

The Freethinker

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MORE YEARS AGO than I care to remember, I attended a lecture by the well-known Jesuit, Father Martindale on "The Conversion of England". It was, appropriately enough, delivered in Oxford, that traditional home of lost causes. I was then a somewhat dubious member of the Church of England, and in the discussion that followed I kept a discreet silence whilst the reverend Father demonstrated to his own satisfaction (as apparently to that of

his audience) that Victorian materialism was on the way out (this would be about 1916) and, presumably after its proximate demise, that nebulous entity, "the grace of God", would come flooding in as a sort of celestial time machine to transport this heretical and schismatic land back to the Age of Faith before the Protestant Reformation, or (as I seem to recall in Father Martindale's own words), "the sacrilegious communion established by Elizabeth caused England to break away from the pristine unity of the One True Church".

After the applause had died away, an old lady who, during the course of the discussion had proudly announced that she remembered "dear Cardinal Newman" preaching at the opening ceremony of the Jesuit Church of St. Aloysius in Oxford (in 1881) went on to make the impassioned assertion that the conversion of England would represent "the greatest miracle since the conversion of St. Paul".

Westminster not Canterbury
Were one to contemplate exclusively the tremendous intervening technical advances (one might say the overwhelming demonstration of materialist theory in practice) one might assume that the conversion of England to medieval Christianity, as so confidently predicted by the now aged Jesuit, would have been farther away nowadays than ever before. But human evolution does not advance in a straight unbroken line; there are too many complicating factors for that often to occur. Consequently whilst it is certainly true that mankind has made more technical progress during this present century than in the whole preceding era of recorded human history, the contemporary reaction in both its religious and its political aspects, still remains extremely potent.

The Church traditionally founded by Peter and Paul is now making sensational headway—in influence at least if not in actual numbers—and nowhere more so at present than here. Fresh proof of this has just been afforded by the *Sunday Mirror* (23/6/63) in the course of an article that purported to list the twenty most powerful people in Britain. Under "Archbishop of Westminster" (note, not Canterbury) it stated: "The Roman Catholic hierarchy (nearly 4,000,000 faithful) has more influence today than the Church of England". The *Sunday Mirror* added: "The post is vacant, awaiting a Vatican appointment".

Christian Reunion
One has only to reflect how utterly incredible such a statement would have been in a widely-read popular Sun-

day paper even at the time of Father Martindale's lecture half a century ago, to see that "the greatest miracle since the conversion of St. Paul" has moved appreciably nearer and certainly very much nearer since in the self-same Oxford, "dear Cardinal Newman" and his then tractarian associates, set out on the road to reunion with Rome. Or as a contemporary Protestant parody phrased it: "They nightly pitched their moving tent a day's march nearer Rome".

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Conversion of England

By F. A. RIDLEY

One can add that the policy initiated by the late Pope John and now to be apparently continued by Pope Paul, was originally adopted in view of this current situation as envisaged by our Sunday con- temporary in this (as, no doubt in other) formerly Protestant lands. It is in fact precisely because the hitherto major religious rivals of Rome, Orthodox Protestantism and (Greek) Orthodoxy, are visibly disintegrating that the Vatican has arrived at the conclusion that the time is now ripe for Christian reunion—a reunion, be it always understood, akin to that which periodically occurs in the insect world when the exhausted fly becomes co-opted into the patiently prepared spider's web.

For the great news has now arrived, and in a journal boasting one of the largest circulations in Britain. Westminster (RC) is in; Canterbury (C of E) is out! "Dear Cardinal Newman" was after all a far-sighted man who took the right turning.

Exit the Church of England
In case of an eventual Catholic restoration, it would be only common gratitude to acknowledge St. Patrick as the celestial protector not only of Ireland, but of England as well. For certainly the astonishing Catholic revival in this country during the past century is far more due to Irish, rather than to English influence.

The potato famines of the hungry forties drove millions of hungry Irish peasants to take refuge in Protestant England, America and Australia, spreading the faith wherever they went, whereas the Church of England by law established since the first Elizabeth, has always remained exclusively the Church of English "gentlemen" and has conspicuously failed to take root amongst the industrialised masses. But the English gentlemen are now on the way out. More and more the Church of England, like Mohammed's traditional coffin, is "without visible means of support", despite belated and in the main, futile attempts to ingratiate itself with the masses and to speak their language.

All the present odds are—and the Romeward gyrations of successive Archbishops of Canterbury tend to prove it—that probably before very long the Church of England will gratefully accept any terms plus emoluments that Pope Paul and his successors will be pleased to dole out to them.

Well, that is the position: if rationalist conservatives think it will only represent a sectarian change of name, they will very soon suffer a grievous disillusion. For Rome is, and will remain, a totalitarian power. So what next?

The Mark III Brain

By HUBERT WALEY

TIME: 1,500,000 BC

PLACE: Senior Design Officer's Office, CRE (Cerebral Research Establishment), Heaven.

The *Senior Design Officer* is seated at his desk drawing. *My Prenatal Self* is seen flitting vaguely in and out of the window, evidently trying to get a glimpse of the drawing, which is marked "TOP SECRET".

S.D.O.—For Heaven's sake come right in, Waley, and stop flittering around. You ought to see this really. After all you'll be issued with one yourself in due course.

M.P.S.—It looks terribly complicated . . .

S.D.O.—Well, you see it represents a major breakthrough in brain design.

M.P.S.—How exciting! What does it do?

S.D.O.—I'm glad you asked that question! You see it . . . Though that really isn't the main thing it does . . . One has to start some way back to get the thing clear. I remember when we issued the first Mark I brains to worms. Not brains at all according to present-day ideas—but they worked—terribly limited scope of course. What can a worm do all day? Just eat, make love, and crawl around! Hardly bears thinking of, does it?

M.P.S.—It sounds idyllic to me.

S.D.O.—Yes, I know, it's chaps like you who clog the wheels of progress, if you'll forgive me saying so. Anyway a lot of go-ahead young chaps in this section saw the possibilities of a more centralised control-system and sat down and designed the Mark II brain, complete with backbone. You can see for yourself what a success it's been. The animal kingdom has never had it so good—lizard-skin for the lizards, ostrich feathers for the ostriches, and holidays abroad for migratory birds and fishes.

M.P.S. Yes, and incidentally that experimental breeding station at Eden is looking lovely at the moment with the apple blossom all out. Good idea to plant those fig trees along the main walks. But you were going to tell me about the improved performance which you expect from this Mark III brain.

S.D.O.—Well, let's start with one solid fact—every owner of a Mark III brain will be able to talk and think.

M.P.S.—Talking will be very useful to us all, no doubt?

S.D.O.—Why, of course! You'll be able to "nice morning!" to your friends, when the weather's fine.

M.P.S.—Well, I would have thought my friends could have ascertained the state of the weather for themselves. Still—thinking must be attractive—I shall look forward to long hours of peering prophetically into the future.

S.D.O.—There's a slight snag there I ought to have mentioned perhaps. You mustn't turn on the long-range prediction knob and keep the set working with it on too long. That's liable to make the whole gadget heat up. Anyhow most users won't want to use the set for mooching around with. They'll use it for what it's meant for—giving simple answers to practical, daily, down-to-earth problems. Food for instance—. Say a monkey wants a coconut. Well, of course, it has to climb up a palm-tree and bring one down. That starts it off complaining that it's culturally underprivileged through only having a Mark II brain. Now a man wants a coconut—just too easy! All he has to do is learn some trade, join the right Union, draw a packet of pay, set aside something for the pools and the payments on his car, his telly and his washing-

up machine, and, if there's anything over, hand some of it to his wife. All she has to do is get into a bus, if it doesn't come along full, get out as near as she can to the nearest Supermarket and, if they happen to have any coconuts that day, she simply grabs one, puts it in her basket and with reasonable luck she won't have to wait more than twenty minutes to pay for it. Still, I suppose you're going to say that material progress isn't everything. Fair enough—. We've promised to equip all these newly-developed bipeds with Freewill and we mean to keep that promise.

M.P.S.—Freewill? I keep hearing talk about it these days. What does it really mean?

S.D.O.—There you go again! Forever wanting definitions. Read your Wittgenstein and always start with concrete instances. Say a cat picks a fish out of water. What does the fish do? Wriggle of course. Why? Because it's made that way—mere reflex. But suppose a lion came into a man's bathroom and picked him out of his bath. What would he do? I suppose he might wriggle too. But what a difference! He'd be wriggling as a deliberate gesture of protest against an unwarrantable assault.

M.P.S.—Wouldn't it be simpler to say that fish and man both wriggled because they felt so helpless?

S.D.O.—Helpless! The possessor of a Mark III brain helpless—! I don't mind telling you now—in strict confidence of course—that with the scientific know-how built into this brain one man could exterminate every lion on the face of the earth by simply turning a knob.

M.P.S.—Just the lions only? Some sort of highly selective anti-lion device?

S.D.O.—Well, no, after all we were simply talking of Power. This device I'm speaking of—and mind you it's very hush-hush—would affect all highly-evolved types of life equally.

M.P.S.—So he'd exterminate himself too! a useful kind of power! At any rate I suppose he'll foresee this drawback and refrain from making these exterminators?

S.D.O.—I'd feel more confident about that if it wasn't for this trouble with the long-range prediction setting. Still we can't hold production up indefinitely just for that. You see any type incorporating long-range prediction would have to be hand-made—one by one. We might manage six or seven of these prototypes in a couple of thousand years perhaps. But what would be the point?

M.P.S.—The Mark IV men could go round warning the others against running this appalling risk.

S.D.O.—Yes—possibly—there might be something in that idea. Anyhow I'll mention it to The Boss, if I remember. Remind me of it some time—after you're born at any rate.

M.P.S.—It may be too late by then.

NOT MANY LEFT!

Forty-four teenagers who stayed away from a special Mass for young people at a Roman Catholic Church at Thornton, Liverpool, have been expelled from membership of the church youth club.

Twenty-three-year-old schoolmaster Peter Forshaw, leader of the St. William of York Club, said: "We took club activity as well as attendance at the Mass before expelling 44 of the members."—*Daily Express* (24/6/63).

Mormonism—A New World Religion?

By "AKIBA"

ALL ORTHODOXIES contain within themselves the seeds of heterodoxy. Christianity, in fact, bears eloquent witness to this truism. Each sect, each denomination, each new Church has proclaimed itself the true, authentic version of Christianity—and has implicitly or explicitly rejected the claims of its rivals for the mantle of the True Church.

A survey of post-Christian, and, in particular, a survey of Christian "heterodox" offshoots from the main trunk (or trunks) of orthodoxy—has been attempted with varying degrees of success by theologians, rationalists and sociologists. The most recent, and in many respects, the most remarkable of these post-Christian religions—is what is popularly termed, "Mormonism". The rise and development of this energetic, proselytising creed has shaken the old orthodox Christianity—and its prospects of making substantial inroads into the camp of the faithful cannot be easily discounted. What are the main facts known regarding this religion?

The Mormons are the popular designation of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, organised by Joseph Smith at Fayette, New York State on April 6th, 1830. At the founder's death, a special Conference voted on August 8th, 1844 at Nauvoo, Illinois, to accept the Church Council of Twelve Apostles, headed by Brigham Young, as the interim governing body, pending reorganisation of a presidency. Brigham Young subsequently led the migration of the bulk of the Church membership to the Salt Lake Valley settlement. A few dissenting groups were organised from amongst those who did not go West. Undoubtedly, it was Brigham Young who built the Church and transformed it into a going concern. Without him there would have been no State of Utah, and without him it is doubtful whether Mormonism would have survived the death of its founder.

Mormon religious thought and practice differs only slightly from the main body of Christian teaching. In addition to acceptance of the Old and New Testament, Mormons believe that Joseph Smith was responsible for three new scriptures. They are: The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price. According to Mormon belief, Joseph Smith experienced a vision of the Father and the Son (the first two Persons of the Trinity) in 1820, in which he was promised additional revelation as the means of re-establishing the primitive Church in purity and with responsible authority. The book was published by Joseph Smith as a "translation" (by means of the "Urim and Thummim") of metallic plates, engraved with reformed Egyptian hieroglyphs, kept and maintained by "Ancient Americans" in the period 600 BC—600 AD.

The six distinctive features which have identified Mormonism—at least to the outside observer are:—

1. Its claim to the restitution of divine authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.
2. The conferring of priesthood on all worthy males to provide broad lay leadership.
3. International temple-building activities.
4. The practice of plural marriage, discontinued by revelation and official Church vote in October, 1890 after thirty years of controversy with the Federal Government.
5. The dietary and abstemious practices derived from a revelation known as "The World of Wisdom", abstinence from tea, coffee, tobacco, and spiritous liquors being emphasised.

6. Its unique voluntary mission system.

It is customary to challenge the "historicity" of the Joseph Smith "revelation", to ascribe fraudulent motives to the original Mormon apostles. Particular emphasis has been laid on the character of *The Book of Mormon*, which was alleged by Mormon opponents to be based on a manuscript by a certain gentleman, named Spaulding. A careful study of the book, however, brings out clearly the truth of the old Rabbi's comment on the New Testament: "What is true isn't new, and what is new isn't true".

However, *The Book of Mormon* has at least two points in its favour; in the first place, there is the Testimony of Three Witnesses:—

That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record [The Book of Mormon], which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken.

Secondly, there is the Testimony of Eight Witnesses which reads as follows:—

Be it known unto whom this work shall come: that Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which have the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship.

It would be hard to find Witnesses who could testify to the authenticity or divine inspiration of any of the books of either the Old or New Testament! It must be said that the Mormons have as strong, if not a stronger "case" for the supernatural origin of their scripture—than any Christian or Jewish apologist.

The Book of Mormon has many different elements and strands woven into it. It draws more of its inspiration from the Old than the New Testament. In many respects, it has affinities with Islam, with Old Testament Judaism as well as the strait-laced Protestantism of the American colonists.

The main body of the Church, has a world membership of 1,500,000 in about 2,200 local units and more than 5,000 full-time and 6,000 part-time missionaries. However, Mormonism is not free of its schismatics. There is the reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints who claim to be the true successors of the original church founded by Joseph Smith.

Incidentally, the Baha'i religion, another modern would-be world religion affords a similar illustration of this process. The real founder of the Bahai religion was the Bab, Mirza Ali Mohammed, who in 1844 proclaimed a new revelation. Executed in 1850 his followers split into two groups, the Baha'is and the Ezelis. There can be little doubt that the Ezelis like the Josephites are the "true successors" of the original faith, and that the Baha'is (like the Brigham Youngites) are deviators.

Brigham Young appears to play the same role in early Mormon history as "Paul of Tarsus" in early Christianity. He modernised and refurbished the original doctrine, in order the better to make it a living, going concern. The "true" Saints were naturally, pushed out in the cold.

Other smaller schismatic groups like the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), the Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), Church of Jesus Christ (Utlenites) and Church of Jesus Christ (Strangites) have little importance.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

BBC's "Meeting Point" the other Sunday dealt with the film "Heavens Above"; Peter Sellers, Roy Boulting, and Frank Harvey all discussing it with Malcolm Muggeridge. The film deals with a young parson who tries to be a "true Christian" and the mess he makes of things; but the interesting point to come out of the discussion was that, except for Mr. Boulting, all the others believed in God. In fact, Mr. Sellers said he wouldn't mind being a parson. None of them, not even Mr. Muggeridge, appeared to have even heard of any anti-theistic argument.

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Nor do any of them appear to have heard of a book published over 60 years ago entitled *In His Steps, or What Would Jesus Do?* which sold in millions. Or for that matter, they appear never to have heard of Bishop Magee of Peterborough and his notorious address in 1889 before the Leicester Diocesan Conference where he said that "it was his belief that a Christian state carrying out in all its relations the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount could not exist for a week". The Bishop then gave his forthright reasons for saying so, and we think that he was heartily disliked by his Christian comrades for not swallowing the Sermon on the Mount. But he stuck to his guns.

★

Still, Christians in the mass always swear by the Sermon on the Mount though it must be obvious no one ever follows most of the marvellous precepts. For example, a correspondent in the *Sunday Mirror* (June 16th) says that he intended taking up the Ministry but has now given it up. Why? Well, he was refused permission "to attend the House of God—once in Coventry Cathedral and once in St. Paul's Cathedral—because of a sign 'Ticket Holders Only'". He wanted to know, "Was it ticket holders only when Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount"? But did Christ ever preach the Sermon on the Mount? Most Christian critics are fully aware that it was never "preached", but made up of scraps of so-called ethics current when it was compiled.

★

Although Christianity the "true" variety was given once for all by Almighty God himself when he came down from Heaven in the shape of Christ Jesus, modern parsons are often far from satisfied. Here we have Dr. Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury (*Daily Express*, June 27th) insisting that "there needs to be some fresh thinking about the role of the Anglican Communion" in the many countries formerly under English rule. We ask what kind of "fresh thinking"? Surely Dr. Ramsey doesn't wish to abolish the numbers of heavenly miracles we find in the New Testament, or the demons and angels, to say nothing of a Hell where the fires are never quenched? How can you get the new Asians and Africans who are still Christians in the new states to toe the line if *fear* is completely abolished?

★

Our diocese of Southwark is again in the news with the resignation of two officers of the Southwark Diocesan Conference—Canon Crockford and Mr. T. A. R. Levett, because, as the *Church Times* thinks, they are opposed to the "new morality", and the views of the Bishop of Woolwich in his book *Honest to God*. And it quotes the Bishop of Southwark as saying, "Criticisms, sometimes hysterical criticism, of what has been termed 'South Bank Religion' leave me unmoved. I prefer my clergy to be adventurous". But has any true Christian the *right* to be adventurous with a stupendous Revelation from God.

CHALLENGE TO PROFESSOR CATLIN

THE GENERAL SECRETARY of the National Secular Society addressed the following letter to Professor George E. Gordon Catlin, FRSA, FRSL, of Whitehall Court, London, S.W.1.

June 28th, 1963.
DEAR PROFESSOR CATLIN,
The Executive Committee of the National Secular Society considered your letter which appeared in the *Eastern Daily Press* on June 1st, and which was reproduced, along with one by Mr. Alex. A. Rudling, in THE FREETHINKER for June 21st, enclosed.

I am instructed to challenge you to defend in public debate (at our expense) your gross misstatements about Thomas Paine, and I intend to publicise the challenge as widely as possible when this letter to you is in the post.

We will provide a speaker (or, if you wish to have a second, two speakers) to demonstrate the groundlessness for your accusations that Paine was a "scoundrel" and a "foul-mouthed rogue", and we will hire the hall and undertake to advertise the debate, etc.

So, Professor, this is your opportunity. Are you bold enough to accept it.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) COLIN MCCALL.

The following reply was received:

DEAR MR. MCCALL,

July 4th, 1963.

Thank you for your letter of the 28th, which I observe comes from "the Organization of Militant Freethought". Devoted although I am to freedom of rational and informed thought, I fear that I have not time to accept your suggestion that, on a public platform, we should give each other mutual publicity.

My views on Tom Paine have been adequately expressed in a review (in *John O'London*, now joined with *Time and Tide*, February 16th, 1961) of *Man of Reason* by Alfred Aldrich, an excellent book.

So far as I am concerned you are free, by permission of the editor, to reproduce as much of this as you choose.

As a strong supporter of the cause of American Independence, my complaint against Paine as a renegade (Mr. Rudling's word, not mine) is of his conduct in France in time of on-coming war. An excessively clever man, he was yet personally avoided by almost all of the American Founding Fathers as objectionable. I strongly favour statues to great Americans—to Eisenhower, who led our troops; to Jefferson, the true man to commemorate on Human Rights; to Washington, at present left with a diminutive statue, balancing off James II and looking into the backside of George IV's horse. And I favour a Magna Carta Day. But I don't favour gilt statues put up by the pressure of partisan groups of militants in peaceful Norfolk towns, if it is thought this will give pleasure to America.

I am sending copies of this letter to the American Embassy and to the Editor of the *Eastern Daily Press*, for publication. You also will doubtless authorize his publication of your own letter to me.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE E. GORDON CATLIN.

MORMONISM—A NEW WORLD RELIGION?

(Concluded from page 219)

The combination of American know-how, a powerful theocratic state (in Utah), and a flexible, modern leadership could give Mormonism a formidable lead in the struggle for power within the Christian world, and it is highly likely, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints will respond to the new challenge thrown up by the decline of the Western way of life by adapting its creed to new conditions and new situations. Already a move has been made by George Romney, who is currently seeking nomination for the candidature of the Republican Party in the next Presidential election, to remove the clause from the Church's rules which make Negroes only second class members of the Church.

As far as the Freethinker and Rationalist are concerned, Mormonism serves one useful function. It provides a powerful weapon in the hands of those who see the pattern of all religions and sub-religions against the background of man's struggle for mastery over himself, his society and his natural environment.

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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 (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoon (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, July 14th, 6.45 p.m.: COUNCILLOR JONAS, "Censorship".
Ilford Humanist Group (Friends Meeting House, Cleveland Road). Monday, July 15th, 7.45 p.m.: A MEETING.
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, July 14th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, MA, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: An Address for Bastille Day".

Notes and News

"THEY CALL me a true demon. I am hated by the Church and the Government—all because I am trying to help women enjoy love." And Dr. Lagroua Weill-Halle will continue to be hated, at least by the French clergy, which condemns pleasures it cannot share. Fortunately, Dr. Weill-Halle, who set up her Family Planning Association in 1956, has the support of 200 doctors and 15,000 women (*Daily Mirror*, 1/7/63) and she courageously defies the French law banning the sale of contraceptives to women. She is the chief organiser of thirty private clinics scattered throughout the country, but her work is hampered because she cannot advertise openly. "I will continue to fight the law until France follows England's lead with authorised Family Planning clinics in most large towns". Dr. Weill-Halle says. "Unwanted children are a universal problem and fear of having a child is often the root of troubles between husband and wife". It is estimated that 100,000 illegal abortions are performed yearly in France.

FOLLOWING ITS report of the 16-year-old girl kept in solitary confinement at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Manchester, noted in our last issue, *The People* (30/6/63) told how 15-year-old Valerie Hennessy had to sit for eight days outside the study of the headmistress of the Cardinal Manning Girls' School, Notting Hill, London. During that time Valerie was not allowed to speak to other pupils or to take part in lessons, because she (wrongly) told her teacher that she was going to be sent to a Protestant school. Her former teacher, Mrs. Pietschette, described her as very insolent, but confirmed

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged: £124 16s. 5d. E.C.R., 5s.; R.C., £10; C. Jones, 2s. 6d.; J.C., 1s.; W. H. Day, 2s. 6d.; H. Goldsmith, £2 2s. 6d.; In memory of W. Ingram, £2; In memory of F.G.W., £1 5s.; M.A.D., £1; S. Merrifield, 3s. 6d.; R. Brownless, £1 1s.; J.A., £3 2s. 6d. Total to date, July 5th, 1963, £146 1s. 11d.

that the headmistress, Mother Mary Louisa had said, "that as Valerie was going to leave there was no point in her continuing her studies" and that, "Later, Valerie was put sitting on a wooden chair" outside the Mother Superior's office for eight days.

MOTHER MARY LOUISA was not available when *The People's* reporter, Mike Munnely called, and he was referred to the London County Council, which aids the Roman Catholic school. A spokesman of the Council said: "There was, it seems, a breach of discipline. I have no knowledge of anything concerning changes of religion". No doubt Valerie Hennessy is "a high spirited girl", wrote Mr. Munnely. "No doubt she did upset her teachers. But surely at this school, even more so than at a non-denominational school, teachers ought to know that a child reacts much better to compassion and charity than to severity"? Perhaps it is time a survey was made of punishments in denominational as compared to state schools. Perhaps *The People* might start it; and perhaps Mr. Munnely would get a few more surprises. Perhaps even the Minister of Education would then take notice.

TWO GERMAN plays may prove to be the theatrical events of the year in London. We shall have to wait until the autumn for Rolf Hochhuth's, *The Vicar*, by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company, but the other, Bertholt Brecht's *Life of Galileo*, opens at the Mermaid Theatre on July 18th. Adapted by Charles Laughton, *The Life of Galileo* received its London premiere at the Mermaid three years ago. This time it will run for only 33 performances, so Freethinkers should make sure of their seats now. It is a play that should not be missed.

R. W. MORRELL, whose comment on Professor George E. Gordon Catlin's abusive letter on the proposed Thomas Paine statue (*THE FREETHINKER*, 21/6/63) appears in this week's Correspondence, is hoping to form a Thomas Paine Society. Readers interested in such a society are asked to write to Mr. Morrell at 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham.

A BOMOH or holy man, Ismail Bin Naina Mohamed, has been charged in Klang, Malaya, with raping two girls aged 17 and 13 on the same day (*The Guardian*, 3/7/63). One of them said she had been sent to the holy man because she had been charmed by a spirit, and he had raped her, telling her not to be afraid because "he had done the same thing to 5,000 others".

WOMEN WILL have to wait, as far as the Methodists are concerned. First things first, and the question of women's admission to the ministry was left off the agenda for the present conference at Preston, Lancs, because it was "feared the subject would confuse the biggest topic", that of closer links with the Church of England (*Daily Telegraph*, 2/7/63), which does not, of course, permit women ministers. The conference will, however, consider a resolution against professional boxing and discuss the problem of falling membership. It has dropped by 10,000 in the last two years.

Our Christian Converts

By H. CUTNER

DURING THE CENTURIES many Jews, mostly because of continual persecution were converted, and appeared overjoyed at having at last found Jesus; though it would not be particularly easy to find out how much of the Christian story appealed to let us say, Disraeli. He was certainly converted as a boy, though he was later always eulogising the Jews. Zangwill called him the "Sphinx" (I believe), but it would be true to say that had he remained an orthodox Jew he would never have become Prime Minister of England. No doubt, as in the case of Heine, it was a very great advantage to have left Judaism, which that great German poet called not a religion, but a misfortune. Heine, though nominally a Christian was at least an uncompromising sceptic; and so I suspect was Disraeli. But unlike Heine, he did not say so.

I may be wrong, but these days Jews don't seem so anxious to go over to Jesus as were the converts during the nineteenth century. Possibly this is because they have found out that there is no need, now that Judaism is ready to admit that Jesus was the greatest Jew that ever lived, and to express gratitude to Christians for making him also a God—indeed making him the Jewish God Jahve "in the flesh". This tickles Jews (privately) immensely.

Still, there are some 20th century converts, and one of them is Mr. H. J. Schonfield. He is well known as the excellent translator of the New Testament into modern English which he calls *The Authentic New Testament* though why "authentic" completely puzzles me. Are not all Bible translations "authentic" in the same sense?

But if I readily admit that his translation reads very well, what can I say of his book, *The Bible Was Right*? In this, Mr. Schonfield discusses not the Bible as such at all, but the New Testament; and he gives us a number of short chapters to prove that "the Bible" was right in nearly every particular. As a convert, he certainly is *plus royaliste que le roi*. He outdoes even that credulous convert, Dr. Edersheim, whose *Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah* had a great success last century, but is most deservedly forgotten now.

Edersheim, in his most rhetorical and diffuse manner, gave us the "life" of Jesus without producing a shred of evidence for any of his statements except citations from the Gospels. In fact, the author of the preface to the one-volume abridgment, the Rev. W. Sanday, admits this. He says "Dr. Edersheim's book . . . was not one which could be called exactly 'critical'. It did not, for instance, presuppose any theory as to the origin and composition of the Gospels . . .".

I quote this passage because Mr. Schonfield's book is a sort of modern version of Edersheim. Every time he can, he quotes the Gospels to prove that Jesus did or said something or other, often claiming that "this is confirmed by Josephus". Naturally, taking what the Roman Church says as to dates, it certainly is confirmed by Josephus. But it never appears in the whole of *The Bible Was Right* that the four Gospels were completely unknown by name before 180 AD, and that the Jewish historian's work had appeared about one hundred years before. Whether the Gospel writers were Jews is quite unknown; we don't even know who the editors were, but no doubt between them all and Josephus, it was possible to get a few Jewish customs and ritual correctly reported—in Greek. All the citations from the Old Testament in the New are from the Greek Septuagint, and not from the Hebrew, a fact which has

always raised some interesting, and up to now, unfathomable problems.

If Mr. Schonfield does mention other sources, like the fragment known as the Gospel of Peter, he takes care to call it "apocryphal", and of course he knows from Luke that numerous Gospels were in his time in existence. But we do not know which Luke used as his "authority", we do not know what he made up when he had no authority, and we do not know who chose it in the end as being "canonical".

Like Renan, Mr. Schonfield prefers to leave out everything which he can't or does not want to explain. I wondered how he would treat the story of the Jewish saints who all rose from their graves after the Crucifixion and came back alive and well to their grief-stricken relatives; but he never mentions them. Nor does he deal with the literal contradictions the Gospels are strewn with. Jesus was crucified exactly as the Authorised Version says—though the word "crucifixion" is never mentioned in the New Testament—with two thieves. I have never discovered any evidence that the Romans condemned thieves to be crucified, or even a blasphemer, which was the crime for which Jesus was punished. For nearly 2,000 years the Jews—black, brown, yellow and white—have actually been blamed for the death of Jesus by crucifixion which, to his credit, Mr. Schonfield declares was "a barbarous method of execution, never employed by the Jews".

He says nothing about the Resurrection, but hurries on to the travels of Paul which of course are absolutely "authentic"—in his opinion. I have never come across any evidence whatever that there was a Paul at all outside the New Testament. The story of his travels was, so I am informed by a reader who has studied Josephus, made up from that writer, though naturally it had to be written up and edited so as to look authentic. But this is too big a problem to be discussed here. In any case, the story as given in Acts is contradicted over and over again by Paul himself in his Epistles, though the bulk of these are now considered quite fraudulent by Christian scholars. As for Acts, it is a "romance" for which nobody has found any authority. Where, for example, is the martyrdom of Stephen mentioned outside the New Testament? And I think I am right in asserting that Justin Martyr, writing according to Christian history, about the middle of the second century, never mentions Paul or Stephen in his two *Apologies*. But perhaps Mr. Schonfield does not know this. He prefers to tell his readers over and over again that Josephus or the Talmud confirms the New Testament which is only true because the "inspired" writers first took whatever "facts" they repeat entirely from "uninspired" writers like Josephus and Jewish rabbis.

Mr. Schonfield's two heroes are Jesus and Paul, and he says very little about any of the other devoted disciples, and even less about the devils and angels and miracles without which Christianity is unthinkable. Like Renan he does not like miracles or, for that matter, prophecies. If he had been writing about *Hamlet*, he would have carefully omitted any reference to the Ghost.

In comparing Dr. Edersheim's treatment of Jesus and his times with Mr. Schonfield's account, we can see how far away—in spite of many agreements—is the complete believer from one influenced by modern thought. This little article can only deal with a few points. I invite the curious reader to study both writers and see for himself.

The Beauty of Atheism

By G. L. SIMONS

IN ITS SUPREME capacity to liberate the human mind, atheism is an invigorating and inspiring system of thought. For me the worthy atheist has a dignity and stature unequalled in men of other creeds. Only as an atheist can a man reach mental maturity, allowing his mind to explore new realms, accepting no pious prohibitions. Man owes his worldly significance to his intellect; only as an atheist can he realise to the full his glorious birthright, and it is upon this realisation that all his great hopes for the future depend.

If atheism inspired and yet were false it may have some benefit for men. But if false it could not be honestly embraced and its potency would evaporate. The strength of atheism depends upon its allegiance with reason, and those who reject God unreasonably do a disservice to atheism. Reason is the great guide of the independent thinker and its demands must be respected. However pleasing it may be to the adventurous spirit to proclaim an opinion which goes beyond the bounds of reason, he must refrain, lest he betray his grand and noble cause. Reverence for reason should be the solitary reverence of the atheist; if he has not this, he is unworthy.

Reason leads to atheism. In its honest application it clears the air of spirit, god and angel. These become concepts, piously imagined and incapable of rational support. And yet despite this we can never have absolute certainty of their non-existence. The very strength of responsible atheism is its unwillingness to claim absolute knowledge. Ultimate truth is unknown to the atheist, for all men have the contagion of fallibility. When the atheist admits this, his position is unassailable. His philosophy is self-correcting; error is acknowledged, and a closer approximation to the truth is achieved. The sober life is one based on knowledge, but it must not be thought that this knowledge is capable of an absolute justification, or that it needs it.

In this context, superstition has a clear meaning, and it is superstitious to believe in the existence of entities for which satisfactory evidence cannot be discovered. The atheist does right to assail the superstitions of pious folk, who so discredit man's great and unique capacities. For the claim of the divines is misguided. They infect man's thought with their invalidities: they corrupt sublime insight and sensitivity. They degrade the nature of human kind and demand that it assimilate their own inadequacy. Of this the atheist will have nothing. He has a vision of greater things. His unfettered imagination and courageous intellect have seen beyond the sad horizon of the feeble cleric. The atheist is impatient of apathy, special pleading and intellectual incompetence in influential places. And his cause is the greatest man has formulated.

Religious thought preserves a petty image of man, burdens him with guilt, restricts him with superstition, stifles him with solemn and pious platitudes. In religion, intellect is crippled, morality is degraded, and imagination is stultified. Mediocrity, uniformity, apathy and complacency are supreme virtues. The independent mind is heretical; the questioning spirit is impious; the experimental moralist is sinful. In religion, platitude serves as wisdom, repression as morality, fear as right-mindedness. Those who grovel, submit, and respectfully recall the old degenerate clichés are virtuous. Those who think freely, who use intelligence, who believe it wrong to inflict cruelty in the name of righteousness, are evil.

Religion fosters a debasing humility; atheism pride. Religion thrives on ignorance; atheism on knowledge. Religion is suspicious of human happiness; atheism unreservedly welcomes it. Religion encourages men to cower and remain as children; atheism encourages men to grow and mature. Religion is the creed of the ignorant past; atheism the philosophy of the enlightened future. Religion depends upon apathy and a sad hankering after times long gone; atheism depends upon vision, courage and humanity. Religion embodies a sickly and timid conservatism; atheism a robust and vital radicalism. Religion enfeebles; atheism ennobles.

Atheism is a mature and rational philosophy. Its principles are clear and well-defined. It need not be embellished with poetry to make it acceptable. To the alert and capable mind its logical force and great potential make it attractive enough. It can be explained in simple language, without allegory or ambiguity. It derives its strength, not from tradition, where it is well-represented, but from reason, not from obscurity but from clarity, not from hypocrisy but from honesty. In its sober, undogmatic form it is invulnerable. It needs no strengthening by overstatement, metaphor or simile; its literal meaning, its simple cogency and its indubious support in reason are the foundations of its compulsion for honest and rational people.

Points From Books

OSWELL BLAKESTON

IN 1959 there appeared an admirably lucid book written to enlighten the general public about the use of drugs and to sweep aside prejudices and misconceptions which surround them. This was *Passport to Paradise . . . ?* by Dr. Bernard Finch, and it was published by Bernard Hanison at the price of 18s. As there is now talk of a new edition, I was encouraged to look again at some of the commonsense statements in this treatise for the layman. The author, for example, discusses the hallucinations produced by the fruits of certain cacti. He suggests that primitive man, in his search for food, may have eaten similar plants containing hallucinogen drugs and at this moment religion may have been born. The experimenter would have experienced visions beyond his wildest dreams, and new ideas would have followed and new worlds would have entered his mind. Heaven and Hell would have arrived; and perhaps the cactus fruits were the "forbidden apples" of the legend about the Garden of Eden? Certainly, if one studies the illusions experienced by mescal eaters, one sees that the physical effects are enough to impose the idea of a god on the primitive mind.

When one realises how little the ancients knew about their diets, one can understand how theologies proliferated. Who guessed, when Nebuchadnezzar was munching "grass", that he was driving himself mad with the intoxication of hashish? At least Dr. Finch offers this rational explanation!

In all, there is no doubt that rationalists should make it a duty to learn more about the uses as well as the abuses of drugs. When a famous American poet recently visited England, he gave a most stimulating interview to *The Guardian* about the things which drugs could do to help

man enjoy "The Leisure State" which is the final goal of rational society. Many people fear such a "paradise on earth" because they equate "leisure" with "drab unemployment"; and their attempts to hold up economic progress lead to all manner of international tensions. Yet certain drugs, taken in measured doses, can increase man's creativeness and so give significance to his existence. Governments should begin to plan now how to organise free distribution of the drugs which open man's minds to fulfilment; but puritanism is so firmly entrenched in this country; that only *The Guardian* gave serious and considered attention to the poet's message.

At lighter level, Hubert Montheilhet specialises in spiderfly thrillers. He has something of the quality of Boileau and Narcejac as well as his own skills. His latest book, *Phoenix From The Ashes* (Hamish Hamilton, 13s. 6d.), is full of odd moments of philosophical insight, apart from the tensions. At one point, some priests ask a young man why he does not pray. He replies: "I obviously don't expect as much as you. I've settled for personal happiness. I'm in no hurry for personal gain".

Ah well, sometimes I like to amuse myself by recalling a story which appeared in Gerald Hamilton's *Mr. Norris And I* (Wingate, 15s.). Mr. Hamilton found himself trying to teach a Chinese servant the elements of the Christian faith. After a time, the servant asked when and where the crucifixion took place, and his instructor told him that it was many centuries ago and in a land far from China. Then "the ghost of a smile" began to brighten the servant's features. He said: "Oh, Protector of the Poor, if it happened so long ago and so very far from here, let us hope that there is no truth at all in this terrible story . . ."

CORRESPONDENCE

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

THE FLOOD

Seldom have I read a more interesting contribution to THE FREETHINKER than "The Flood" by D. M. Chapman in the issue of June 28th. Written in an inoffensive breezy style this is the sort of article debunking religion which can be presented to the "man in the street", I have cut it out, and am showing it to my friends of all shades of religious opinions.

Respectfully, much of the contents of THE FREETHINKER is not very intelligible to a great number of people, apart from "This Believing World". What in my opinion is required is more plain speaking (and a little humour).

Mr. Chapman is to be congratulated on his well written article, I am looking forward to another, and suggest this could tell the story of Job in his really delightful way H. R. TURNEY.

Do we really have to have an article on "The Flood" in 1963? W. CHASE.

"SPARTACUS"

My detailed reply to Mr. J. A. Millar (THE FREETHINKER, May 3rd) got lost in the post. This is a much abbreviated one. Mr. Millar accuses me of "misquoting" Mr. F. A. Ridley "who certainly did not state what Mr. Cutner alleges". Here then are the two quotations:—

Mr. Ridley: Until a little Jew from Tarsus brewed a power-

ful drug of spiritual opium, under whose intoxicating spell, and seeing rapturous visions of another world, the ancient civilisation finally passed away in its sleep. (*Spartacus*, page 72).

Mr. Cutner: . . . a "little Jew from Tarsus" brewing "a powerful drug of spiritual opium under whose intoxicating spell and seeing rapturous visions of another world, the ancient civilisation finally passed away in its sleep". (THE FREETHINKER, April 5th).

The reader will see from these that not only did I "misquote" Mr. Ridley, but that he "certainly did not state what Mr. Cutner alleges"!

There is no evidence whatever that if Paul is meant by the "little Jew from Tarsus", he was "little", nor is there any evidence outside the Gospels that he was known at all to the secular world brewing any "spiritual opium". Paul is never mentioned in the two Christian *Apologies* and the *Dialogue with Trypho* by Justin Martyr who flourished about one hundred years after the death of Paul. Perhaps Mr. Millar will tell us why?

H. CUTNER.

THOMAS PAINE AND PROFESSOR CATLIN

Professor Catlin's bitter denunciation of Thomas Paine published in the *Eastern Daily Press* and reprinted in THE FREETHINKER, hardly reads like the objective views of one who has made any real study of the man or his writings. It reads more like one of the many efforts made by Paine's enemies to smear his reputation rather than answer his charges.

Paine certainly was no enemy of this country, his return here after the success of the American revolution is proof, if any be needed, of this. What he disliked was the attitude and policies of the ruling class and in his writings in America and his famous reply to Burke (who, Professor Catlin might recall, supported the American colonists) stated the issues involved clearly and applied his mind to their solution. In the case of America Paine showed the only solution to the problems there was a clear cut break with Britain, the power of his words were such as to confound the "sensible men" of the day who sought desperately to surround the issues with a dark haze and so use the old trick, divide and rule.

Frankly, I suspect that there are other reasons for Professor Catlin's outburst. With this in mind I turned to *Who's Who?* and there found what may be the real reason. Professor Catlin, the son of a clergyman, is a Christian. Have we here the dislike of Paine by virtue of his writing *The Age of Reason* manifesting itself once more?
R. W. MORRELL.

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