. As there are 92,400 seconds per day this did not leave much time (about 0.1 sec.) for each animal, provided the staff worked twenty-four hours per day. This must have been hard for Noah himself, who was 600 years old at the time.

In order to flood everything, water had to be created; when the flood was over the water had to be destroyed, as there was no place for it to drain. Since Everest is over five miles high and all was covered during the flood (Gen. 7, 19) then the flood water must have been five miles deep. Far be it for our finite minds to question God's sending so much water for so long a time if the reason for the flood was just to drown the wicked. To get to the ark in time, the penguins from the cold regions would have had to be warned even before Noah. The freshwater fishes and invertebrates must not have minded having the salt water of the oceans mix with their environment. Likewise the marine beasts cannot have minded the drastic dilution. The laws of osmosis were suspended for the occasion. During the subsidence a released dove brought back an olive leaf which had miraculously survived the year-long flood.

When it was all over, Noah took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8, 20). This was quite a sacrifice, what with 4,500 mammals and 8,590 birds, especially after having gone to so much trouble caring for them for over a year. It is logical to conclude from this that the species must have been taken into the ark by sevens, which means that there were 14,000,000 animals on board or that only males were sacrificed and that the remaining females were all pregnant.

The sacrifice was a success though, for God who has a nose for roast meat "smelled a sweet savour" (Gen. 8, 21). Next Noah put the kangaroos on a ship and told them to go only to Australia.

God promised that he would just wash away sins and not sinners any more, and as a sign he put a rainbow in the heavens. Up till then light was not refracted by water droplets. Too bad the survivors did not get God to promise not to kill off everyone in ways other than just by floods, for in the New Testament, we learn that the world is to go up in smoke.

Too many people think that the Flood was just a single Old Testament miracle, but through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we have seen that there were many miracles involved, each one a fitting object of wonderment of God's way to man.

# The Argument from Design

By G. L. SIMONS

OF THE SEVERAL ARGUMENTS which are thought (in certain circles) to prove God's existence, the two most popular are the First Cause argument and the argument from Design. I have already spoken of the First Cause argument; the argument from Design is similar in that it is not the prerogative of philosophers. It is believed by many people who are practising Christians, but the enthusiasm with which it is recommended by religious folk has little connection with its logical force.

In its simplest form the argument from Design (or Teleological argument) states that, since design can be perceived in nature, this implies the existence of a designer. In this simple form the argument gives the appearance of begging the question, as indeed it does. It can be modified, however, to make it appear more plausible. The modified version is created merely by choosing words with greater care. Thus it is argued that pattern (or order) can be perceived in nature, that nature is governed by mathematical laws, and that pattern and law logically imply an intelligent cause. This cause is called "God". The argument from Design is outlined clearly in a current Catholic booklet entitled *The Existence of God* by the Rev. R. P. Redmond, DD.

As with the First Cause argument, the argument from Design is only adhered to by people with vested interests. Disinterested philosophers are almost unanimous in rejecting it. It derives most support from Catholic thinkers who are committed to terms of reference that were old-fashioned a hundred years ago. (I sometimes wonder whether intelligent Catholic philosophers believe current Catholic dogma, or whether they merely acquiesce through fear of excommunication.) But the argument from Design is strong at a popular level. It seems, however, that objections have been made to this argument to which no satisfactory answers have been given. The objections mentioned here are not an exhaustive list, but are typical of the most important.

The first objection derives from an examination of the idea of "design" or "pattern". In a complex biological organisation like a man or a donkey, pattern is easily discernible. Parts of the animal are subordinated for the good of the whole. But there are instances in nature where this obvious sort of pattern does not obtain. For example in fog or in the ocean there is no pattern of biological variety. Similarly when a super nova occurs or when two galaxies collide there is no pattern in the familiar sense. Thus it is easy to see why some people favour the notion that man has been designed for a purpose, but difficult to understand them when they claim that this purpose is inherent in the whole universe, in every aspect of nature (which includes the polio virus and the liver parasite). It is highly likely, if there are intelligent beings in the universe who permanently live in a misty, volatile environment, that the argument from Design has never occurred to them.

The second objection is concerned with an analysis of the logic which should govern the formulation of valid analogies, i.e. if man himself did not design things and be perceived no creature that did, he would not be likely to arrive at the conclusion that the universe or any part of it was designed by a transcendent being. It is only by drawing an analogy between his own creations and the entities that he perceives in the world, that the idea of a transcendent designer gains plausibility. But rashly to

draw analogies can lead to unfortunate results, which the Scots philosopher, David Hume, first suggested in his brilliant *Dialogues on Natural Religion*. For example, since the objects designed by man are designed by a *procreated intelligence*, the argument from Design, if it is to be honest, should suggest that the universe was designed by a *procreated deity*, implying a hereditary hierarchy of gods. Also, since the larger the object manufactured, e.g. a ship or a house, requires the combined effort of several men, so the universe should require the combined efforts of several gods. These sort of conclusions are not popular with religious people, but are inevitable in careless argument from analogy. (It is not for nothing that against Hume's name in the Catholic *Index* of Forbidden Books appear the words *opera omnia*—complete works.)

Also the principle of logical induction which is used to assign an attribute to an object when similar objects are known to possess the attribute is only valid when (a) the degree of similarity is sufficient, and (b) there are not a great number of similar objects which are *not* known to possess the attribute. Neither of these conditions is fulfilled by the argument from Design. In the first place the sort of order or pattern in the universe bears little similarity to the order or pattern created by man. (The basic similarity—that all patterns are governed by mathematical law—will be considered in the fourth objection.) In the second place, the attribute of "being designed" is, as far as we know, limited to a very small number of perceived objects, namely those created by man (and some higher animals). We cannot *assume* that other entities in the world have been designed if this is what we are setting out to prove.

The third objection is that the Design argument commits the logical error of using examples from one logical sphere to draw conclusions in a different logical sphere, i.e. there is a fundamental error in attempting to use evidence in the empirical world to establish any fact about a possible transcendent world. This error characterises all the arguments which attempt to prove God's existence by an observation of the world. Immanuel Kant was one of the first thinkers to demonstrate this basic theological fallacy. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (page 370 in the Everyman edition) he says, "Now I maintain that all attempts of reason to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct us to any theological truths . . . If the empirical law of causality is to conduct us to a supreme being, this being must belong to the chain of empirical objects—in which case it would be, like all phenomena, itself conditioned". No wonder the Catholics speak of Kant as a heretic.

The fourth objection derives from a consistent observation of Occam's injunction "not to multiply hypotheses beyond necessity". In other words, to adopt the simplest hypothesis which fits the facts. Reflection soon shows that to invoke a designer to account for the pattern in the universe is a quite superfluous operation. For if *anything* exists so will *laws of nature*. This is because the laws of nature derive from the attributes of existent things, and for anything to exist it must have attributes. Therefore since things exist so do the laws of nature. Religious thought is confused in thinking that possibly matter has always existed but it took God to create the laws of nature.

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

ITV'S programme on religion (June 16th) included two interviews, one with Sir Richard Acland, and the other with the Rt. Hon. R. A. Butler, and it was a great pity that they were not allowed to discuss their differences between themselves. Sir Richard made a withering attack on religious instruction in schools—which it may be remembered, was made almost compulsory in all state schools by Mr. Butler in 1944. It was outrageous that the first three chapters of Genesis, maintained Sir Richard, should be taught as science *and* history. And he was even more devastating over the story of Jonah as "history".

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On the other hand, Mr. Butler made no problem about his thorough belief in Christianity, though he tolerantly admitted that even unbelievers can and do practise the "Christian" virtues. Neither Sir Richard Acland nor Mr. Butler even mentioned "our Lord", a surprising omission. What we hope to hear one day is a discussion between a Freethinker and Mr. Butler on *Ascension Day*. Would he insist against the Freethinker that the Resurrection was *literally* true, that the resurrection of crowds of Jewish saints at the time was literally true, and that Jesus literally then ascended unto heaven to sit on a literal right hand of God (presumably sitting on a cloud) in spite of the Bishop of Woolwich?

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A medium, Mr. Leslie Flint, according to "Psychic News" (June 15th) gave a tape-recording of the voice of George Bernard Shaw the other week, who managed to come from Summerland for once because he found he could at last "inhabit" a body. In that deliriously happy Paradise, it appears you don't really require a body. Actually, his "survival" had proved a "revelation" said Shaw triumphantly, now realising that he was much more "than a body". We were assured that Shaw had met his parents, that he was never really satisfied with his plays, that he even liked Oscar Wilde, and that, though in this life he had always objected to "existing beyond death", he had now returned to prove "that he was still a living paradox". And there are actually people who can lap up any number of these imbecilities!

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On the other hand, we have the same journal with absolute certainty telling us the glad news that "spirit guides all venerate Jesus", and that "when pioneers rejected the Christ principle, Spiritualism withered"; yet so far, Jesus himself has never materialised here in England speaking perfect English, just like the Virgin Mary came to Lourdes in person speaking perfect French. One fervent Spiritualist possibly gave the reason. He is Mr. George Rulf who wrote to *Psychic News* that Jesus was a myth, ever since which, many of its lady readers have deluged the journal with horrified attacks, protesting that "our Lord" *did* live and *was* still living.

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In general, any tramp who has no home and wants to sleep in doorways and is fined in court is of very little interest to readers, but the London *Evening News* the other day devoted over a column to one of them in detail. And why? Simply because he was a Bible student, and wanted the Church of England to provide a home for him so that he could study the Holy Book. The magistrate was quite unsympathetic, and remanded the Bible-loving tramp for a doctor's report. We wonder whether this was because he slept outside in doorways, or because he read the Bible?

But what a pity that he didn't know that the vicar of St. Giles', Camberwell, and his four curates, are giving away as prizes £100 in notes—though it is true that only regular churchgoers can qualify for a prize. They have to use the money to earn more by Christians, as shown in that beautiful story of the talents in the Gospels, and thus follow the teaching of Jesus, the reward being no doubt a seat in Heaven alongside—or between—God and Jesus. What heavenly inventions have some of our Men of God!

## Madalyn Murray's Victory

IN HER account of the United States Supreme Court's consideration of her appeal against Bible readings and recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the schools of Maryland (heard with a similar appeal from Pennsylvania), Madalyn Murray prophesied "almost certain victory", "possibly a 9-0 decision, or an 8-1 with [Justice] Stewart dissenting" (THE FREETHINKER, April 26th, 1963).

On July 17th, the Supreme Court duly declared these religious practices unconstitutional, with Justice Stewart duly dissenting. Justice Tom Clark, who read the 8-1 majority decision, said:

"The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the Church, and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind.

"We have come to recognise through bitter experience that it is not within the power of Government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard."

The decision follows last year's ruling that the reading of a non-denominational prayer in the schools of New York state was unconstitutional, and must be regarded as a powerful reassertion of the separation of church and state in the USA, in fact a victory for Secularism. It must also be regarded as a great victory for Mrs. Murray and her sons (achieved at great personal inconvenience and even suffering) and for the Pennsylvanian Unitarian appellants.

## THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

(Concluded from page 203)

It is impossible to conceive of things existing without attributes. Locke realised this difficulty when he attempted to divide the qualities of things into two classes—primary (belonging inherently to the object, e.g. shape, size, extension) and secondly (assigned to the object by an observer, e.g. taste, colour, texture). Now any existent object must have at least the qualities which Locke called primary. And it is precisely because of these qualities that objects react with one another in a certain way, their mathematical definition of these laws merely signifies that the universe is of a consistent type, amenable to description of a certain sort. There is no reason whatever to believe that the laws of nature imply a lawgiver. The word "law" is unfortunately ambiguous, and it is only because it signifies both a product of social legislature and an attribute of the world that unthinking folk are apt to believe there is an important analogy between "People who steal are imprisoned" and "In air at a certain pressure water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade".

The argument from Design is clearly fallacious. Those who adhere to it, do not do so because of a love of logic, but because they do not wish to relinquish emotionally sustained prejudices. But reason is important, and those people who teach that it is good to ignore it when it threatens particular beliefs are both immature and irresponsible.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—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

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, June 30th, 6.45 p.m.: T. G. MILLINGTON, "Punishment, Unjust, Ineffective and Irrelevant".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 30th, 11 a.m.: DR. J.A.C. BROWN, "The Social Effects of Radio and Television".

Wales and Western Branch (Bute Town Community Centre, Tuesday, July 2nd, 7.30 p.m.: ANY QUESTIONS?

## Notes and News

DR. GLANVILLE WILLIAMS has—not for the first time and we hope not for the last—been upsetting Roman Catholic sensibilities on the subject of euthanasia, with a review (of a book by Norman St. John-Stevas) in *The Observer*. One Catholic correspondent (2/6/63) referred to Dr. Williams's "passionate defence of the right to kill innocent people", but Lord Longford (16/6/63) was superficially much more reasonable and restrained. "Three issues at least have emerged from this correspondence", he began, "apart altogether from the fairness or otherwise of Dr. Glanville Williams's review of Mr. St. John Stevas's brilliant little book". The third "issue" was the crucial one: "should Roman Catholics (10 per cent of the British population) be allowed to play their normal democratic part as citizens" or are they "to be treated as second-class citizens". Surely, asked Lord Longford in his most sweetly reasonable Catholic tones, "no rational democrat is going to suggest that?"

PROVERBIAL, THOUGH, sweetness can be unwholesome, and a Humanist letter from L. A. Rouse of Bedfordshire, added a bitter corrective. Roman Catholic teaching results, wrote Mr. Rouse (*The Observer*, 16/6/63) "in the birth of millions of children whose parents neither wanted them nor are able to bring them up in a reasonable standard of comfort". "It also jeopardises the health and lives of thousands of women . . .". "Why in the face of all this suffering", asked Mr. Rouse, "should not civilised people criticise with all the force at their command these tenets, even when applied only to those already of the faith?" Why indeed.

"MAY I RECALL to you the meaning of 'revolution' according to the English language: 'Complete change, turning upside down, great reversal of conditions, fundamental reconstruction'." These words of Leonard Woolf (in a letter to the *New Statesman*, 14/6/63), also acted as a corrective; this time to the exaggerated claims for the achievements of Pope John, with special reference to Paul Johnson's *New Statesman* article a week earlier, on "The Papal Revolution". Mr. Woolf wrote: "Mr. Johnson, on inspection, informs us that the Pope's 'revolution' took four forms: (1) The doctrine of papal infallibility remains unchanged. (2) The bishops rejected a thesis on 'the sources of revelation'. (3) The Vatican Council has 'kept open the door' to unity. (4) Two encyclicals with 'sufficient saving ambiguities' (Mr. Johnson's words!) have a tenor which is 'unmistakably progressive and reasonable' (Mr. Johnson's words!)"

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MR. JOHNSON called Mr. Woolf's summary of John XXIII's reforms "tendentious and misleading". In any case they should "be judged in relation to the rigidity and immobilisme of the institution he inherited". "Naturally," Mr. Johnson continued, "a number of interested parties are seeking to minimise these changes". What he neglected to say was that he too was an interested party. As a Roman Catholic and a Socialist, he would "naturally" have a tendency to maximise the changes. We repeat, Mr. Woolf's letter was a corrective. John XXIII was, by papal standards, liberal, and a great improvement in all respects over his predecessor, Hochhuth's "Vicar". There have certainly been changes for the better in papal policy during the last few years, notably in relation to the Cold War, but there has hardly been a revolution in the true sense of that term. Rather, as F. A. Ridley showed two weeks ago, has the liberal faction in the Church of Rome temporarily gained ascendancy over the rival conservative or ultramontane party.

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THE PRISON COMMISSIONERS report that in 1962 "an increasing number of men" in prison registered themselves as having no religion" (*Daily Mail*, 12/6/63). The Commissioners comment: "This appears to be because the men are unable to accept the presupposition of Christian worship rather than because they wish to repel the ministry of the chaplain". Now that the religious—or non-religious—beliefs of prisoners have been publicly referred to, the Commissioners should be asked to give details. How does the percentage of non-religious prisoners compare with that of the various religious denominations—Roman Catholic, for instance? What percentage of each involved serious crimes as opposed to, say, public disobedience in connection with nuclear disarmament demonstrations? And so on. We have long pressed for the publication of such statistics as important to the scientific study of crime—and religion. We feel sure that, despite "increasing" numbers, the non-religious prison percentage will still be below its population percentage, whereas the Roman Catholic percentages will be reversed.

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CHINA, WE LEARN from the *Sunday Express* (9/6/63), has "launched new attacks on Christianity and the Bible". Peking Radio described the Bible as "a book of myths used to dope people with religion", and the *People's Daily* declared: "The ruling class of capitalism-imperialism is using religious superstitions as a tool to deceive people. The struggle against religion should be given serious attention".

# William Kent FSA

By H. CUTNER

ONLY A FEW days before his death on May 9th, Kent and I went to a British Academy lecture on "Hamlet and Ophelia", and I had sent him the list of famous people shown on a signboard just outside Southwark Cathedral who had been connected with or lived in Southwark; as he was quite sure that one or more of the names were wrong. These two very trivial incidents prove how almost to the day of his death he was still interested in the two subjects which had interested him all his life—his beloved London, and the plays and problems of William Shakespeare.

For William Kent was a born Londoner, and his enthusiasm for our great city never waned. He was ready to talk about all its nooks and alleys and famous streets in detail. His mind was stored with their history culled from all kinds of books, many of them forgotten, and picked up by him from secondhand bookshops or market stalls. On London, he had a phenomenal memory and was down on me—and of course on other writers—like a flash when we made a mistake. I once wrote in these columns that Samuel Pickwick was connected with the George Inn in Southwark, and I was wrong as he proved to me. For Charles Dickens, Kent had an admiration only second to that for Shakespeare though, unlike me, it was not on the side of idolatry. In his two books, *Dickens and Religion* and *London for Dickens Lovers*, will be found how thoroughly he knew the famous novels and the unforgettable characters created by the great novelist. His knowledge can only be described as encyclopedic and always compelled my unbounded admiration.

In his deeply interesting autobiography, *The Testament of a Victorian Youth*, dealing as it does with his own early life and his Nonconformist environment, we get a fascinating account of what Dissent was like in the latter years of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, with brilliant sketches of his religious teachers, famous then but almost forgotten these days.

William Kent was born in 1886, did not have more than an elementary education, was working as soon as he left school, and eventually spent most of his working life with the LCC in its law department. He only rarely talked to me about this, for I suspect most of it was routine. But in his spare time he began as a "guide" to take parties around famous streets in London, and gained quite a reputation for his popularity. He loved nothing better in the world than to point out with great detail notable events, and where this or that historic person famous in his day lived or died.

In his fascinating work, *Walks in London*, will be found what a master he was at this kind of thing. Here is a passage—and his books teem with similar ones:—

We will go down the Old Bailey. The name dates from the middle of the thirteenth century, "Old bailey street" is first mentioned in 1570. The name refers to the bailey or ballium of the City wall between Ludgate and Newgate. In 1189 Newgate prison is first mentioned. Whether this was a small one over the gate, or a larger one on the site of the present Central Criminal Court, it is impossible to say. It was much damaged by the Wat Tyler rebels in 1381. In 1423 the executors of Richard Whittington carried out some repairs. It was damaged but not destroyed in the Great Fire . . .

and so on. But Kent's books were not a mere repository of facts. They were an entertaining description of the places he knew and loved so well.

His *Encyclopedia of London* is now a classic and his *London for Everyone*, a best seller. For those who want more there is *London for the Curious* or *My Lord Mayor*

or *Mine Host London*. Nor must I forget his one biography, also of a Londoner—*John Burns: Labour's Lost Leader* whom he knew well, and who was the subject of his last article for THE FREETHINKER.

Kent and I shared a love of literature in general, and his books contain references to scores of writers more or less famous. Like me, he was an "indiscriminate" reader, but naturally he loved the best. He commenced to write early in his career, and gradually shed his religious beliefs, though he never favoured militancy as I did. He was the soul of tolerance in these things.

His ready pen loved, not only to get at the facts, but to make those facts interesting for readers and he thoroughly succeeded. Older readers of this journal must have enjoyed the many articles he wrote for us over the years, and he was always ready to send us an article full of things he loved or wanted to be discussed.

Kent gradually became a convert to what is called the Oxford theory of the authorship of the Shakespearean plays—that it was Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, who really wrote them, or at least most of them. In this, quite independently, I concurred. Kent gave many lectures on the subject for the Shakespeare Fellowship, had many debates, and never ceased pointing out how our highly honoured professors of literature fought shy of him and the Oxford case.

His private life was his own of course, but he was often unhappy due to an unfortunate combination of circumstances that need not be discussed here. He could forget about them when taking people for a tour through London, or when writing his many books.

But his most shattering misfortune was the destruction of his magnificent library of 5,000 books through "enemy action". Many of them were indeed unique, some probably not even in the British Museum Reading Room. It was a collection which took him 50 years to gather and only those who have collected books over the years will know how much of a tragedy it was for Kent. The pamphlets he amassed could never be replaced, and he sadly told me some were worth their weight in gold.

But of one thing we can be certain—his own books will keep his memory green, for few writers have shown more enthusiasm and sincerity than he on his chosen subjects.

If not a strenuous militant, he was a quiet advocate of Freethought, and for many years a member of the National Secular Society, Rationalist Press Association and South Place Ethical Society. And, as I think of our long friendship, and look back on the many hours we have spent together on the causes we so loved, I can only say—good-bye, old friend.

## ETHICAL UNION HOUSING ASSOCIATION

THE ETHICAL UNION Housing Association (already responsible for Burnet House in Hampstead) is now building flatlets for elderly persons in Wimbledon, close to the shopping centre. Tenants will have a self-contained unit with own front door consisting of a bed-sitting room, kitchen and toilet. Baths and a common room will be shared. Members of the National Secular Society are invited to apply, men as well as women as the scheme is intended for both. The flatlets are expected to be ready for occupation about the end of October. Those interested are asked to write to Mr. M. L. Burnet, Hon. Secretary, EUHA, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W.8.

## My Love of Montaigne

By FREDERICK E. PAPPS

I MAKE NO CLAIM to wide scholarship. My praise for Montaigne must be regarded as that of a very ordinary individual whose academic learning terminated at a council school when twelve years of age. Such little knowledge as I possess is entirely due to a certain aptitude and a choice of books which was outside the usual literary demands of those born in my social strata of our society in my time.

Some few years ago now, a friend (incidentally a man of wide experience and superior education) paid me a visit one hot summer's day, and we had a very pleasant discussion, mainly about matters of topical interest and books. A few days later the postman delivered a weighty packet which contained a volume of the famous *Essays* of Montaigne, translated by E. J. Trechmann and edited by J. M. Robertson (Oxford University Press) together with a letter from my friend advising me to read the book carefully. I could take as long as I liked and I was also adjured not to hurry the process of returning it. I kept it for over a year. First I read it through from cover to cover; then I would open it anywhere at intervals. Finally, pricked by conscience, I parcelled it and reluctantly returned it to its rightful owner. I missed it sadly.

In 1961 I was eighty years of age and to my astonishment and delight one of my grand-daughters presented me with a brand new copy of the *Essays*.

The more pious and, let it be said, ignorant of our Christian friends say that the Bible contains all the truth, knowledge and guidance necessary for life here on earth. I think that the wisdom and the philosophy of Montaigne as expounded in his essays is an admirable substitute. Montaigne was a gentleman of culture, a French aristocrat who enjoyed his wealth, his gracious style of living. He was fond of his hunting, his horses, and his library. He lived (1533-1592) at a time when the cruelty of the Christian Church had revealed itself in the terrible Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day (1572), and it was in fact the Massacre, more than anything else that induced him to renounce public life. But Montaigne had to steer a very careful course in his criticism of the Church and its methods.

The essays show him as a man of wide learning, a great humanitarian with a generous tolerance and understanding. J. M. Robertson has shown (convincingly I think) that Shakespeare was strongly influenced by Montaigne. Certainly they have much in common. As with Shakespeare you may open Montaigne anywhere and you will be confronted with wisdom and humour, and, what is more startling, a relevance to modern thought.

Montaigne deals eloquently and knowledgeably with man's emotions and activities, his vices and his virtues, his ignorance and learning. He interpolates his comments with copious quotations from the ancient Latin and Greek classics, which tend to confirm his themes. He treats the emotions of sexual love with a mixture of tenderness, abounding wit and a humour that provokes chuckles of laughter. He was not a particular admirer of the institution of marriage and his opinions are tinged with a caustic wit and truisms which have their counterpart today.

The foregoing is intended in no way to be a review of a famous book, but rather as an effort to call the attention of those Freethinkers who may possibly have overlooked or missed this gem of three and a half centuries ago. Like the Christian with his Bible, the Sceptic can refer to the *Essays* for comfort, amusement and profit. A

professed Catholic, Montaigne's "whole habit of mind is", as J. M. Robertson said, "perfectly fatal to orthodox religion", and the reading and frequent excursions into the pages of his *Essays* have provided me with a mental stimulus and satisfaction which I have failed to obtain in any other literary work.

## From Montreal

By LANJE GARDYEN

A NEW CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, the first organisation of its kind, has been formed and incorporated under Federal Government charter in the Province of Quebec. The inaugural meeting represented what the *Montreal Gazette* (31/5/63) called a "unique assembly of men and women—including lawyers, teachers, journalists and businessmen", English and French speaking, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and non-religious. I believe much good can be accomplished by this new body which, Alban Flamand its first president said, intends to work with similar organisations in other provinces and in other countries. Take the first item in the constitution which begins: "To protect civil liberties, whether they be physical, intellectual or oral, without distinction as to sex, religious opinions or ethnic origins . . .". It is rumoured that this met with slight opposition from a Jesuit father, but little more than nominal—over the wording "religious opinions", in fact. And it was overwhelmingly accepted.

The latest news tidbit: The graduate students of the (French and Catholic) Jacques Cartier "Normal" school (equivalent of English training college) published an article on the front page of their school paper recommending secular "normal" schools—*école normales neutres*—where all future teachers could obtain a humanist training and then, at will, go to teach in any school, Catholic, Protestant, *laïques*, or what-have-you.

This is an old theme that we Freethinkers have been hammering. Once remove religion from Quebec French-speaking schools and the English-speaking majority in the other nine provinces will have no objection to French schools for anybody who wishes to study in French. But, as the Roman Catholic religion is always coupled with the language there is friction. We reproach the English—and other English-Speaking Canadians with not learning French, but how can they? The doors of our French schools are closed to anybody who isn't a Roman Catholic. The only exception is that for the last three or four years we have had two small French elementary Protestant schools in Montreal.

Our whole history has been falsified with the slogan that the Catholic Church has preserved the French language. It's all baloney. When the English conquered New France, they made a deal with the Catholic hierarchy whereby the Church promised obedience to the crown in the name of the (uneducated) people, in exchange for many privileges. In fact the Anglican monarch was more liberal than the French king because bishops were allowed to be appointed directly by Church authorities, whereas the French king held a veto. The Church has *used*, not served, the French language ever since. It is now being realised that, as we have long said, "You can be just as French, in fact, more French, if you're not a Catholic, because then you can enjoy the whole of French culture, not just the Catholic-approved part of it."

## CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

## DOGMATIC ATHEISM

I am convinced that in his present confused frame of mind Mr. W. E. Huxley is a positive liability to the atheist cause. In reply to my two criticisms of his previous letter he misunderstands my first point and misrepresents my second.

His statement that "non-existence is rightly inferred from lack of valid proof of existence" is such a silly generalisation that he must be unaware of its implications. Since Mr. Huxley did not understand my Adam and Eve example I will try another. Consider the situation before the discovery of a type of virus: no-one could prove that the virus existed, but from this it could not be "rightly inferred" that it did not exist.

I did not assert that atheism had not always preserved intellectual honesty; I said that if it did not it was no better than theology. Mr. Huxley's remark "Atheism always has preserved intellectual honesty" is very careless. I have only to indicate a single intellectually dishonest atheist to refute Mr. Huxley's claim. Does he really think that none has existed throughout history? Such exist and have existed simply because human beings are imperfect. Mr. Huxley reminds me of a Catholic talking about papal infallibility.

I suggest to him that the loose thinking of which he is so proud is not admirable, even in an atheist, and that his ill-considered remarks leave him wide open to any intelligent religious believer.

G. L. SIMONS.

[This correspondence is now closed.—ED.]

## CORRECTION

In the article, "The 'Holy' Nail of Turin (7/6/63) occurs the statement: "Nivola is the Latin for cloud". While I have no pretensions of being a Latin scholar having taken only a "seconds" in that subject at my college exams back in 1908 I would point out that *nimbus* (Latin for cloud) being a noun of the second declension could not possibly have the terminal "ola". The word may possibly be Italian but of that I am no judge.

C. E. WOOD, MPS.

[John W. Telfer writes: "I thank Mr. Wood for his correction and for a reminder never to take any Roman Catholic statement on trust. The statement, 'Nivola means cloud in Latin', appeared in *The Universe* (26/4/63). *The Italian for cloud is nuvola.*"]

## WON'T DO!

Mr. Ries, in his letter which appears in your issue of June 14th, quotes the phrase "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", and later says "The people who needed God's forgiveness were those who had brought Jesus to his crucifixion".

Now when I was a boy in the eighteen-nineties I was taught by my spiritual pastors and masters that the central fact of Christianity was that, we being by nature born in sin, the Lord sent his son down on earth to suffer and die for our redemption, this project being carried out through the agency of the Jews. I believe this still to be the general opinion among orthodox Christians.

I was also led to believe that because the Jews had been instrumental in bringing Jesus to his crucifixion they were not very respectable people, one of them, Judas, being particularly accused having "put the finger" on Him when He was being sought by the Law.

Now this really won't do. If the crucifixion was necessary for the salvation of mankind surely anyone who helped to bring it about should be in no need of forgiveness. Pilate apparently tried to throw a monkey-wrench in the works and if it hadn't been for the insistence of the Jews the whole thing might have miscarried. They would seem to merit praise rather than blame.

Incidentally, in case any readers fail to understand the old-

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fashioned wording of the quotation, the New English Bible has it "... they do not know what they are doing".

S. S. A. WATKINS.

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