

The Freethinker

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IT IS ALREADY sufficiently clear that future historians will recognise the brief, but eventful, reign of Pope John XXIII, as so to speak, a watershed, a novel point of departure in the long and chequered annals of the Church of Rome. When regarded from this point of view the papal perspectives presently confronting John's successor, Paul VI (Giovanni Batista Montini) present features of exceptional interest to students both of religious evolution as also of secular developments.

Students of English historical literature will, no doubt, recall Lord Macaulay's famous traveller from New Zealand sketching the ruins of St. Paul's in a world from which all the contemporary institutions had disappeared, excepting only the evergreen "august dynasty" of the popes of Rome.

The Papacy in World History
Macaulay is often described today as a political pamphleteer of the Whig persuasion, rather than as a scientific historian. No doubt also, it is true (as McCabe once suggested) that Macaulay saw the Church and See of Rome surveying the ruins of St. Paul's and (as McCabe rose-tinted glasses—or more precisely, through a veil created by his own verbal exuberance!

However, the English historian did at least draw the attention of his readers—and at a time when the Vatican was at the lowest point in world power and estimation during the triumphant onrush of liberalism after the French Revolution—to the fact that the Papacy was not only the then seemingly decaying head of a superannuated religious organisation, but also a cosmopolitan institution endowed with a quite incredible faculty of resiliency and a recurring ability, of which Macaulay gave several authentic examples, of fighting back from apparently hopeless historical impasses. At the time Macaulay wrote, Rome, under the puerile Pius IX was in precisely such an impasse; but under his successor, Leo XIII, it again began the long climb back to world prestige and power, this time in the teeth of liberalism, of the spectacular growth and transformation of human knowledge and living conditions effected by the essentially modern social industrial and scientific revolution. The innovations recently effected by the late Pope John and now bequeathed to his successor form the latest development in this historic come-back; a resuscitation that may perhaps be said to have begun with the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII (April 15th, 1891) when, as I have elsewhere phrased it, "the Middle Ages at last ended in Rome" (cf. my book, *The Papacy and Fascism*). The significant reign of Leo XIII and the more recent, but probably equally significant reign of John, provided fresh proofs of the thesis of Macaulay, that the Papacy represents a world-power of a permanent character by no means (whatever it may say about itself) inflexible or unchanging in its current attitudes, but contrarily endowed with quite extraordinary

powers of resiliency and adaptation to changing historical conditions.

The "Harold Wilson" of the Vatican

The surprise election of the aging and little-known dark horse, Cardinal Roncalli as Pope John XXIII, appears to have represented in final analysis, the successful termination of an ecclesiastical *coup d'état* staged by the more intelligent leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in effective opposition to the dead hand of extreme reactionaries in every sphere who had controlled the Church under John's two Pius predecessors.

By calling a general council of the Church, the first since 1870, John effectively displayed his recognition that new times had arrived and that the Church had to make some show of adapting itself to these new times. The untimely death of the Pope interrupted his "revolution" (or rather, counter-revolution) in mid-course. But the speedy election of the present Pope indicated that John's electors had correctly reflected and interpreted the contemporary mind of the Church. For if John was (in Catholic perspectives) "left", his successor is at least "left centre". He may go slower than John, but he will move in the same general direction. To borrow a current illustration from English leftist politics, one might term Pope Paul "the Harold Wilson of the Vatican". The papal revolution will go on, if more cautiously, under the professional diplomat, Montini, as it did under the perhaps more impressive Pope John. For we are living in 1963 and the infallible Church evidently realises this, for it has not yet lost that recurring ability to fight back in changing historical circumstances that Macaulay had already noted a century ago.

Papal Problems

In this present year of grace, marked especially by such diverse phenomena as the threat of nuclear war, the space age potential, over-population on a world scale, and the menace of international Communism (in perhaps more militant Chinese form), the Catholic Church obviously has an extensive agenda to lay before the resumed Vatican Council when it meets again next month. For the *non possumus*, the flat negative given by John's Pius precursors to practically every modern problem evidently no longer represents a viable policy for even the most conservative Church, in face of this era of ever-accelerating social and scientific revolution. Most critics have already commented on the changed attitude towards both Communism and the Cold War in John's last encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, to mention only one of the Vatican's most urgent and immediate problems. The Vatican is faced, probably within the next decade, with the irresistible advance of a social revolution in the last of the major under-privileged areas in the world, Latin America, which has been since its 16th century conquest by Iberian Crusaders probably the major area of both Catholic spiritual and economic exploitation. In another more strictly religious field, Christian reunion under, of course, Vatican leadership,

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Papal Perspectives

By F. A. RIDLEY

presents today unprecedented opportunities as well as difficulties for the Vatican. To mention again only one aspect of this complex problem, recent developments have evidently promoted the question of the Conversion of England from the mere nostalgic pipe-dream that for all their rhetoric it actually was in the days of Newman and of the Tractarians, to a position nowadays probably quite high up on the Vatican Council's agenda. For the current decline of the Church of England is as obvious as is that of its secular counterpart and traditional mainstay, the former English aristocratic oligarchy. Such a situation obviously lends itself to present-day papal strategy (N.B. critics of this point of view would be well advised to bring their thinking up to date; for Queen Victoria like Queen

Anne has been dead quite a while).

The Vatican Enters a New Era

The view expressed by some writers that Rome represents a hide-bound conservatism, incapable of change is, as Macaulay showed long ago quite unconfirmed by its actual evolution. Nor is there any reason to believe that this process of adaption to a changing environment has ended. Contrarily, Pope John's "revolution" only bears out Macaulay's thesis, and the Vatican may eventually find room for Teilhard de Chardin, Simone Weil, even perhaps the Bishop of Woolwich. Meanwhile, students of this chameleon-like institution will await with keen interest its immediate developments under the infallible direction of Pope Paul.

"Generalization in Ethics"

By G. L. SIMONS

MARCUS GEORGE SINGER is a graduate from the University of Illinois and received his PhD from Cornell University in 1952. He is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin and is currently in England on a Guggenheim Fellowship, attached to Birkbeck College, University of London, as a Visiting Fellow. His recently published book, *Generalization in Ethics* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 30s) is his first, although articles and reviews have appeared in various philosophical journals.

The main theme in the book is an attempt to show that the Generalization Argument ("If everyone were to do that the consequences would be undesirable; therefore no one ought to do that.") can and must serve as a rational foundation for an ethical philosophy. The argument seems fallacious since it appears only to justify the conclusion "not everyone ought to do that". Thus Dr. Singer introduces the *generalization principle*: "What is right (or wrong) for one person must be right (or wrong) for any similar person in similar circumstances".

He explains what is meant by "similar" and establishes the criterion whereby a person can claim exemption from moral rules rationally derived. The *reason* for exemption must be a genuine class difference between those people who are subject to the rule and those who are exempt. The mere tautological fact that people are separate individuals is insufficient to establish legitimate exemption. Dr. Singer explains why the Generalization Principle and the Generalization Argument have to be supplemented by a further principle, the Principle of Consequences: "If the consequences of A's doing x would be undesirable, then A ought not to do x".

One type of objection to the main thesis is exemplified by "If everyone produced food the consequences would be undesirable; therefore no one should produce food". This application of the argument is invalid, Dr. Singer maintains, because of what he calls "invertibility", i.e. it can be said also that if no one produced food the consequences would be undesirable. A further objection is exemplified by "If everyone ate at nine o'clock the consequences would be undesirable; therefore no one should eat at nine o'clock". This application is invalid due to what Dr. Singer calls "reiterability", i.e. any time (or place) could be selected; the argument would prove that no one should ever eat. This is plainly absurd. Furthermore, he maintains, a case that is reiterable is also invertible.

Having distinguished between moral principles (always applicable) and moral rules (variable due to local factors) and having criticised absolutism in Cabot and Moore,

Dr. Singer examines the application of the Generalization Argument to various moral situations, e.g. competition, punishment, military service. He then considers the *Obverse* of the Principle of Consequences (i.e. "If the consequences of A's doing x would be desirable then it is A's duty to do x") and its relation to the *Obverse* of the Generalization Argument. The connection between these obverses and Utilitarianism is self-evident. Dr. Singer criticises Utilitarianism and shows how Mill modified it by introducing the Generalization Argument.

He next considers in detail Kant's *Categorical Imperative*, i.e. "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law", and concludes that if the Categorical Imperative is valid (and it is) then so is the Generalization Argument. He applies the Categorical Imperative in specific instances to show its relevance to his basic thesis. He concludes with a distinction between morality and prudence, a further discussion of principles and rules, and a confident dismissal of ethical relativism.

This is a well-written book; it is clear and well-organised. Dr. Singer has a fortunate style; nowhere is he obscure or unduly academic. It is apparent that this is a rational work attempting to give morality an objective basis independent of supernaturalism and metaphysics. It is obvious that if Dr. Singer's thesis is valid it is of great importance. But how valid is it?

I believe that the thesis is largely valid within certain terms of reference. Inconclusive points within the thesis are of little importance. For example, I am not convinced that an application of the Generalization Argument which is reiterable is necessarily invertible. But individual cases could be eliminated for the one case or for the other; it would not matter if not all unsatisfactory applications of the argument were invertible. Similarly some of the objections to Utilitarianism seem to me not to rule out the possibility of amendment. But Dr. Singer makes a sufficient number of telling points against Utilitarianism to preserve his thesis intact in this connection.

The terms of reference are such, I believe, as to render illegitimate Dr. Singer's attempts to dismiss emotivism and ethical relativity. A main purpose of the book is "to point a way out from the current popular theories of ethical relativity". If in this Dr. Singer is unsuccessful it must be admitted that his book has largely failed.

Dr. Singer admits, explicitly (page 12) and implicitly (all through the book), that the successful application of the Generalization Argument depends upon an assumption

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A Material Basis for Mind

DEREK F. LAWDEN

FOR A HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIVE YEARS a time-bomb has been ticking away beneath the column of Western man's beliefs regarding his own nature. It has been threatening to destroy the structure at which he has been labouring for over 2,000 years. So powerful is the terror which arises when the presence of this time-bomb is recognised, that we've sought to comfort ourselves by banishing the complex of ideas associated with it to nightmare tales of horror where, disguised as fiction, we can face the reality at last.

I'm referring to the possibility of the creation of living forms, by man, from dead matter; and to the consequences for our view of human nature that this possibility entails.

Before 1828, it was the commonly accepted opinion that many substances which participate in the internal chemistry of a living organism could not be prepared, artificially, in the laboratory from inorganic substances. It was believed that a certain mysterious vital energy was always active in their manufacture, and that this energy flowed from the author of all being who could not be coerced by man.

A clear dividing line was accordingly drawn between "inorganic" substances, which could be synthesised from their elements, and "organic" substances, which could not. Deployed on either side of this dividing line were the scientists and the theologians, preparing to do battle.

This was the situation in 1828, when the German chemist Wohler synthesised urea, and so set working the mechanism of the time-bomb I've already referred to. For urea is an eminently organic substance, to be found in the urine of all animals. If it can be synthesised it strongly suggests that there's no reason in principle why *all* organic substances should not be so prepared, and, further, why the chemistry of even the human organism should not eventually be fully elucidated and hence subjected to conscious human control.

Even more disturbingly, this development hinted at the possibility that at some future date man might learn the secret of life itself, and thus be in a position to act as the creator of living forms—forms which might ultimately possess an intelligence superior to that of Man, the self-styled lord of creation. In these circumstances was Frankenstein born in the imagination of Mary Shelley; and the possibility alone of his achievement has terrorised us ever since. However, it is not the robot we fear so much as the insidious suggestion that we also in reality are automata, destined to play the same tragic role assigned to the monster in the Frankenstein story.

My reason for stressing the urgency of a serious consideration of these issues is that the rate of advance in the biochemical field is now rapidly accelerating. Four years ago, Fraenkel-Conrat and Williams in the United States demonstrated the synthesis of tobacco mosaic virus from inert molecules. This virus lives as a parasite upon the tobacco plant, multiplying within its host plant and being responsible for the characteristic symptoms of mosaic disease in it. For the first time, then, a particularly simple life form had been created by man from dead matter.

And last year, Crick and Watson at Cambridge solved the problem of the structure of the DNA-molecule which acts as the repository for the master-plan which determines the structure of every cell in our bodies. This molecule is the principal vehicle by which men and women transmit to their descendants the human design, and so maintain

our species in existence through thousands of generations without any serious modification.

A Nobel prize was awarded to these investigators for their achievement, in very proper recognition of its status as a breakthrough in our knowledge, likely to lead, in a short time, to a complete unravelling of the chemistry of the living cell. The barrier separating the domain of the living from that of the dead has thus obviously been breached and will soon be entirely swept away. No real obstacle will then remain to prevent biologists and chemists amalgamating their sciences into a truly comprehensive understanding of matter in all its forms, from a simple grain of salt to the whole brain of man.

Once again we've been taught that Nature knows nothing of our human categories or lines of division. Nature is a unity, and we must ultimately comprehend her as such. We are journeying towards this high state of understanding, but on the road our weak intellects find it helpful to analyse Nature into constituent parts, between which we then imagine drawn firm lines of division.

The division between living and dead matter is an artificial though frequently convenient, distinction of this type. It's created in the mind of man, and unless we firmly grasp its imaginary nature, it can lead to tedious arguments of a quite sterile kind. For example, is a virus "living" or "dead"? This is not a question relating to Nature, but to an imaginary dividing line, imposed by ourselves upon her in the same way that we inscribe lines of latitude and longitude on a globe.

The fact that the question is difficult to answer implies only that the dividing line is in danger of becoming a hindrance to thought, rather than a help. In other words, it's out-of-date. The hierarchy of material structures stretches up from the elementary particles to man himself, without a break and the characteristics we normally associate with "life" are observed to arise in a continuous fashion as we ascend the scale.

But if we accept that there is a continuous gradation of qualities from the elementary particles up to man himself, it seems to me that we're also forced to accept some very curious consequences. After all, it's our most fundamental experience that we are conscious beings; and we cannot doubt that animals also experience consciousness, though probably their experience is less intense than our own. Proceeding downwards in the hierarchy, there is not an obvious level at which we can feel safe in asserting that the last spark of consciousness has been extinguished and that we have arrived at 100 per cent "unconscious" matter.

If there *were* such a level we should once again have to accept the old dichotomy between living and dead matter. I suggest, therefore, that even the fundamental particles must be imbued with an element of consciousness, albeit of a most feeble intensity and poor quality; and that these act as mental poles, in much the same way that they behave as gravitational and electrodynamic poles with respect to these more familiar physical fields.

However, in case some of my scientific colleagues are listening, let me hasten to add that I am not suggesting that the mental field is of the same nature as a physical field, or even that it is representable in the same space with such fields.

To continue, it is then quite reasonable to suppose that
(Concluded on page 270)

This Believing World

That once famous pious organisation the British and Foreign Bible Society, is sadly out of the news today. We think it used to boast of about 800 wonderful Bible translations into all kinds of foreign languages and dialects all, we believe, taken from the Authorised Version which is now known to be a very faulty version of God's Precious Word. Probably, the task of bringing all these into line with the *New English Bible* appals them. Be that as it may, an old newspaper cutting we have reports the present Archbishop of Canterbury addressing the Society and saying, "present day life in Britain was no longer moulded by the Bible".

★

This was probably a shock for the BFBS which lives only for the Bible, and it must have been heartbreaking to hear Dr. Ramsey very pathetically pointing out that a hundred years ago nearly every home had its family Bible, and now alas! they were "damp and musty" obviously because nobody read them these days.

★

To make sure that the fight between Dick Tiger, the middleweight champion, and Gene Fulmer, a Mormon elder, in Nigeria the other week should not be stopped by rain, we were pleased to note that "rain doctors" were called in, and so successful were they that the rain held off, and the Mormon elder was thoroughly beaten. What have our sceptics to say to that? Why is it that Christian parsons, even with the aid of Jesus, are helpless when it comes to beating the rain—in summertime at least?

★

According to "The Observer" (August 11th) Catholics and Jews are going to discuss their differences at a World Jewish Congress meeting at Montreux. The idea is to examine the case of the Jews being guilty of the Crucifixion, which all good Christians have believed for nearly 2,000 years, and which most saintly Christians will believe as a fact whatever the outcome of the discussion. In any case, practically all Jews and all Christians believe that there really was a Crucifixion and that it was Jesus who was crucified.

★

The only people who have strenuously denied the "fact" are of course a number of Freethinkers whose examination of the story, as given in the Gospels—and there are no other sources—have led them to believe that, as there never was a Jesus, so there could never have been a Crucifixion; that the story is an allegorical literary invention; but it would be very difficult to get even a Jew to admit this. There *must* have been a Jesus, it says so in Holy Writ, and that settles the question for all time. One wonders of what use any meeting between Jews and Catholics can be? Just talk?

★

Our pious contemporary, the "Daily Mail" (August 10th), was not afraid to head an article, "A lot of the Bible is just plain wrong", the declaration of Canon J. Pearce-Higgins who had already shown some courage in attacking the immaculate 39 Articles. The Canon has at least gone now as far as declaring that "Some of the history is wrong, some of the details are obviously garbled" which, said better by Thomas Paine nearly 170 years ago, earned for him the undying hatred of most pious Christians.

★

But Canon Pearce-Higgins went even further. He maintained that the great Apostle of the Gentiles, St. Paul himself, "was completely wrong in his idea of a Second Coming"—and so on. The Canon accused his brethren

in Christ of repeating "parrot-wise" Biblical stories—"the old unhappy days and battles of long ago". It was all very sad. But he did not attempt to answer the question, the awful question—were Freethinkers right after all?

★

It was left for a mere parson, the Rev. O. Fielding Clarke, to turn on a "heretic" in the Anglican camp, the much better known Bishop of Woolwich, with a reply to *Honest to God* entitled, *For Christ's Sake*, the heading of a review in the *Daily Express* (August 9th). Mr. Clarke, we are told, "understands the difficulties of belief". This simply means that there are no difficulties of belief for him whatever. The reviewer contends that the "second half of the book is a masterly exposition of the positive case for Christianity", resting its case on the Resurrection. And that old myth has been exploded not only by unbelievers but by Christians! Anybody who can *prove* the Resurrection deserves the greatest honour this world of ours can give. In actual fact, it can only be swallowed these days with much difficulty on *faith*.

"GENERALIZATION IN ETHICS"

(Concluded from page 266)

that certain things are *undesirable*. This admission seems to me to be a hostage for the emotivists. And how, after admitting that the ultimate reference is desire, can Dr. Singer maintain that a moral principle is "necessary and fundamental" (page 64) and allows "of no exceptions" (page 103)?

This apparent defect is underlined in his attempt to justify certain moral principles. Apart from his justification of the Generalization Argument which he admits depends upon agreement as to what is desirable, his reasons for accepting certain principles, e.g. the Principle of Justification (page 105) and for rejecting other principles, e.g. the Obverse of the Principle of Consequences (page 186-189) are also in terms of what is desirable. Dr. Singer starts with a preconceived set of moral beliefs. The justification of certain principles which are essential to his thesis depends upon these preconceived beliefs. To someone who did not share Dr. Singer's moral outlook his arguments would be unconvincing.

This means that there is an important limitation on Dr. Singer's thesis. It is only of value to people who share his morality on certain important points. I think it very likely, for example, that Heraclitus, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche would recommend certain behaviour even if it meant the extinction of the human race. There is no place in Dr. Singer's system for such thinkers. This means that his system is incomplete, and must be by its very nature. Thus he can only object to ethical relativity *within* his own system; *outside* it, other systems could exist, and because of them, ethical relativity. By contrast, an emotive theory of ethics attempts to account for the various systems, and not merely a single one which is derived from a preconceived morality.

Hence I believe that Dr. Singer's book fails in an important respect. In another respect it is successful. It demonstrates how, in a given society where moral beliefs are widely shared, it is possible to organise a morality on a rational basis and give it a kind of objectivity. For this reason I believe the book is important and should be read by all people who seek a rational justification for morality.

AN ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS
By GEORGES ORY
(President of the Cercle Ernest Renan, Paris)
Translated by C. Bradlaugh Bonner
Price 2s. 6d., plus postage 4d.

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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, August 25th, 6.45 p.m.: PROFESSOR J. FREMLIN, "Why are Non-Scientists So Inhuman?"

Notes and News

ON JUNE 21st, we reported the three-week postponement by the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation of a talk by Professor D. F. Lawden on "A Material Basis for Mind". The talk, due to be broadcast on June 2nd, was considered "inappropriate at this time because of the impending death of the head of the Roman Catholic Church". Thanks to the help of our New Zealand friend, Arthur O'Halloran, we are now able to print Professor Lawden's talk with the permission of himself and the *New Zealand Listener*.

★
THE US Supreme Court's ruling that prayers and Bible reading in public (state) schools are unconstitutional, is being openly defied in some areas, according to the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* (6/8/63). Not surprisingly, defiance of the ruling has been "especially forthright" in southern states where, as the paper put it, "no politician stands to lose many votes by attacking the Supreme Court and defending the Bible". In Alabama, for instance, the State Board of Education has specifically made Bible reading part of the curriculum, while South Carolina's superintendent of education has notified teachers that they may "feel free" to continue classroom religious exercises, and Kentucky's state superintendent of public instruction has advised school officials to "Continue to read the Bible and pray until someone stops you".

★
IN NEW JERSEY, the state department of education "unofficially" notified all school boards that religious exercises must be discontinued, but the school board of Mahwah

(NJ) voted 5 to 4 to continue Bible reading and recitation of the Lord's Prayer. Likewise, though the Massachusetts state commissioner of education formally advised all school districts that the Supreme Court ruling clearly means that "the Lord's Prayer may not be recited, nor may there be a reading of the Bible for devotional or religious purposes", at least one town (Montagne) spurned the notice and recommended that religious exercises be continued. And in several states where authorities can see no legal way to continue prayers and Bible reading, "a search for substitutes is under way".

★
T. C. LETHBRIDGE has a "gift" for water dowsing and, said a *Daily Telegraph* reviewer (9/8/63), "a taste for the inexplicable", for which he provides "provocative explanations". His latest book, we are told, will be dismissed by materialists, but if you are prepared to pay a guinea for "little more than an extended monograph with sketches", the title is, *Ghost and Divining Rod*, and the publisher, Routledge. In it, you will learn, among other things, that water is not the only substance possessing static force which can influence the electrical fields of individuals, and that naiads, oreads and dryads were simply names for local fields of force indicating the unseen presence of supernatural beings. But please don't order from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop.

★
THERE ARE, as Geoffrey Moorhouse reminded us in *The Guardian* on August 14th, still a large number of monasteries and convents in this country: eight Anglican orders of monks and fifty of nuns; eight Roman Catholic orders for men and more than two hundred for women. And "nearly every one of them is deployed around the land in several communities". Not only do more women than men choose the religious life, they choose it at an earlier age, and Mr. Moorhouse recounted how a sister superior smiled, not because she was amused, but because she was encouraged by a letter from a girl of 14 who wanted to become a nun "because I don't want to waste a minute of God's time". This, to us, is the saddest aspect of "vocational" life: that girls should "see themselves in a habit in early adolescence"; renounce a world they never had the chance to know and vanities they never had the chance to gratify. But we should not forget either that, "even in the communities which interpret their rules most tolerantly", obedience "can make demands which sooner or later leave a small wreckage behind—novices who leave before taking final vows, scattered breakdowns, and even defections by those who are fully professed but who, one morning, get up and walk out".

★
IN HIS opening address to the congress of the World Union of Catholic Teachers in London on August 13th, Lord Craven said that children should be protected from "certain contaminations in this amoral world of today" and that Roman Catholics, therefore, were obliged to send their children to a school of their faith. "Innocence has a right to flower in a climate which is its own", he said. And ignorance, too, no doubt!

★
FINALLY, a sight we regret we missed. A Baptist minister with two dozen followers sang hymns outside a New York supper club, the "Sweet Chariot", in protest against what they called the "blaspheming of religious songs" in the club (*Daily Telegraph*, 8/8/63). As they sang *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, "waitresses from the club, many in scanty costumes, and entertainers, gathered outside to sing in a counter-demonstration". It was probably better than the show inside.

A Material Basis for Mind

(Concluded from page 267)

by building these particles into certain complex structures we could cause their fields of consciousness to interact in such a way as to generate an experience whose quality and intensity would be immeasurably superior to the quality and intensity of the experience associated with one single particle. Such a structure would correspond to what we call a brain; and the human brain would be but one amongst many possibilities.

My hypothesis therefore enables me to include the phenomenon of consciousness within the framework of physics. Furthermore, it eliminates the need for a dualistic approach to the universe, according to which mind and matter are substances of quite different types which nonetheless interact within any animal brain.

The familiar dichotomy between "mind" and "matter" has led to numerous difficulties in philosophy, and it's repugnant to scientists, who are continually being impressed by evidence of the essential unity of the world in which we live, and of which we ourselves are surely a part, no more and no less than the matter of which we are formed.

But to admit all this is not to assert that our nature is identical with that of a machine, whose design is based upon the laws of mechanics and electrodynamics alone. For, if all matter possesses mental characteristics, a material structure designed to emphasise this mental aspect would be a very different thing from a machine, whose structure takes advantage only of the mechanical and electrical aspects of matter.

Matter, in fact, is no longer to be thought of in the same light as previously, but as a substance whose many-sided nature is only just beginning to be appreciated. To my way of thinking, it detracts no whit from the dignity of a human being to recognise that he is nothing, apart from the matter of which he is composed; for this "matter" is a truly wonderful thing, imbued with qualities of so varied and remarkable a nature that it possesses a surer title to be considered the basis for our being than the nebulous spirit-stuff from which the "soul", of theological speculation, is supposed to be formed.

Thinking along these lines, it seems to me probable then that, in essence, matter has a mental nature. For there is only one matter structure of which each of us has direct experience and this is the matter which goes to form your brain and mine. All other matter is only perceived by us indirectly, via the senses.

But introspection suggests very strongly that this matter is of the nature of a combination of mental experiences. I shall accordingly put forward, somewhat tentatively, the view that all matter is of the nature of a continuing mental experience, and that when the primitive experiences which are the fundamental particles are caused to reinforce one another according to a well-designed scheme, a high-quality experience results which we refer to as a human being.

At the other extreme, a random collection of primitive experiences such as go to form such a thing as a billiard-table, only results in an overall experience the sum of whose quality is not significantly superior to that of its elements. In common parlance, the table is "dead".

To summarise my point of view, then, I would say that these latest biochemical discoveries reveal and emphasise the firm bonds which exist between us and the rest of nature. The self or soul is revealed as an illusion, each

man being in essence the matter of which his brain and body are composed; which, like any other material structures, are continuing mental experiences.

With the dissolution at death of the design relating the primitive particles forming a human body, the high-quality mental experience deteriorates, and is soon replaced by an experience at the level that we normally associate with so-called "dead-matter". Nature, together with the whole of mankind, constitutes a continuing mental experience, more intense at some points than at others, but having a basic unity.

This unity may be resolved into distinct objects and individuals for convenience in everyday human affairs, provided we appreciate that such an analysis destroys the reality by introducing artificial lines of division having no counterparts in nature.

This opinion runs directly contrary to orthodox Christian teaching, of course, but appears to me to be in accordance with Buddhist ideas and, from my limited knowledge of the subject, this seems to be the religious attitude best suited to complement the present scientific view of nature.

It needs some intellectual courage to substitute for the concept of a self which endures through a stream of experiences, a material brain which is, in its essence, a composite mental process—especially in the Western world, where the self enjoys so exalted a status. But the present explosion of biochemical knowledge forces us, I believe, to adopt this new view of our own nature and may, incidentally, provide us with an escape route from the religious desert of our times.

One last word: these ideas will probably prove unwelcome to a considerable body of my listeners, and some will question the propriety of my giving expression to opinions, however well-founded, which many will find profoundly disturbing. Those who have a vested interest in a particular view of human existence may also react unfavourably.

But any advance towards the truth can only be achieved—as always, in man's history—by the challenge of accepted views and the proposal of alternatives; and since man set out on his quest a few thousand years ago there has been little rest or comfort for the human mind. To oppose the statement of new theories on the grounds of the prevention of mental distress is accordingly to oppose the search for truth, and to choose mental stagnation.

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Any Answers?

"JOY BROKE the silence. 'John, I see now what my mother was suggesting when she enquired of me whether your own love for me was wholly pure and unselfish. For true love must be pure—absolutely above sex and filthiness before marriage. John, is your love for me as pure and as white as snow?'" This elevating excerpt is taken from the "Children's Corner"—yes, "Children's Corner"—of *The Messenger*, "A Monthly Magazine for the Family", published by the London City Mission (Vol. 15, No. 7). And the young readers are asked to tell "Uncle Remus" how they think that John should have replied.

A Soviet Book on the Origin of Christianity

By OTTO WOLFGANG

L'Origine du Christianisme by I. Lenzman (Moscow 1961), translation by L. Piatigorski.

GREAT RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS can have an individual founder; yet this is the exception. The prevalent ideas and fashions of a time are not the result of individual brainwaves or whims; they are the product of the material conditions in which the people have to live. In general, the social, political and intellectual processes of life are determined by the way in which people produce the material means of life. "It is not the consciousness of human beings which determines their existence, it is their social existence which determines their consciousness" (Marx).

It stands to reason, therefore, that Soviet science started with an analysis of the social conditions prevailing around zero of our traditional calendar, conditions which gave rise not only to Christianity but to several similar religious ideologies (e.g. the sects of the Dead Sea scrolls of Qumran).

Chattel slavery—the basis of antique society—had reached an impasse; exploitation wars had brought in a surplus of slaves who had no productive incentive. Together with the poor freemen whose labour had fallen into disrepute, they had to be maintained; this in turn led to more wars for plunder and soil. The Roman Empire—whose inhabitants, unable to think of any alternative to slave labour, were without hope to improve the living conditions of the lower strata—covered the whole known world, and the Emperor was almighty. In consequence, individual deities—such as Isis, Mithras, Jesus—took on a world-wide, universal aspect. Amongst the destitute masses messianic hopes arose that a mighty Lord would soon come to deliver them from a lot which, for lack of organisation among the multi-national slaves, they themselves were unable to destroy.

This impotent hope is most clearly expressed in the Book of Revelation, the oldest part of the canon. The Gospels being the latest composition, it can be said that in general the sequence of the canon is an inversion of its chronological origin.

A century ago already the Tübingen circle of F. C. Baur had established that the principal parts of Revelation were written in 68 AD; in it Jesus—partially identified with the mystical Lamb—is a purely cosmic hero, existing since the foundation of the world (18, 8). This work, sizzling with hate against Rome, the world oppressor, proves: (a) that it was composed during the Jewish War, i.e. a national revolution drowned in blood; (b) that the first communities of the new faith gathered in a string of about seven towns in Asia Minor, despite a folklore connected with Palestine; that (c) there is no mention of a Messiah having come down to live among human beings. For these reasons many clerics—down to Luther and Zwingli—opposed the inclusion of Revelation in the canon, particularly because, since the proselytising amongst the wealthier strata of society, the attitude of Christendom towards the Roman authorities had changed.

If we consider what differentiates the believers in Revelation from the Qumran sect, we can understand why the latter could not survive. The Essenes believed in a human "Teacher of Righteousness", who had suffered but was expected to come to life again. The Lamb with 7 eyes and 7 horns—called Jesus in a few chapters only—is a purely astro-cosmic image "existing since the beginning

of time". And whilst the first Judeo-Christian communities had no priestcraft as such, the Essenes added to the existing ritual and had a rigid theocratic discipline. Early Christianity became popular just because of its lack of ritual, whilst the Essenes disappeared together with the kingpin of Hebrew existence—the Temple.

No part of scripture has remained unadulterated; but Irenaeus (120-200) avers that the text of Revelation was completed at the time of Domitian, i.e. about 95 AD. Irenaeus was also the first to mention the four gospels. The hypothesis that the first one had been translated into Greek from a Hebrew original is without any foundation. The fourteen epistles said to be written by St. Paul (their oldest papyrus, going back to c. 200 AD was discovered in 1931 and shows great divergences in both text and dogma) were messages to the community nuclei in order to keep the messianic hopes alive and combat growing currents of doubt and heresy. (The Jews, whose position had visibly deteriorated, never believed that the Messiah had already appeared.)

The Epistles mark the development of a novel dogma, a change in the social structure of the communities and increasing opposition to Judaism; whilst the early Epistles still address the slaves, freedmen and artisans, the later ones (Ephesians, Philippians, Thessalonians and Colossians) declare that all men are equal "in God", irrespective of their social or ethnic status. In this connection the author makes the unjustified reproach that early Christianity consoled the slaves with pious words ("all are equal in the face of the Lord") but never attempted to do away with slavery as such. However, if anybody in antiquity could have imagined a working society without slaves, then history and its social outcrop—our religious ideologies—would have taken a quite different turn.

Whilst the oldest Epistles appealed to the slaves to be good workers, and to the masters to treat their slaves as human beings, the later Epistles merely warn the slaves of their obligation to obey their masters (Eph. 6, 5; Col. 3, 22). At the same time—now, after the smashing of the Jewish revolt—the Roman authorities are assured of Christian loyalties whilst the Jews are declared the enemies of God and all mankind (1. Thess. 2, 15).

So the wheel had gone full circle. Revelation preached hatred against Rome, and asserted that only the members of the twelve tribes of Israel were eligible for salvation. Now, after the suppression of Bar Cochba's insurrection in Judea (132-136), the Jews had to pay heavily for their stubborn struggle against Rome and the Christians went out of their way to demonstrate their loyalty as Roman citizens and enemies of the Jews (Romans, 13, 1-5).

After this volte-face Christianity was eligible to become the state religion.

There is no record in the New Testament of what the Christians did during the Jewish War; this in itself corroborates the fact that they originated not in Judea but in the Greco-Roman diaspora (Alexandria, Greece, Ionia), where they found sufficient tolerance for their new creed to develop. Inside the rigid theocracy of Judea it would have been nipped in the bud.

In the second half of the 2nd century, seeing that the messianic hopes remained unfulfilled, it became necessary to compose the gospels ("according to" certain "Evangelists") of which there existed hundreds upon hundreds of various versions. Every locality had its own literature,

among which the Council of Nicaea made its choice for the canon (4th century).

By that time Jesus, the Christ, had become a human ancestor, just as in the Old Testament the indigenous deities had been transposed into human heroes and "patriarchs". Having traced the beginnings of pre-Christian ideas in Jewish and pagan writers (such as Philon of Alexandria and the Roman courtier Seneca), Lenzman says: "No religious system has ever been invented by a 'founder' nor has it been the result of divine revelation (as the clerics want to make believe): all religions are the traceable result of historical conditions existing at a certain period in a certain territory from which certain pre-conditions allowed them to spread. In competition against rival systems, they adopt from them what boosts their proselytising popularity. Christianity is no exception: its similarity to other religions, its plagiarisms from older cults only tend to underline its natural origin. All Christian dogmas can easily be derived from the socio-historical conditions as they existed at the time of their inception; and from then onwards, these ideologies have developed together and in conformity with the development of material conditions in Western society".

CORRESPONDENCE

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

GOSPEL ORIGINS

If Mr. Cutner is not ignorant about Gospel Origins, he is being wilfully obtuse. Neither can he pass the word "ignorant" back to me, who have spent forty years of research in this field and know every single reference and source available, and in the original languages.

What Eusebius (4th century) thought of Papias is quite irrelevant. What counts is that Papias makes reference to the Gospels, notably Mark and Matthew. Contemporary with him we have Jewish rabbis speaking of the Gospel (Evangelion), and not much later a pagan philosopher Celsus refers to the precepts of Jesus "in the so-called Gospels". Justin speaks of the Gospels under the name of Memoirs of the Apostles, and quotes many sayings of Jesus, especially in his *Apologies*. Justin's Jew Trypho did not accuse the Christians of inventing Jesus, but of inventing things about him. The historicity of Jesus was never questioned by second-century Jewish authorities.

Boldly, Mr. Cutner defies anyone to tell us how or where the Gospels were written. This was not the issue, but the antiquity of the Gospels, which Mr. Cutner now admits. Certainly we do not yet know "where", but to an appreciable extent we do know "how". Honest tackling of evidence is worthy; but frivolity is both out of place and unscientific. When it comes to knocking down poor Aunt Sally, I can only deplore such unscholarly and ungentlemanly conduct, and leave to Mr. Cutner his pyrrhic victory.

HUGH J. SCHONFIELD.

TRAGEDY AND MARXISM

Marxists wrangle interminably, Eva Ebury concedes, but never, she exclaims triumphantly, about the "Tool" being "the Dynamic of Social Progress". Hardly surprising if "even bourgeois science" has perceived the obvious. Eva Ebury's "sole necessary axiom of Dialectical Materialism" is not then, apparently, the sole prerogative of Marxists. Can it be that she selects an obvious agreed axiom of sociology and claims it for one social philosophy?

It can; and in doing so she robs that social philosophy of any uniqueness that it might possess. After all, it is styled *Dialectical Materialism*, so presumably the dialectic is a "necessary" feature of it. Or is that a wrangling point?

RICHARD BARRY.

WHAT IS GOD?

To me it seems just as foolish to pretend that the word "God" has no meaning, as it is to insist that the word must have only that meaning attached to it by some religious sect. The infinite variety of meanings which can be attached to the word certainly creates problems for the logician, but these problems cannot really be solved merely by condemning the word as a "meaningless symbol".

From the religious point of view I call myself an atheist, because I have come to reject all orthodox attempts to demonstrate the nature and existence of God.

From the moral point of view I call myself an atheist because

I have come to regard morality as a purely human necessity which does not require the support of any supernatural being, and for which the existence or non-existence of God seems totally irrelevant. I would say that belief in God does not make people any better or worse than they are without this belief. Many good people do believe in God, and many equally good people do not believe in any God. And, of course, many bad people believe in God.

But from the point of view of logical metaphysics, I cannot call myself an atheist until I am finally convinced that there is no Absolute and Eternal Being, whose eternal life consists in the creation of the phenomenal world and all that it contains.

I do not think that I have ever really thought it necessary to regard God as either good or bad. That, I suppose is why God is to me quite useless as the foundation of any moral order.

PETER P. CROMMELIN.

MONTAIGNE

J. M. Robertson, in a further quotation by Mr. Papps, says of Montaigne that "despite his professions of conformity he did not hold the ordinary Christian beliefs".

Having regard to my orthodox extracts taken at random from only four of Montaigne's 107 essays would it be unreasonable to contend that despite his unorthodox "habit of mind" he did "hold the ordinary Christian beliefs"?

J. M. Robertson does not suggest a reason for Montaigne's ambivalence.

S. G. KNOTT.

[Mr. Papps writes: "I can only repeat that Mr. Knott should consult Robertson's 'various studies of Montaigne', which he clearly has not done. Nor has he commented on the fact that the Essays were placed on the Index.]

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