

The Freethinker

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JOSEPH LEWIS, Secretary of the Thomas Paine Foundation of New York, and editor of the magazine *Age of Reason*, who was responsible for the erection of statues to Paine in Paris and New Jersey, has issued a public challenge to Professor George E. Gordon Catlin of Whitehall Court, London, in connection with the Professor's letter in the *Eastern Daily Press* on June 1st, reprinted in THE FREETHINKER on June 21st. Professor Catlin, it will be recalled, deplored the proposed statue to Paine in his birthplace, Thetford, Norfolk, and expressed the wish that, "If it is erected, I hope the citizens of Thetford will have the moral courage to blow it up." He described Paine as "a plausible but deplorable scoundrel, with whom most of the Fathers of the American Revolution declined to associate" and "a foul-mouthed rogue".

George Washington

Mr. Lewis characterises this letter as "abusive" and untrue. George Washington (he points out) wrote this to Thomas Paine:

Your presence may remind Congress of your past services to the country; and if it is in my power to impress them, command my best services with freedom, as they will be rendered cheerfully by one who entertains a lively sense of the importance of your works, and who with much pleasure, bribes himself, your sincere friend . . .

Mr. Lewis reminds Professor Catlin that Washington was President of the United States and one of the Founding Fathers. "Did a President of the United States ever write you a letter like that?", Mr. Lewis asks the Professor.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson, another President of the United States and one of the Founding Fathers, wrote this to Thomas Paine:

. . . I am in the hopes you will find us returned generally to sentiments worthy of former times. In these it will be your glory to have steadily labored, and with as much effect as any man living. That you may live long to continue your useful labors, and to reap their reward in the thankfulness of nations, is my sincere prayer . . .

"Did a President of the United States ever write you a letter like that?", Mr. Lewis asks the Professor.

James Monroe

James Monroe, again a President of the United States and a Founding Father, wrote this of Thomas Paine:

The citizens of the United States cannot look back upon the time of their own revolution without recollecting among the names of their most distinguished patriots that of Thomas Paine. Is it necessary for me to tell you how much all your countrymen, I speak of the great mass of people, are interested in your welfare? They have not forgotten the history of their revolution and the difficult scenes through which they passed . . . You are considered by them as not only having rendered important services in our own Revolution, but as being, on a more extensive scale, a friend of human rights, and a distinguished and able advocate in favor of public liberty. To the welfare of Thomas Paine, the Americans are not, nor can they be, indifferent . . .

Again, Mr. Lewis asks the Professor: "Did a President of the United States ever write you a letter like that?"

Next, Mr. Lewis cites the resolution of the Congress of

the United States:

"Resolved: That the early, unsolicited and continued labors of Mr. Thomas Paine, in explaining and enforcing the principles of the late Revolution, by ingenious and timely publications upon the nature of liberty and civil government, have been well received by the citizens of these states, and merit the approbation of Congress . . ."

"Did a governmental body ever pass a resolution like that in your behalf?", Mr. Lewis asks.

"It is quite obvious", he goes on, "that you are not wholly acquainted with the history of the American Revolution".

He then turns to Professor Catlin's descriptions of Thomas Paine as a "deplorable scoundrel" and a

"foul-mouthed rogue". The dictionary definitions are: *Scoundrel*: "A man without principle, a mean thorough-going rascal, worthless knave . . ."; and *Rogue*: "A thoroughly dishonest and unprincipled person; a knave; a trickster . . .". Thomas Paine is no longer able to defend himself or to bring action for libel, but, says Mr. Lewis:

"I am alive and I am assuming the role of Thomas Paine's defender and I am going to make you *put up or shut up*".

"What act or deed did Thomas Paine commit that caused you to call him a deplorable scoundrel and a foul-mouthed rogue?"

The Challenge

Then comes Mr. Lewis's challenge:

I now publicly offer you the sum of One Thousand Dollars for one iota of evidence that Thomas Paine was guilty of taking a dishonest dollar. I demand proof of this charge.

I now publicly offer you an additional One Thousand Dollars for an iota of evidence that Thomas Paine ever wrote one line advocating dishonesty or urging anyone to commit a dishonest act.

I demand proof of your charges and if you fail to comply with this demand, you shall go down in history as a companion of the detestable James Cheetham, the convicted libeller of Thomas Paine.

On the back of the Thomas Paine Foundation letterhead there are some quotations from Paine's writings, says Mr. Lewis. "Was it any of these sentiments that caused you to call Thomas Paine a deplorable scoundrel and a foul-mouthed rogue? It was Paine himself, who said: 'How easy it is to find abusive words'."

"Unless you make a retraction of your utterly outrageous attack upon Thomas Paine, 'one of the best and most useful men who ever lived', I shall", Mr. Lewis tells Professor Catlin, "when I return to London, consult a firm of solicitors for advice as to whether the statement in your letter . . . 'I hope the citizens of Thetford will have the moral courage to blow it up', is subject to legal prosecution for advocating violence and the destruction of public property". The words and mode of expression of your letter are not those of a "man who professes to be a member of one of the learned professions".

And Mr. Lewis concludes: "Had enough?"

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

\$2,000 Challenge to Professor Catlin

“The Pope? Never Heard of Him!”

By F. A. RIDLEY

WHEN POPE JOHN XXIII died, not only the Christian world, but also those of non-Christian belief, paid official tribute to him. Amongst the capitals that paid public homage to him, was Delhi, which nowadays occupies the position of the capital of the secular state of India (Bharat). For in Delhi, as a public tribute to Pope John, all public buildings flew their flags at half-mast. This included all the foreign embassies in Delhi with however, one notable exception; for the Embassy of (Red) China manifested no overt sign of grief. When subsequent inquiries were made about this (literally) singular omission, a representative of the Chinese Embassy replied curtly: “The Pope? Never heard of him!”

The fact of the matter is, of course, that the Chinese people have not yet forgotten the lugubrious record of Christian missions throughout the 19th century, during which heyday of the world ascendancy of European imperialism Christian missionaries so often formed the spiritual counterpart to the gunboat diplomacy of the then Christian West, that forced impartially opium down the throats of the Chinese to the greater profit of Western capitalists, along with Christianity for the greater glory of God.

Was it not that great pillar of the holy Gospel (Protestant version) Sir John Bowring, one of the most famous hymn writers in the English vernacular of his day, who in his secular capacity of Her Britannic Majesty, Queen Victoria's Consul-General in the Far East, dictated an iniquitous treaty extorted by naked violence to the Celestial Chinese Empire, the two principal clauses of which ran: that opium (of Anglo-Indian manufacture) was to be freely sold in China, and that the Gospel of Christ was to be freely preached throughout the vast domains of the Son of Heaven? Incidentally giving in the Far East a literal interpretation of the celebrated contemporary definition of Karl Marx in Europe, that “religion is the opium of the people”. It was actually so in China.

Nor probably has the present Chinese regime forgotten that it was the pious Christian General, Charles Gordon (whose heavily annotated Bible became after his death, one of Queen Victoria's most treasured personal possessions) who, at the head of his “ever-victorious army” of European mercenaries, armed and equipped by the Shanghai beneficiaries of the vastly profitable opium trade, kept in power the corrupt and incompetent Manchu dynasty against the Tai-Ping Rising (early 1880s) and thus delayed the unification and modernisation of China for another century (The Tai-Ping Rising was actually on the point of victory when Gordon intervened; Chinese historians regard it as the starting point of modern Chinese Nationalism. Mao Tse-Tung, is no doubt aware of these shameful facts of still comparatively recent Chinese history. For few lands have suffered more bitterly from the secular depredations of Christian powers or directly from the destructive incursions of Christian missions. Apparently these and similar facts are also familiar to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, and explain its lack of interest in the recent papal obsequies. “The Pope? Never heard of him!”—surely a historic observation.

I have drawn attention to this Chinese *bon mot* (of which the great Confucius would surely have heartily approved), because it is particularly apposite. For we

miss completely the real significance of the tributes paid to the late Pope John if we do not realise that they represent more—much more—than a mere personal tribute to the deceased pontiff who, as one cannot but agree, was certainly a great improvement on most of his holy (and not so holy) predecessors such as say, Alexander VI, Pius X and Pius XII. Pope John indeed, appeared briefly on the papal stage as that *rara avis*, a genuinely human being underneath the triple crown.

However, without in any way denying or wishing to denigrate his personal virtues (to which I have already paid tribute here), we must still point out that there are political reasons for the universal chorus of acclamation that followed his demise. For Pope John's principal claim to lasting fame (from the point of view of course of his own Church) is that he, so to speak, called off the Cold War, or at least contracted out of it on behalf of the world-wide Catholic Church. For Pope John had at least the sense to see that the days of crusades are over, that a modern nuclear holocaust will spare neither believer nor unbeliever and that (as any student of historical materialism could have told his infallible Holiness), war at least on a world scale has now become impossible, not on account of changes in human moral concepts, but because of the technical evolution of the scientific apparatus for making war, that is to say the institution classically defined as “the continuation of politics by other means” (cf. Gen. von Clausewitz, the Prussian military philosopher).

In brief, Pope John, unlike his Pius predecessors of unhappy memory, realised that the days of holy wars are over; that the aftermath of nuclear war will not be the triumph of the faith, but “a hell of disintegrating atoms”. In brief, that co-existence, including co-existence between those hitherto irreconcilable ideological rivals, the Kremlin and the Vatican, is now not so much an alternative policy as humanity's only hope of survival.

What are the current perspectives of the coming age of ideological co-existence between Christianity and Communism? For it seems to be clear that it is precisely such an age that appears to be dawning. For the policy initiated by “the incomparable Pope John” (as the present Pope has already described his predecessor), has already led to a marked improvement in the mutual relations of Rome and Moscow. For example, the newspaper of the powerful and traditionally anti-clerical Italian Communist Party appeared in mourning on the day of Pope John's death. This would have been incredible before John's accession.

Everything indicates that just as the Social Democratic Party in Germany and the French and Italian Socialist parties have now called off their former anti-clerical propaganda and are compromising all along the line with the Church, something very similar is now going to happen with relation to the Vatican and the Kremlin. In the world-wide Communist movement also, Atheism and Materialism will cease to be “articles for export” with however, one notable exception: for here as elsewhere, intransigent China will refuse to follow the Moscow line. At present it certainly appears that in the not so distant future, the only remaining forces still to come out uncompromisingly against religion will be the Freethinkers west of the Iron Curtain and the Chinese Communist Party east of it.

“God’s Woman”

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

IT USED TO BE taught in school that there were three sorts of nouns, common, proper and abstract. A schoolboy asked thus to classify them, safely managed the first two and then stuck for a moment, until in sudden triumph he burst out: “common, proper and—and improper”. He was quite right, as far as he went. And “God’s Woman” does sound almost as improper as it is undeniably abstract. Some have gone so far as to call it blasphemous. For God’s Woman is not a woman at all. God’s Woman, according to the literature put forth by Jehovah’s Witnesses, is the extraordinary name these people give to one of their highly-coloured, imaginary organisations comprising, they say, the 144,000 elect who shall rule in the New Creation as kings and priests, with Christ Jesus as Chief Priest, on Mount Zion. We are informed that “concerning the seed of the woman, this heavenly organisation has been compared to a faithful wife. He, the Creator, is the husband who fathers the seed or offspring it brings forth . . . etc.”.

Whatever we can make or not make of it, it seems to be a fair sample of the gibberish which makes up the entire and entirely cryptic teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Both in their own voluminous writings and their pervasive activities, Jehovah’s Witnesses are nowadays a good deal in evidence, at least in Britain and America, where they originated. But not much seems to have been written about them by outsiders. The one or two accounts that do exist all emphasise what they call the strangeness of the Witnesses’ religious beliefs. Which is hardly to be wondered at. Yet these beliefs, even if more arrogantly expressed, are probably not more strange than the beliefs of Mormons, Christian Scientists, The Brethren and other esoteric growths. Strangeness comes about only by contrast with what is familiar and the strangeness of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who are of comparatively recent date, is largely due to the long passage of time which has gradually blunted the original strangeness of so many orthodox beliefs through a growing and deadening familiarity with them. Many orthodox beliefs must have seemed just as strange and wild at their inception, to those who did not share them. The ancient Pagans thought the early Christians mad. Many orthodox beliefs indeed, seem just as wild and strange today to those who give them serious attention. It would be difficult to point to anything in Jehovah’s Witnesses that could not be matched in absurdity by their inveterate enemies the Roman Catholics.

The first thing that strikes one about Jehovah’s Witnesses, on reading their publications or conversing—that is trying to get a word in edgeways—with their extremely talkative and pertinacious emissaries is, that the Almighty must be pretty hard up for testimony if he depends in any way on such a source. The second thing is, that people who can so rantingly admire such a deity as the deity nick-named Jehovah-God, must be desperate indeed for somebody or something to enthuse about. This Jehovah-God seems to have been an invention of the self-styled “Pastor” Russell of dubious memory. Russell may have suffered from a common delusiveness, he enjoyed an uncommon shrewdness. He knew, as they say, how to put it across. So well in fact, that after his death, he was officially elevated by his devoted disciples to almost the chief place in the hierarchy of the New Creation. However, the big brain he was so fulsomely accredited with

by his friends, turned out to be, on a later and more correct diagnosis—so said his enemies—only a swelled head.

This complaint is not altogether unknown among some of the present-day Witnesses, who have long since forgotten “Pastor” Russell. They share the one inevitable characteristic of all religious bigots, they are always and entirely right. What is perhaps more marked in Jehovah’s Witnesses than other religious bodies, is their vehement and often vindictive condemnation of everybody who disagrees with them, as always and entirely wrong. Whether consciously or instinctively, they seem acutely aware, that once they admit any fallacy in their beliefs, the whole structure will fall to pieces. They are therefore apparently quite content never to do more than assert or deny as their mentors direct. They seem to be afflicted with that Nazi-like frigidity which forbids them to think for themselves, even if, which seems doubtful, many of them have the capacity to do so.

Every assertion or denial they make is based upon the Bible, surely the most treacherous book of reference they could have chosen. They are always ready with chapter and verse for support. When they are confronted, as they can easily be, with another chapter and verse which flatly contradicts the one they have quoted, we are immediately told that our choice does not mean at all what we suppose it to mean. It needs the interpretation of a “Judge” Rutherford or his equivalent to make clear that it really means quite the opposite of what the uninitiated understand it to mean. Needless to say, it always means whatever is favourable to the ideas of Jehovah’s Witnesses. This of course is a very old dodge with religious fanatics, yet there are always some dupes to be taken in by it. All Witnesses are necessarily fanatics by the very nature of their claims. Unlike good builders, they never wait to test the security of their foundations. It never seems to occur to them to question the authority of the Bible, or the competence of those who so glibly and speciously expound it. “If” as Royston Pike remarks, “the infallibility of Holy Writ is questioned or denied, they may throw up their hands in wonderment or shocked dismay at so perverse an attitude”. They appear incapable of suspecting any perversity in themselves. They simply take cover behind an impregnable gullibility.

Bibliolatry of this sort is not exclusive to Jehovah’s Witnesses. It forms the bedrock of most of those vulnerable doctrinisms quaintly referred to as fundamentalist. And the oddest aspect of this is, that those communities that live so ardently by what they proclaim the light of the Bible, are either at one another’s throats, or else congealed in a silence of baleful enmity, on account of their conflicting scriptural interpretations. They haven’t an inkling that in their claim for the contents of the Bible as having been divinely dictated, they are providing, for a more open-minded opinion, the most convincing refutation of any God remotely worthy of the name. For no intelligent reader of the Bible, whether Christian or atheist, can avoid the glaring fact that the Bible is as full of contradictions, bestiality, falsehood and nonsense as it is said to be of poetry, benevolence, truths and wisdom. What exactly is meant by calling it the word of God has never been explained, because everybody explains it differently and nobody satisfactorily. Nobody can bring forward a

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Mr. Hugh Redwood's "One-Minute Sermon" in the *Daily Mail* (July 13th) takes its text from Luke 5, 3—"He taught the people", and we cannot help wondering what he taught? Jesus is always represented to us as the greatest teacher the world has ever seen, and so he ought to be if he is God Almighty; but what is the truth? He knew nothing *literally* about art or science or music or literature. He never mentions any of the great teachers except Moses, and most of what Moses taught he rejected with contempt. His ideas on mercy, justice, love, were commonplaces in his day, and in any case, he taught a ferocious hatred for many people who disagreed with him. All that Mr. Redwood has to say of the wonderful teachings of Jesus is, "Take Christ aboard your own craft—await His word in the deep". It's a wonderful "one-minute" sermon!

★

If nothing else, Hot Gospellers in New York's Broadway (*Daily Mirror*, July 3rd) are doing a roaring business in a night club saving souls for Christ, with coloured girls in tights called Angels serving drinks to fervent believers—the drinks (not the believers) called "Soul Stirrers". A pious singer jumps on a table, and the drinkers go wild "chanting some pop Gospel claptrap", while the Angels with their tights, haloes, and wings, add more and more religion to the Hot Gospelling.

★

Except that this type of Christianity is more modern, it does not differ in essentials from the dear old revival meetings so precious when at their most lurid and still remembered in Wales, for example. It is true that the ladies, bestowed then by Jesus himself with "the gift of tongues", used to roll on the ground shrieking for the Blessed Bridegroom, and no doubt finding him. But a few haloes or tights or wings do not make all that difference. As the *Daily Mirror* explains—"But it's damn good fun—once!"

★

We are absolutely at one with the Rev. J. Whitelam, Vicar of the Church of St. Agnes, Kennington Park, in his campaign for getting more money from Christians, and insisting that on holidays merely eating and sleeping is not fair to God. He wants every Christian to give at least half a crown to the Church every week, and worship God even more than ever on holidays. We feel with the vicar that the more money is paid out by Christians, and the more God is adored, the more the Almighty will be pleased, and the better the chances of missing the almost inevitable Hell fire for eternity. Good luck to Mr. Whitelam.

★

Spiritualists have as good a right to commit suicide as anybody else, though it is rather surprising to find one—cited by the *South London Press* the other week—doing so because he could not get cured by "faith-healing". The astonishing reason he gave before his suicide was that it was because he was a medium. In commenting on this, "Wanderer" the writer, admitted that he was most grateful to him, for "he cured me for ever of any belief in the supernatural". Our own experiences of mediums and faith-healers made us anti-Spiritualist for life.

★

That one time "infidel slayer" Dr. Donald Soper has at last found "an antidote" for apathy towards the Churches. It is, he told the Methodist Conference at Preston the other day, for them "to show they had a practical interest in coming together". This looks suspiciously like saying it's preferable to hang together than hang separately. Any-

how there are to be further discussions on promoting Anglican-Methodist "unity". Dr. K. Barrett, who is Professor of Church History at Durham University, signed a "dissenting" report though he agreed that all sections of Methodists should discuss the question. There appeared however little enthusiasm either way, and nobody knows whether "unity" should go the Anglican way or the Methodist way. And where was true Christianity?

"GOD'S WOMAN"

(Concluded from page 235)

vestige of evidence to show that the Bible has any supernatural origin. Like all similar compilations it obviously derives from a combination of intellect, emotion and imagination, which, there is no earthly reason to suppose are other than completely human.

Out of this welter, the late Pastor Russell, his successor Rutherford and others, built up the outlandish organisation which, after changing its name more than once, we now know as Jehovah's Witnesses. What may be called the Witnesses' theological system is described with impeccable clarity and impartiality by Royston Pike in his *Jehovah's Witnesses* (Watts & Co.). This reports many astounding and unattractive facts which indicate that practically all the teachings of this peculiar cult are on a par with the mythical and ridiculously named "God's Woman", which, on the face of it, suggests that Jehovah-God is a sort of immoral and immortal old scallywag. For it is only one step between the ridiculous and the more ridiculous. None of their teachings receives the slightest historical support from modern scholarship. No other theology gives them countenance. And they themselves, with the obstinate blindness of those who won't see, fail to see that to all those unconvinced and unconverted, they are the dupes of an obsession which in some fields could be marked down as an irritating sort of insanity.

Perhaps the best way to deal with them is to laugh at them. Nothing so antiseptically deflates their kind of self-importance, nothing so wholesomely stimulates self-examination, as a little derisively good-natured laughter. Once these Witnesses can prove that their Jehovah-God is and does as they maintain, once they can demonstrate the validity of the conclusions they draw, we will joyfully accept their God, we will eagerly give them full accord as Jehovah's Witnesses. But until they do, they cannot expect us to regard them as anything but False Witnesses of a most pernicious kind.

QUESTIONS

How do you explain to an American that you can buy frozen peas on a Sunday but that by law you must not buy tinned peas? How do you tell an Italian that he can buy himself a fresh peach on the Sabbath—if he can find one—but not a tinned peach?

What is the reason you give to a Belgian when he asks why he can watch a play on television on the Lord's Day but not in the theatre; that he can go to a shop and get himself clotted cream in tins but not tinned fresh cream; newspapers but not books or stationery—except at main railway station book-stalls?

We keep our senses on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

But rarely on Sunday.

—"Cassandra" (*Daily Mirror*, 10/7/63).

WITHOUT COMMENT

A Chinese girl paid a £9 fine for a Malay youth convicted by a religious court in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, yesterday of being alone with her. "I love him", she said.

The case was the latest in a clamp-down on "Khalwat", the Moslem offence of a man and woman being together in a secluded place.—*Daily Sketch*, 11/7/63.

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 (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 28th, 6.45 p.m.: T. M. Mosley, "Some Things Christians Should Know".
Birmingham Humanist Group (Arden Hotel, New Street), Wednesday, July 31st, 7.30 p.m.: A. F. M. BRIERLEY, "Are Humanists Human?"

Notes and News

A "DECENT" period of time having now elapsed since the death of Pope John XXIII, in this issue F. A. Ridley and David Silloc turn their infidel eyes on the event, while Reginald Underwood takes a look at those "inveterate enemies" of the Roman Catholic Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, who recently encamped at Twickenham.

★

WE MUST record that on June 22nd the National Secular Society received its first mention in the august pages of the *New Yorker*, thanks to the activities of one member at Aldermaston prior to the last march. In a very fair account of the march, Daniel Lang, the *New Yorker's* "reporter at large" gave some idea of the mustering of the faiths, as follows: "The Buddhist priest came along, slowly and steadily beating his tambour, his movements unimpeded by his flowing orange robe. Episcopalians, Methodists, and Catholics were there, and so was a man who had thrust anti-Catholic literature on me back at the assembly grounds, identifying himself as a member of the National Secular Society. Communists, Conservatives, Labourites and Liberals passed with their banners . . .".

★

LANJE GARDYEN reports from Montreal that there is increasing religious opposition in Quebec to the educational changes proposed by the Parent Commission and supported by the Federal Government, involving the establishment of a Minister of Education (see this column

10/5/63). Roman Catholics in particular dislike the idea which they consequently label "undemocratic". Monsignor Pierre Decary, President of the Quebec Federation of Classical Colleges sent a telegram to the Federal Premier Jean Lesage, saying that "The bill offers no guarantee of freedom to independent institutions, freedom which the episcopacy claims for these institutions which are at the service of the public welfare". The General Council of Catholic Teachers' Corporation of Quebec, the St. Jean Baptiste Society, the University Commission of the Society of Jesus as well as Catholic individuals like Abbé Louis O'Neill of Laval University and Mr. Claude Ryan of the paper *Le Devoir*, have also opposed the bill. And they have succeeded at least in delaying it. Perhaps more.

★

PREMIER LESAGE announced to the Quebec Legislative Assembly that the bill would be held over until the next session "to give everyone the time wanted to familiarise themselves with the details of a law of this importance". And although he emphasised that the Government has no intention of withdrawing the measure he ominously said that "amendments which did not infringe on the bill's basic principles would be considered". "Delay of Bill Pleases Educators", stated a *Montreal Gazette* headline. Insert "Religious" before "Educators" and you have it right, says Lanje Gardyen.

★

FURTHER CHRISTIAN reaction to the United States Supreme Court's ruling that Bible reading and prayers in the state schools were unconstitutional. Three of the US's five Catholic Cardinals spoke out against the ruling (*Time*, 20/6/63). Cardinal Spellman of New York thought it would "do great harm to our country"; for Cardinal Cushing of Boston it was "a great tragedy"; and Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles said obscurely "our American heritage of philosophy, of religion and of freedom is being abandoned". Shocked, too, was Billy Graham. "I don't believe that a small minority should rule the majority of the people", he said. Even the "liberal" Protestant Bishop James A. Pike of California opposed the ruling. The result, he said, "is not neutrality but an imposition upon the public school system of a particular perspective on reality, namely, secularism by default, which is as much an 'ism' as any other".

★

THE JULY 5TH issue of *Time* celebrated "a millenium of monasticism" on Mount Athos (one time sacred to Zeus) with a fine colour supplement and a feature on the Greek Orthodox Church, which it said was "still light years away from any union with Rome". The Rev. Anastasios Giannoulatos of Athens had stated the position epigrammatically: "We are very near the Roman Catholic Church in dogma. But from the point of view of feeling, we are very far. With the Protestants we are far apart in dogma and very near in feelings". One feeling it shares with both Catholics and Protestants is "that in an increasingly secularised world, a divided and competitive Christianity is a luxury that the churches cannot afford".

★

IN HIS "Russian Postscript" (*The Guardian*, 11/7/63), Lord Altrincham remarked that, in their attitude to marriage, "as in much else, the Soviet Communists seem to have learned from Roman Catholicism". It is the "done thing", he said, to be married in a Palace of Weddings, but "no one who is divorced may be remarried in a Palace of Weddings". Divorce, in fact, is frowned upon.

The Cadaverous Faith

By DAVID SILLOC

THE EMOTIONAL MOTOR of the Roman Catholic Church which, by its great power and concomitant condemnation of contraceptive methods of birth control, is precipitating misery on an even larger scale than it managed to create with its soul-saving, heretic-hunting, God-given Inquisition, displayed itself magnificently recently by its masterly exploitation of Pope John's dying, death, and lingering on earth horizontally on a moving museum of a catafalque.

Pope John, we are told, was a Pope of Goodness, and my impression of him is not in conflict with that opinion. I have little against Pope John as a person, but I have a great deal against the epic spectacular of which he was until recently the centrepiece.

Let us have a look at some reports of maudlin effusions which, for too many days, bespattered our newspapers and made so many people spiritually sexcited.

The Pope, a man of 81, his body wracked by heteroplasia, is said to have repeatedly offered his life as a sacrifice for the Ecumenical Council. What baloney. If a knife is whizzing its way to my wife's heart and I hurl myself in front of her to protect her and am myself the recipient of this missile of death, one can justifiably say that I sacrifice my life for that of my wife. But for an old man who is bound to die of cancer of the stomach, for whom there is no means of recovery other than a miracle which in spite of many prayers does not occur, to talk of sacrificing his life is twaddle.

The faithful prayed for this good man. First they prayed that he might live. Only a few days later they were praying that he might die, and quickly. First they demonstrate their belief that with God all is possible—"Only a miracle can save The Holy Father". Then they let loose one of their rare flashes of human sense and say "It is humanly impossible to nourish hope". I thought the Catholics knew the knack of doing the humanly impossible and nourishing hope relentlessly right to the bitter end. When the Pope finally does die, his death cannot be announced in terrestrial terms, but "Praised be to Jesus Christ . . . The Pope of Goodness expired religiously and serenely . . .". Are they poking fun at Shakespeare?

On Saturday, June 1st, a papal official told the Pope, according to David Cook of the *Sunday Mirror*, "Holy Father . . . you seem to be resurrected". Resurrection would have boosted membership considerably, but Pope John was to disappoint the official. He was, he said, "moving gently towards the end". And how gently we can tell from the reports of his great suffering which he was bearing with "edifying resignation".

That same Saturday evening, the editor of the Vatican newspaper saw the Supreme Pontiff and (according to Patrick O'Donovan, *The Observer*, 2/6/63) said afterwards: "I think he will go to paradise tomorrow—the feast of Pentecost". The Pope, truly supreme in deed as in word, was to upset the forecast. He died on Monday evening and his body was still being paraded in this world of sin and woe on Thursday. If it was his soul that the editor thought would be zooming its way to paradise on Sunday, it could not have been very large or caused much deflation of the body, because George Gale of the *Daily Express*, describing the corpse in Rome on Tuesday, June 4th, said, in his somewhat detailed analysis of the flesh, "nor is his massive body at all wasted".

Pope John died at 7.49 p.m. on Monday, June 3rd. How they determined the exact minute of death I don't know. According to Stephen Harper of the *Daily Express* (4/6/63), "Professor Gasbarrini put a stethoscope to the Pope's chest and declared him medically dead". Was it 7.49 at this point? Surely not. Because, after the Professor's expert pronouncement, the Papal Grand Penitentiary also listened with the stethoscope. He was not dead yet, for the Catholics at any rate. Harper says, "First, Pope John had to be dressed in a scarlet robe with a scarlet cloth over his face. Then Cardinal Cento called to him three times, not as Pope John, but by the name with which he was born in a peasant hut—Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli". Only then, and after a suitable pause, did the Infallible Pontiff's underlings, assisted perhaps by the Holy Ghost, come into possession of the absolute truth that John XXIII was dead.

Outside the Pope's room, Rhona Churchill of the *Daily Mail* (4/6/63) had been present at "a sunset Mass" in St. Peter's Square attended by 100,000 people. She had observed that "there was genuine grief in every heart" (good for her X-ray insight!) "and it was visible in every face" (good for her remarkable powers of perception with 100,000 people crowding up the square!). She heard "the whirr of cameras used by men standing on the roofs of their cars, yet it did not detract from the solemnity of the service". Nor, would it seem, did the genuine grief in their heart and the visibility of it in their face detract from their camerawork which came over magnificently on the telly.

The grand performance was not over yet, by a long way. The faithful could not see for themselves that Pope John was showing us "so simply and magnificently how to die". His death spasms were not televised. Was it because the Catholics have respect for the dying and accord them a measure of privacy? If so, they made up after the expiration for the earlier lack of televising by jazzing him up in robes of red and gold and laying him on a catafalque in the apse of St. Peter's. Reporting from Vatican city on Tuesday, Rhona Churchill told us (*Daily Mail*, 5/6/63) that he was lying "close to the high Papal altar guarded by proud noblemen of the Vatican court dressed in glittering helmets, horsehair plumes, scarlet tunics, white buckskin breeches and drawn swords". I wonder why the resplendent noblemen were proud. Were they proud that their Pope had died so simply and magnificently? Or were they proud that he had gone to Paradise? Or were they proud that they were dressed in "glittering helmets, horsehair plumes", etc.? Or were they proud that they were on the telly? At any rate, we have the proud noblemen of the Vatican court guarding Peter's successor, with the cardinals kissing his gloved hand and the lesser beings his slippered feet. How extraordinary! The True Church of God does let out its repressed sinfulness in a peculiar way—kissing the soulless feet of a cold corpse on a catafalque.

On Wednesday the solemnity in St. Peter's Square had gone, it would seem, and two thousand police had to be called to control the enormous crowd. There were, according to Rhona Churchill, mob violence, mass hysteria, babies rescued from the crush, police knocked to the ground, nuns jumping barricades, women fainting and screaming. I must say I should have enjoyed seeing the

nuns jumping the barricades. It's nice to know they don't lose all of their animal instincts.

At last they buried him, and another spectacle was over. The Holy Church did rather well out of it, by and large. Their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, had had a very quiet burial. Tut, tut. If you are going to "sacrifice" your life, then use all the media of communication to parade that sacrifice. In fairness to the early Christians we must remember that they did not have newspapers whose readers would lap it all up, nor did they have television cameras whose film would be watched by avid emotional gluttons.

It's 1963. There will be about 50 million more people on earth next year. I wonder how many of them will be Catholics ready to obey, when the time comes, "God's law" that "to destroy, block or spill the seed deliberately, either by using anything or by interrupting the act of marriage, is a mortal sin". Let us not seek the death of celestial Catholics who are not of our way of thinking as their great believing ancestors did in the good old days with those who were not of the faith. But let us fight them with all the words at our command, with all possible recourse to non-violent action to remove this anachronism of emotion that can make a mockery of a man's life, a circus of a man's death, and a great big screaming joke of a man's reason.

Not Proven

By COLIN McCALL

EMMETT McLOUGHLIN is a man for whom I have immense admiration, and I am full of praise for his first three books, *People's Padre*, *American Culture and Catholic Schools*, and *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church*. For his new one, *An Inquiry into the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Lyle Stuart, New York, \$4.95) I am not so sure. I was not so sure when I heard he was writing it, and I am not so sure now. It is thin in both senses and, while it is the result of a great deal of research which took him to Mexico and South America, I can't help wondering if it was really worth it.

The theory of Catholic complicity in Lincoln's assassination on April 14th, 1865, is not, of course, new, but it has not been thoroughly investigated until now. Whether the result of Mr. McLoughlin's investigation is, as the blurb claims, "light where before there was darkness", I very much doubt. This is not to say that the theory is absurd, nor even that it is unsupportable, but it is certainly not proven. And it is no reflection on Mr. McLoughlin to say that he was more at home in his previous books than he is in this. In them he wrote from experience: stating a case he knew. In this he tries to build up a case which at best is circumstantial.

It is not that he goes beyond the evidence. It would be wrong to suggest that. He never claims that the Catholic Church was solely responsible for the assassination. That the leaders of the South were implicated can, he says, "hardly be questioned". What he questions is that they alone were involved. "In fact it is the thesis of this book that they did not alone consummate the assassination. They could not have done it. The actual murder took place after their cause was hopelessly lost and when they had actually surrendered. Furthermore, the spiriting away, the concealment, and the legal defence of one of the principal conspirators took place after the Confederacy had ceased to exist".

There was one organisation, Mr. McLoughlin maintains, "whose historical background was characterised by

the planning and execution of such deeds; that had a last-ing consistent motive before, during and after the crime; that had the necessary international connections; that had the money; that could elicit suicidal self-sacrifice in its members; and that continued to exist through all phases of the assassination conspiracy. This is the Roman Catholic Church".

The Church, Mr. McLoughlin argues, "considered Abraham Lincoln a major enemy, not only because of such specific incidents as his eloquent and brilliant defence of the ex-priest Chiniquy, but also because of his opposition to Church influence in the New World". Frankly, I think the Chiniquy affair can be discounted. That Lincoln epitomised the liberalism that was anathema to Rome, cannot. There is certainly a good deal of truth in Mr. McLoughlin's contraposing Pius IX and Lincoln. One of the "errors" in the Pope's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) was that "The Church ought to be separated from the State and the State from the Church". And the legal right to "liberty of conscience and of worship" was "erroneous" and "pernicious" (Encyclical *Quanta Cura*). The alignment of forces in the 1860s, then, whilst perhaps not so clear as Mr. McLoughlin suggests, was roughly as he states it, viz:

On one side were dictatorship, slavery, secession, monarchy, European imperialism, Jesuit chicanery and a Church-dominated assault upon the Monroe Doctrine, all of which found spiritual leadership in the one person: Pope Pius IX.

On the other side were freedom, emancipation, Freemasonry, democracy, Latin American struggle against foreign domination, all embodied in the one person: Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln, we know, admired and supported Juarez, who disestablished and disendowed the Church in Mexico and dismissed an archbishop and five bishops for resistance to his Law of Reform, and who (with his followers) was excommunicated in 1863. And both Lincoln and Juarez (like Simon Bolivar) were Freemasons.

The Empress Eugenie expressed her hatred for Lincoln (comparing him to the "missing link") and looked forward to the spread of monarchy and the Church through Mexico and the US. And it was the hope of Napoleon III, the Emperor Franz Joseph and the Pope, that the establishment of Maximilian on the throne of Mexico would prelude the absorption of the Southern States. Juarez and Lincoln thwarted those plans.

Did the Church, then, plot to kill the American President? The plot was hatched in a Catholic home (that of Mary Surratt) and Mr. McLoughlin considers that at least seven of the ten known conspirators were Catholics. But it is the story of Mrs. Surratt's son, John, that provides the most suspicious aspect of the whole Lincoln plot. It is, Mr. McLoughlin says, "the Vatican's point of greatest vulnerability".

To summarise: John H. Surratt, the only principal conspirator who escaped, was hidden in Canada by Catholic priests, sent to England by Catholic priests, hidden in a Catholic rectory in London, concealed in a Catholic college in Rome, and accepted in the Zouave Army of the Pope. Moreover, he was defended, in a very long and expensive trial, by a firm of attorneys whose most active participant was a Roman Catholic. Finally, Surratt, after being included in the general amnesty, taught in a Roman Catholic school.

Here, it must be said, the Vatican is vulnerable. But the most the Surratt story proves is sympathy, not complicity. And this is my judgment on Mr. McLoughlin's book. He strains to prove complicity but fails. Surely a Confederate plot is much more feasible, whether or not the cause was hopelessly lost. And since when has motive been extended to "after the crime"?

CORRESPONDENCE

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

DR. SCHONFIELD REPLIES

It is unexpected to find an article about myself in THE FREETHINKER, but if it was to be done it is a pity that it could not be by an author better informed about myself and my work than Mr. Cutner, who also very clearly is no expert on early Christianity.

To get the facts straight, I should appreciate being permitted the hospitality of your columns to comment at reasonable length on the writer's observations.

In the first place I am not a convert to the Christian Religion since I do not accept its theology. This I have made clear in more than one of my books. I am a Jew who believes that Jesus was the Messiah, which is a rather different matter and does not involve any conviction that he was superhuman.

Most of your contributor's remarks concern one of my many books, *The Bible Was Right*. This volume got its title—not mine—from the fact that it arose from a series of articles on this theme commissioned by the *Evening News*, in which my share was confined to the New Testament. I certainly never set out, as Mr. Cutner states, "to prove that the Bible was right in nearly every particular". That would have been a most foolish undertaking, for which no scholar of consequence would be responsible. In the Foreword to the book—which Mr. Cutner chooses to ignore—I explained clearly what I regarded as my terms of reference. Here is what I wrote. "Is the Bible to be trusted as a faithful reporter of what men thought and did in those times to which it relates? I have put the question in this way rather than in terms of the Bible's absolute inerrancy, because it seems to me that in secular as distinct from spiritual matters the Bible claims no greater knowledge on behalf of the several writers than would come within the range of their intelligence and experience".

This is very different from the impression conveyed quite falsely in the article. But I would like to be more specific in replying to your ill-informed contributor.

He says that the four Gospels were completely unknown by name before 180 AD, and implies by this that they did not exist before this date. This of course is nonsense. They could not have been fully established by 180 unless they had been written much earlier. Justin speaks of them some twenty years before, and Papias as far back as 135 AD. We have a fragment of a MS of John dating from about 140 AD. The information furnished by the Synoptic Gospels in particular is so different in quality from Christian thought in the early second century that they must all have been composed by about 110. Not only so, but Matthew and Luke use Mark as one of their sources, so that this Gospel must have been in existence much earlier, at least by 80 AD. Its venerable authority is also certified by the fact that the text is imperfect, breaking off near the end in the middle of a sentence.

I am accused of leaving out everything which I can't or do not wish to explain. This is a silly and unwarranted charge. I have never shirked anything. If Mr. Cutner knew my writings better, he would be aware that I dealt with the story of the Jewish saints rising from their graves at the time of the Crucifixion in my book *Jesus: a Biography*. In the same work I dealt with the accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus, and believe I shed some light on the traditions.

"I have never discovered any evidence," says Mr. Cutner, "that the Romans condemned thieves to be crucified, or even a blasphemer". There is Roman authority for the crimes which were punished by crucifixion. One crime was highway robbery. Those crucified with Jesus are described in the Gospels as brigands, as I have correctly translated in *The Authentic New Testament*. Another crime was high treason, for which Jesus was condemned, setting himself up as a king without authority of Caesar. I have clearly explained the nature of the "blasphemy" in Chapter 18 of *The Bible Was Right*. It was the crime in Roman law of *Luesa Maiestas*, violating the majesty of Tiberius. The Gospels make this quite clear.

I could of course go on to demolish the further ignorant statements of your contributor, but would refer "the curious reader" whom he invites to look at my writings to my books *The Jew of Tarsus* and *Saints Against Caesar* which may be found in various public libraries.

One thing is quite certain. Mr. Cutner is not as he claims "influenced by modern thought" but by Rationalist conceptions of a hundred years ago, so many of which are now out-of-date in the light of archaeological discoveries of the present century. I am all in favour of freethinking; but not of unfree prejudice which warps judgment. HUGH J. SCHONFIELD, DSLitt, FIAL.

CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

Please allow me to say that I was amazed when I read the short article that appeared in THE FREETHINKER under the headline, "Another Clerical Error". No one who knows me would say that I was sympathetic to the Catholic Church or its Cardinals, but I like to see things straight even when a Cardinal is involved.

Let me say, first of all, that Mindszenty had little in common with the Workers' Councils that led the struggle against those who admitted that they had framed, tortured and executed innocent men and women. Mindszenty made a speech when he was released from prison which was used throughout the world in order to prove that the Hungarian rising was led by Fascists. He finally found refuge in the US Embassy where he has been ever since.

Your contributor, A.P., says that Mindszenty can leave his place of refuge any time he pleases. Perhaps he can, but we should remember that a Communist, Imre Nagy, was promised safe conduct to his home if he left the Yugoslav Embassy. When he and others left the embassy they were taken to Roumania. Janos Kadar, the present Prime Minister of Hungary, said he would not be put on trial. That promise was broken and Nagy was executed. One can hardly blame Mindszenty for being a little cautious.

Mindszenty was not a leader in the Hungarian rising, but I would find no fault with him going into hiding had he been so. Lenin, the most outstanding leader of the present century, did so on at least two occasions.

A very strong case can be made against the Catholic Church on many counts. An examination of statements by the late Pope John, and the present Pope, on social questions and on peace, would serve a useful purpose. The piece by A.P. serves no purpose at all.

HARRY MCSHANE

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