

# The Freethinker

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NOTHING IN RECENT WEEKS has been more astonishing than the news that Princess Irene, a member of the House of Orange, has been received into the Roman Catholic Church and is to marry Prince Carlos, pretender to the Spanish throne. No European country has endured more suffering, persecution, and brutal terrorism than Holland (then the Spanish Netherlands), under the totalitarian rule of Philip of Spain and his two henchmen, the Dukes of Alva and Parma. And no rulers ever put up a more determined resistance than the men of the House of Orange, William the Silent and his successors. It seems a tragic sequel to the illustrious story of a gallant people that a Princess of their Royal house should now embrace the faith responsible for soaking her country in blood. And that is not an exaggeration. In her autobiography the late Queen Wilhelmina wrote of William, that "he was supported by a small and impoverished people, but a people ready for all sacrifices, because it had lost its rights and liberties through the tyranny of a merciless oppressor". The sentence of outlawry on William issued by the Spanish monarch reads like the outburst of a petulant child, the vital extract being, "we promise to anyone who has the heart to free us of this pest, and who shall deliver him dead or alive, or take his life, the sum of 25,000 crowns in gold . . .". Well, after five attempts to win this blood-money, Parma's fanatical Catholic agent Balthazar Gérard, posing as a Calvinist, succeeded in fatally shooting the Prince on July 10th, 1584. An inscription on his tomb in the New Church at Delft reads, "As long as he lived he was the guiding star of a whole brave nation". How short are memories!

**In the Corridors of World Power**  
By luring into its ranks a wealthy and aristocratic minority, the Roman Church can establish valuable connections with governments which can secure it many advantages, both economic, and educational, though often causing bitter conflict in the countries concerned. Therefore those who hold, or are likely to hold, high office, have a certain responsibility towards the people of their territories, and should not lightly surrender the ordering of their lives into the hands of a reactionary priesthood tending to be restrictive of progress, liberty of thought, and ideas. Moreover, their example is often followed by the emotionally-inclined and under-educated members of the public. In the "corridors of world power" you will find Catholics in key positions, ready to manipulate the reins of government in favour of their Church. Therein lies the danger in this latest development in Holland.

**Freedom or Catholic Power?**  
You cannot have both. In 1559 the Netherlands was the chief danger area in Europe owing to the spread of Lutheran doctrines, so in that year, to counter these, Charles the Fifth introduced the Inquisition there to deal with the heretics. Previously, in 1380, Groote had formed a secular Brotherhood (*Fraterhuis*), which greatly in-

fluenced Thomas á Kempis and Erasmus, and which caused the Netherlands to be more susceptible to the New Learning of the 16th century. Considerable opposition was therefore aroused by the king's repressive edicts and laws, concerning which Philip of Spain wrote, "I would sooner lose all my States, and a hundred lives if I had them, than rule over heretics". So the terror of Alva began in the Netherlands. Philip wrote in a letter to him,

"we think the best course will be to encourage by money and secret favour, the Catholics of the North, and to help those in Ireland to take up arms against the heretics . . .". Alva needed no encouragement. In 1567 he set up his tribunal, the

"Council of Blood", and when its work was completed he claimed 18,600 people put to death. The torture and cruelty was such that by 1569 all opposition appeared to be crushed, and Spain triumphant. It may not be without significance that in that year Breughel painted his *Massacre of the Innocents*.

## The Siege of Haarlem

In 1572 however, the revolt flared up again owing to the successful activities of the "Beggars of the Sea", who were using their ships to harass Spanish ports, and had captured Brill. Alva again marched through the land, killing, burning, and terrorising. During this time the siege of Haarlem became notable in the history of warfare for the courage and endurance of its citizens, both men and women, against terrible odds. Every time the walls were breached they speedily repaired them, even throwing into the gaps statues stripped from the churches, which filled the attackers with horror, although they had no objection to slaughtering men, women, and children in cold blood. After months of seige, all attempts at relief having failed, those brave defenders were obliged to surrender, but under a promise of pardon from Alva's son Don Frederic. That, however, Alva would not allow. The garrison was immediately slain, and five executioners were kept at work continually until they were exhausted, when the remaining victims were tied together two by two and flung into Haarlem Lake to drown. Such was the farce of pardon!

## Where Heresy Built Its Nest

The small town of Naarden which could put up little resistance met the same fate. There the people were herded into the Gast Huis Church (acting Town Hall), and slaughtered. Afterwards the whole town was systematically burnt street by street. A Spanish comment on that episode was, "Naarden was chastised by Divine Providence for having been the first town in Holland where heresy built its nest" (Mendoza). And so it continued: after Naarden, Alkmaar. "If I take Alkmaar", Alva wrote to Philip, "I am resolved not to leave a single creature alive; the knife shall be put to every throat". However, owing to the Prince of Orange's decision to let the sea in, Alkmaar was saved. In the same year when Zutphen was captured by Don Frederic, Alva sent orders not to leave a single

## IEWS AND OPINIONS

### The House of Orange and the Catholic Church

By ELIZABETH COLLINS



man alive, and to burn every house to the ground. In almost literal obedience to that order, citizens were killed in the streets, hanged from the trees, and turned out into the fields stripped naked, to freeze in the winter night! Every canal, every river, in what was the Spanish Netherlands, became the graves of those who resisted the Catholic Alva and his Spanish master.

#### Leyden University

The sufferings of the people of Leyden, by famine and all the hardships of a long siege until the city was relieved by the piercing of the dykes, are recalled today by the presence in that city of the famous University. As a reward for their courage and constancy under their heroic burgomaster Van der Werf, William of Orange offered them either exemption from taxes or a university. They, to their honour, chose the university. Today the struggle is not yet ended between Catholics, Protestants, Free-thinkers, and others, one of the main points of contention being, as always, education. With a Princess turned Catholic, the pressure will be intensified and resistance diminished. In the last talk I had with the late Joseph

McCabe we discussed the Inquisition (the present Holy Office), in relation to the above countries, and I well remember his words, that, "given the power they would do the same again". Those who fall for Catholic propaganda, and allow themselves to become inveigled in that spider's web of superstition and theatrical mumbo-jumbo, are in process of giving them that power. It has been said that the Princess's change of faith is in the interests of Christian unity; this talk of unity I believe to be just a policy of expediency on the part of the Vatican to which it has been driven by the pressure of Humanist and Freethought ideas spreading over the world. To counter those ideas Catholics seek to entrench themselves in palaces and the seat of governments, the vital corridors of power. It was vital, then, that the Dutch government should insist on Princess Irene's renunciation of her right of succession.

It may be argued that the above past history is best forgotten. I cannot agree. A country's sturdy resistance to tyranny should always be remembered by its sons and daughters. Only so can the lamp of liberty be kept alight.

## Mithraism

By AKIBA

DEAD RELIGIONS have no advocates. Contemporary writers preserve only contemporary prejudices and objective reporting of a rival religion is unknown in Church history. To place a dead religion back into its historical context requires the approach of a rational historian. And Mithraism deserves comprehensive study, if only to prove that all religions have a common substratum, and that the victory of one rather than another is determined less by its theological merits than by its value to the contending classes of society.

Mithraism enjoyed widespread popularity in the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era, the name Mithras coinciding with a common noun in Sanskrit which means "friends" or "friendship", and in Avestan "compact". Right from the earliest times, the Mithraic concept appears to have been an essentially ethical one. It became a world religion—or at least a contender for this position—when its diffusion through the Roman Army led to a temporary conquest of state power and imperial patronage.

Our knowledge of Mithraism, or to be more precise, the doctrines and rituals of Mithraism, is largely drawn from the inscriptions and monuments discovered in the Mithraea, the interpretation of which is contributed by ancient texts, especially those of Christian apologists. A few years ago, a Mithraic temple was uncovered in the City of London, and this has added a local significance to the accumulation and interpretation of the evidence available concerning ceremonies and ritual practices.

The close resemblances between the evolving Christian Church and Mithraism of the third and fourth centuries brought about an antagonism born less out of doctrinal or theological divergence, than out of the uncomfortable similarity and propinquity of the two religions. The two religions conducted their propagation simultaneously, and their diffusion took place under analogous conditions. The number of Mithraic monuments that have been left tends to strengthen the view that, at least in the epoch of the Severi, the adepts of this Oriental-Persian religion were more numerous than the disciples of Christ.

Perhaps the deepest and sharpest cause for the conflict between Mithras and Christ was that both religions proselytised amongst the "inferior classes" of society. Their

endeavours were not addressed to the cultivated minds, but to the masses, and the spread of Mithraism was rapid, a natural product of social and political factors such as the importation of slaves, the transportation of troops from one region of the empire to another and the general transfers of public functionaries and officials.

The closeness of the character of both religions is remarked upon in Cumont's classic work, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, as follows:

The adepts of both formed secret conventicles, closely united, the members of which gave themselves the name of "brothers". The rites which they practised offered numerous analogies. The sectaries of the Persian God, like the Christians, purified themselves by baptism; received by a species of confirmation, the power necessary to combat the spirits of evil; and expected from a Lord's supper, salvation of body and soul. Like the latter, they also held Sunday sacred, and celebrated the birth of the Son on the 25th of December, the same day on which Christmas has been celebrated, since the fourth century at least. They both preached a categorical system of ethics, regarding asceticism as meritorious, and counted among their principal virtues abstinence and continence, renunciation and self control . . . They both placed a Flood at the beginning of history; they both assigned as the source of their traditions a primitive revelation; they both finally believed in the immortality of the soul, in a last judgment and in a resurrection of the dead, consequent upon a final conflagration of the universe".

Many of the later "heresies" which broke out within the body of the Catholic Church, or emerged as local contenders for allegiance (such as the Manichees, Albigenses, and the Cathari) testify to the massive imprint which Mithraism left on the history, structure and practice of Christianity.

There can be little doubt that the same combination of social and political factors which brought about the demise and absorption of Mithraism, will eventually prevail against the present dominant world religions. Reason will emerge triumphant, as man frees himself from fear and superstition.

#### ADOPTION

A NUMBER of local Adoption Societies have stated that they are willing to consider agnostic and atheist adopters in their own area. Readers who desire further information are asked to write to the Secretary of the National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.



# St. Paul and Christian Origins

By F. A. RIDLEY

GEORGE MOORE'S *The Book Kerith*, is certainly one of the finest literary works in the English language to concern itself with a religious subject from an explicitly free-thinking point of view. For this ironic masterpiece gave an original interpretation of Christian origins, and its two principal characters, though sometimes described as fictitious themselves, do not usually feature in works of avowed fiction. They are Jesus of Nazareth and St. Paul.

Briefly, the plot of *The Book Kerith* centres around the post mortem adventures of Jesus, not, be it hastily added, in the next world but in this. For, taking up an ancient Jewish tradition (referred to in the fourth Gospel), Moore relates how "our Lord" after being taken down from the cross, is rescued by his disciples and eventually resuscitated. Subsequently, the renovated Jesus becomes a shepherd in an Essene community (a modern touch this, since the book was written long before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls). Here, as the years pass by, he is met by an itinerant missionary named Paul, who eloquently seeks to convert Jesus to a belief in his own resurrection and subsequent ascension to Heaven!

After a vain attempt to disillusion the ardent missionary, Jesus finally departs to India with a group of Indian magi, leaving Paul preaching "Jesus and Him crucified", and announcing His miraculous appearance on the road to Damascus. Such is a brief outline of this remarkable book, written with typical charm by its distinguished Irish author, culminating in a dramatic crescendo of mounting irony and—when considered as literature—not far below the satiric masterpieces of Voltaire and Anatole France.

To critics of the orthodox view of Christian origins, George Moore's preface is as interesting as the novel itself. For, he relates that his interest in the problem of Christian origins was first aroused when still a child. He overheard a conversation at his father's dinner table, where an Irish circle, which included a bishop, were discussing the problem presented by Christian origins. The conclusion to which they eventually came (with the assent apparently of the bishop) was that without St. Paul and his indefatigable missionary journeys, Christianity would have died out.

According therefore to this view, which was widely current in 19th century critical circles, Jesus—even granting his historical existence—was only a kind of figurehead for the new religion. The man who actually made it a going concern was Paul of Tarsus, who thus qualified as the "second founder of Christianity", a "founder" at least in some ways more important than its titular founder. *The Book Kerith* was actually written in 1917. Some years later, the ex-atheist, Mussolini—in a speech to the Italian parliament, which aroused great indignation at the Vatican—declared that Christianity, like the Essenes, would have quickly died out had not Peter and Paul acclimatised it in Rome.

How far today is the above supposition true? In point of fact, it seems a rather over-simplified view. All that we know for certain about Paul is contained in ecclesiastical tradition, of which the oldest form is to be found in the Acts of the Apostles, dubiously ascribed (along with the third Gospel) to an otherwise unknown compiler called Luke. In its present form, Acts dates from probably at least a century after the traditional date of Paul's death, AD 64. Other second century writings, notably the Epistle to the Corinthians (dubiously ascribed to Clement

of Rome and originally included in some early editions of the New Testament) also make explicit references to Paul, but this later ecclesiastical tradition differs from—indeed on some important points is diametrically opposed to—certain statements supposed to be made by Paul himself in the Epistles. For example, according to Luke, Paul worked in perfect harmony with Peter and the original disciples of Jesus, whereas in what purports to be his own Epistle, Paul fiercely denounces the Galilean apostles, Peter, James, etc.

Similarly, whilst Paul is represented as writing his most important Epistle (that monumental treatise on Catholic theology as Albert Kalthoff has aptly termed it), Romans, and whilst—according to Clement—Paul died an edifying death along with Peter, the fact seems to be that the Romans knew nothing of Paul until about a century afterwards.

Neither *The Shepherd of Hermas* (also included in some early editions of the New Testament) nor the several works of Justin Martyr dating (as is clear from internal evidence) from after the middle of the 2nd century, mentions Paul nor his (self-styled) Epistle to the Romans, nor even demonstrates any acquaintance with or acceptance of, the peculiarly Pauline doctrines that it was the express purpose of the Epistles to establish. Now Hermas is stated by an almost contemporary document (*The Muratorium Fragment*), to have been the brother of the then Roman bishop, Pius, whilst Justin Martyr was the leading apologist of the Roman Church. How are we to account for all this? Who and what was Paul? Was he really the "second founder of Christianity"? Was he even a Christian at all? Some might even ask was there such a person, though I would not go so far as this last query, for I do not think that conflicting traditions necessarily disprove anyone's existence as an historical person. In point of fact, more often than not, they tend to establish it.

What does seem to emerge clearly from this welter of discordant tradition is that the Paul of history was an important Gnostic teacher in the middle of the first century who, like many of his contemporaries, taught a religious revelation of a divine Christ who had appeared to him in a vision traditionally located on the Damascus road. Later he formed a theological school of Gnostics who, collectively (in some cases perhaps under Paul's own inspiration) published a *corpus* of Pauline epistles which, after being extensively edited or bowdlerised by the Catholic Church, are now included in the New Testament.

Paul himself and his immediate disciples were Gnostics, who knew nothing of any earthly Jesus and were on very bad terms (as is evident from Galatians) with the earliest Galilean preachers of such an historical Jesus "whom he did not preach". Long after Paul's death the Gnostic, Marcion, made a collection of his writings and introduced them into Christian circles. Marcion himself was excommunicated in 141, but the Catholic Church first edited then accepted, the Pauline *corpus* as the basis for its New Testament. It even forged new Epistles (Timothy, Titus, etc.) to bring Paul into line with current Catholic orthodoxy. Christianity is, accordingly an amalgamation between the Pauline Christ and the Galilean Jesus: the one divine, the other at least professedly historical. Paul's more intransigent Gnostic followers went on making trouble for the Church for a long time. In the canonical

(Concluded on page 63)



## This Believing World

The Pope's pilgrimage to the Holy Land was fine publicity for the Vatican, for it filled columns in the newspapers of the world. The furore it caused has died down a little, but the conversion to the Roman faith of a Princess—one from a rigid Protestant family—must mean the sweet nectar of more publicity for the Vatican.

★

Perhaps the only reason for the conversion is that Princess Irene of Holland is marrying a Roman Catholic, though in any case we cannot help wondering whether she has read the famous work of J. L. Motley, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and its terrible account of the Spanish Catholic thug, the Duke of Alva, when he tried to conquer Holland in 1567-73 treating prisoners and civilians alike with ferocious cruelty, as Mrs. Collins's article this week shows.

★

Our cordial contemporary "Psychic News" in its number for February 8th, has managed to obtain "the most amazing seance pictures ever taken", as a heading informs us. They make the famous photographs of Sir William Crookes and Florrie Cook look like the throw-outs of a 10-year-old amateur. We are given seven large reproductions of veritable "materialisations" of spirits, most of them the inevitable nun in what appears to be a white habit and not the usual dark one. As a proof of their absolute genuineness, all the faces are discreetly hidden.

## Dog and God

FOR MANY PEOPLE in England both Dog and God are sacred, and these good folk must have been rocked when Rumer Godden's *Chinese Puzzle* was published in 1936 by Peter Davies. I found this book only the other day on a second-hand stall, and I think it deserves a word or two as memorial to Miss Godden's courage.

The story is a fantasy about a mandarin who is reborn in an English home as a pekingese. The peke, consequently, is particularly intelligent. He realises, sooner than most puppies, that dogs compare favourably with men, indeed they approach very close to man's idea of God. "Their Qualities are those the Saints strove for; Truth, Devotion, Single-Heartedness and Faith. Their Creed is Simplicity, instinctively they are wise, and yet, by some inverse Process, they are rated lower than Man, just as the Letters of their Name spell God yet are reversed".

Now it happens that in their Secret Spirits most adult dogs know this. The good dog believes that "One Day a Messiah will be born to Dog-Dom, a Dog, with the Body and Creed of a Dog but the Spirit of a Man. HE-WHO-WILL-COME, the Messiah whom they call HE-WHO-WILL COME, will reinstate them, then they will regain their Equality with Man, be freed from Worship, and spell their Name as God".

The puppy wonders if he himself can be the Messiah; but when he tries to speak to grown-up dogs about this, they growl and tell him not to be blasphemous. One old dog is more patient and takes the trouble to point out to the peke that he is only a Foreigner. "There is no mention of HE-WHO-WILL-COME being British", the puppy replies with dignity; "up to now there have been no British Messiahs".

So it is all a problem for a little dog; but what a headache it must have been for dog-doting vicars in 1936. Brave Miss Godden!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Every one of these remarkable proofs of genuine spirits is vouched for by nineteen doctors who "arranged all the apparatus" and applied "the most stringent conditions". Five mediums were employed, and they were all "strapped and padlocked to chairs". And in spite of this, the "spirit forms" passed "through iron bars of cages". We wondered at first where all this happened? It was actually in Brazil, and what more proof need be asked for?

★

Canon Hugh Montefiore once a Jew, but now a convinced convert appears quite hurt because an invitation to speak at a Jewish meeting has been withdrawn (*Daily Mail*, February 1st). He is said to have been making converts "left, right and centre"—which appears to us to be rather a tall story. Are any parsons making converts life, right and centre, these days? He was to have spoken at the Inter-University Jewish Federation, a student body, but it has taken a dislike to his missionary activities.

★

On the other hand, Somerset Maugham, among the greatest of our living novelists, in an interview (*Sunday Express*, January 26th), clearly declared—and at the age of 90 too—"I do not know whether God exists or not. None of the arguments that has been adduced to prove his existence carries conviction . . ." And he added, "death is inevitable". What arguments out of his primitive theology can Canon Montefiore bring to "convert" a man like Somerset Maugham? The out-of-date "evidences" of Christianity?

## THEATRE

### "The Bacchæ"

EURIPIDES, as the Mermaid Theatre programme reminds us, was a sceptic. His last play, *The Bacchæ*, which the Mermaid is now presenting, confirms this. Its subject-matter is religion, but its concern is with human beings, not with the gods. And it is for this reason that it retains its importance after two thousand four hundred years.

*The Bacchæ* is essentially a study in religious fanaticism, which is likely, alas, to be with us for a long time to come. The particular faith is the Dionysian, but the lesson of the play can—and should—be applied to others. And it has special relevance to Christianity. "We are born again!" "We drink Him down in the wine. He comes alive in us!" cry the devotees.

Pentheus, King of Thebes might condemn these as "sick notions" and "drivel", but what hope has he of reasoning with those filled with the holy spirit; who feel the wonderful force working within them? Even his grandfather regards religion as a "useful lie", until it drives his daughter to murder her son. Then, too late, the truth comes to him. "You had no minds left", he shouts. "Dionysos was in possession".

*The Bacchæ* of Euripides, as the programme again reminds us, is quite unlike the pictures of Titian and Rubens, or Keats's "god of breathless cups and chirping mirth". It is, in fact, one of the greatest tragedies of all time, a superb play that powerfully moves and affects us today.

At the Mermaid, David Myerscough Jones's set, Ariane Gastambide's costumes, Bill Eyden's drum- and Nicholas Danby's organ-playing do much to heighten the impact, and the chorus, for once, is credible. Barrie Ingham is an impressive Dionysos, and the play is well directed by Bernard Miles.

COLIN MCCALL.



# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, February 23rd, 6.45 p.m.: J. B. DURK (Catholic Evidence Guild), "The Existence of God".  
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, February 25th, 7.30 p.m.: WILLIAM OUSBY, "Psychological Aids to Personality Integration".  
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday February 23rd, 6.30 p.m.: W. H. CLARKSON, "Man's Humanity to Man".  
Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, February 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: Open Discussion.  
Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, February 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: CANON D. PEARCE-HIGGINS, MA, "The Evidence for Survival After Death".  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, February 23, 11 a.m.: JOHN BURROWS, "Welfare State or Supermarket?".  
Wales and Western Branch NSS (Bute Town Community Centre), Thursday, February 27th, 7.30 p.m.: "Political Forum" with Conservative, Liberal, Welsh Nationalist, Labour and Communist speakers.

## Notes and News

ON FEBRUARY 9TH, part of the BBC Sunday night programme *Dig This Rhubarb* was devoted to "Shades of Doubt", as expressed by various well-known figures of the last hundred years. First we had Darwin's rejection of Christianity in his (unabridged) *Autobiography*, then Chartist Thomas Cooper deciding during a period of imprisonment that "I'll pray no more". Past literary figures like George Eliot and Robert Louis Stevenson led naturally to distinguished present-day veteran writers E. M. Forster and Somerset Maugham. Forster's Christianity "quickly and quietly disappeared" while he was at Cambridge. Somerset Maugham was more direct than in the *Sunday Express* interview (see *This Believing World*), viz.: "I do not believe in God. I see no need for such an idea".

AMID WHAT it described as "mounting tension", the *Daily Telegraph* reported (4/2/64) that "venerable priests" had agreed the previous day that the lost but now recovered

hair of Mohammed was genuine. India's new Minister without Portfolio, Mr. Laibahadur Shastri, had, we are told, "gambled" on the priestly inspection of the three-inch-long hair, against the advice of his officials. And, inside the mosque, when the moment came to open the casket containing the relic, the chief priest's hands "trembled so violently" that he had to ask a colleague to complete the task. "The continuous chanting of prayers turned into wailing and sobbing", the *Telegraph* said, but "One by one the leading priests bent over the phial, straightened to hold it against the light, then nodded their acceptance". And, "A wave of incredulous relief swept through the crowds in and around the mosque". It's amazing what a few nods can do.



THE FEBRUARY issue of the always interesting *Anarchy* is devoted to "Arms of the Law", and includes an article on the notorious "brick" case by the man actually accused of carrying a piece of brick during the protests against King Paul and Queen Frederica of the Hellenes. The writer is Donald Room, cartoonist of *Peace News*, and he takes us chronologically through his experiences at the hands of the police—and especially of a Detective-Sergeant later said to be suffering from mental illness. The piece of brick was a "plant" but, fortunately for Mr. Room, a ham-fisted one. Had it been placed in the defendant's pocket the case might well have resulted in a miscarriage of justice. As it was a forensic chemist was able to show that the dirt in Mr. Room's pockets contained not a trace of brick dust, and summonses have now been issued against the Sergeant and three constables. *Anarchy* is obtainable, price 2s., from Freedom Press, 17a Maxwell Road, London, S.W.6.



PETER LENNON, in a further letter to *The Guardian* (12/2/64) following his series of articles on censorship in Ireland (Views and Opinions, 7/2/64), announced that the paper had received more supporting than hostile letters and that he "personally received a number of letters which were, almost without exception, *entirely favourable*". But, more important, an Irish paper, *The Southern Star* of Cork, with a circulation of 19,000, had courageously republished Mr. Lennon's articles in full, accompanied by an approving editorial. Another Irish provincial paper, *The Kerryman*, is also carrying a series of six articles "highly critical" of what Mr. Lennon called "our 43-year-old 'fledging democracy'".



THE SAME DAY (12/2/64) *The Guardian* published a number of letters on "The Catholic Doctor's Dilemma", in response to an article by Michael Winstanley on the birth-control pill. Two from women were especially good. Can anyone doubt, asked Madeleine Simms, "that the first duty of the Catholic GP is to tell every new patient coming on to his list what his religious views are, and how these affect his practice of medicine?" Mrs. Anthea Cadoux-Hudson expressed her sorrow for Roman Catholic women, and asked if it was their sole role in living "to produce a child every other year or live in a convent". This "medieval choice" is simply not appropriate for the twentieth century, Mrs. Cadoux-Hudson said, "even if the wishes of the women themselves are never to be considered". Mr. R. F. Mercer, however, saw no doctors, but only Mr. Winstanley's, dilemma. In the same way that Catholic judges grant divorces though believing them to be wrong, so should Catholic doctors "fall in line" if the National Health Service and the British Medical Association officially requested that the pill and contraceptives be made available to patients.



# Soap and Civilisation

By EVELYN INGLIS

(Concluded from page 56)

The sometimes poetic art of copywriting has always found soap a rewarding subject for eulogy. In *The Dublin Journal* of 1741, an advertisement extols "an excellent beautifying soap for washing of Ladies . . . made of the juice of Herbs and boiled in Asses' milk . . . it will make them as Fair as Alabaster".

In the 18th century, however, cleanliness in England was to some extent discouraged by the government, for a heavy tax on soap was enforced. In spite of a tax, which at times rose to 3d. a lb. (the cost of making the soap itself), the returns showed a marked national desire to become cleaner. The national exchequer benefited by £1,126,000 from this source in 1852.

Nevertheless, it was during this period that some of the pioneers in large-scale soap manufacture first began production—Andrew Pears in 1789, R. S. Hudson soon after 1830, and W. H. Lever in 1884. *The Times*, in 1845, was glad to note that an experiment "at the Eastern Asylum for the Houseless Poor has most satisfactorily proved that the very lowest of the poor will gladly avail themselves of facilities for personal cleanliness". Production was greatly advanced by the chemical discoveries of Michel Chevreul, and Nicholas Leblanc who found that soda could be made from common salt. With the opening up of Africa and South-East Asia, vegetable oils began to replace animal fats.

Gladstone's abolition of the soap tax came at a moment when reformers were vigorously advocating public cleanliness and sanitation. Doctors also were in favour of better hygiene and, from about 1830, recommended showerbaths to be taken for their curative value as well as for cleanliness. Gradually these baths found their way into the houses of the rich.

With the rise of the cotton industry and the more plentiful supply of soap, it was possible for all to acquire some semblance of daily cleanliness. At this time another important development was taking place; the hip baths and wooden tubs were disappearing in favour of full-length, zinc baths. In the latter part of the 19th century baths in the larger houses were often made of marble, the bathrooms being spacious and over-decorated, as they were converted bedrooms.

In 1908 the Statler Hotel in Buffalo, USA, was the first hotel to provide all rooms with adjoining bathrooms. And in the early part of this century, the bathroom became a small room stripped of all unnecessary furnishing. But the custom of taking a daily bath, in England, did not become general until after the first World War.

In Scandinavia, Russia, Turkey and Japan, the old custom of public bathing still lives. The principle of the sauna is the same as that of a Turkish bath, cleansing by perspiration, the difference being that in a Turkish bath the air is damp, while in the Finnish bath, although moisture can be added, it is dry. The sauna was, and still is, a family affair, the simplest form being a one-roomed log hut with a small furnace in one corner.

For many centuries the Japanese have valued their hot baths as an ideal form of relaxation. These consist of washing, rinsing and finally immersing in a communal warm bathing pool. Both in Japan and Finland, this form of bath is still an element of civilised life which is undervalued by the rest of the world. Indeed, the people of both these countries consider that our ordinary brief

immersion in a small bath is by itself inadequate, and that for real cleanliness it should be supplemented by at least a weekly visit to the communal bath. In the towns of Finland and Japan the men and women bathe separately, with women attendants in both sections, while in the country districts, and in privately owned baths, they bathe together.

As one of the various experiments now being undertaken to discover methods of birth control that will eliminate the need for contraceptives, Japanese scientists have found that bathing in water heated to 120° Fahrenheit has been found effective in reducing the number of sperm below levels of fertility for up to twelve weeks. If this news proves to be correct, the Japanese bath may indeed become the bath of the future.

While England is the only country to ennoble the bath with a Most Honourable Order, candidates for which since its inception in 1127 took a bath to signify outward as well as inward purity, it is in Finland that the bath receives the greatest veneration, Finnish literature abounds in descriptions of the joy which the sauna gives. An authority on the history of the Finnish bath, H. J. Viherjuuri has risen to lyrical heights in this descriptive passage: "Everyone who has been to a really good sauna knows that afterwards he becomes aware of a lightening of both heart and body. This feeling of well-being is marked even during the various phases of the sauna, and is often expressed in delighted exclamations such as 'How wonderful it is!' 'It makes one feel so good!' This feeling reaches its climax when perspiration begins to stream down the body; when beating with the birch whisk makes the skin tingle; when the heat of the sauna is exchanged for the cool waters of the lake. The feeling of exhilaration which follows the cold dip is undoubtedly one of the most delightful sensations that the human body can experience. For this reason, jumping into the lake can become almost a passion. But perhaps the most delicious moment of all can be experienced only on a still summer evening, when the bath is over, and one can lie naked in the fresh air outside the sauna, or else stretch out quietly on a bench in the dressing room.

"Then every trace of tension vanishes, and in this atmosphere of undisturbed tranquillity, one feels as if one had somehow been transported into another world. The sauna relieves nervous tension, pressure and preoccupations. It banishes psychological troubles and ill humours as well as physical ills. In its heat, the mind is relieved of all pressure, and recovers its true balance. A man bowed down by worries may come out of its doors in a philosophical and even humorous frame of mind.

"To their sauna the Finns give love, loyalty and devotion. These, too, are qualities which bring men closer together, and thus the sauna contributes to goodwill and solidarity. Many writers have likened the sauna to paradise. And when the heroes of folklore dreamed of the life to come, they quite naturally believed that there would be saunas in the dwellings of the blest."

The bathroom of the first half of this century was strictly a functional place for soaping in privacy. In the second half of the century it is taking on a more luxurious polish: it is now the place for soaking in comfort. With the addition of wall-to-wall carpeting, diffused lighting, a shower-spray, twin washbasins and larger baths, the bath-



rooms of the future, it seems, will indicate a return to the refined ideas of enjoyable cleanliness of our ancestors in ancient Greece and Rome.

[Reprinted from *Past and Future*, December '63—January '64.]

## Recollections of an American Country Boy

By HUGH ROBERT ORR

It was my good fortune as a youngster to live on a farm only three miles from the nearest town. To a farm boy in those days a trip to town was an event to be looked forward to with delight. This respite from the farm work occurred never oftener than once a week, and sometimes two long weeks went by without this pleasant interlude. My parents usually took me and my two young brothers with them on these trips and, what with the purchase of groceries and other supplies and an hour or two spent visiting friends or window shopping, we managed to make a day of it.

The church which we often attended was in the village and the Sunday preaching service, together with the Sunday School, afforded another opportunity for us boys to get into town, though it wasn't so much fun as on week days because everything was closed up and there was no sightseeing for us. The two long hours we spent in the church pew, with our Sunday shoes pinching our toes and our collars choking us, did not add up to our idea of a good time. Nor did it seem to relieve the situation when the preacher in his long black coat visited the Sunday School for a few moments, as he always did, to tell us that attending church regularly would help us to overcome our sins and help us to be good boys and girls. So, naturally, we accepted the admonition and endured the doubtful experience in much the same dutiful way as we had learned to take our sweetened onion syrup for our winter colds, allowing that either one would probably do us good on the grounds that it made us feel uncomfortable.

No, it wasn't altogether the pinching shoes and tight collars that were the cause of our discomfort. As I now reflect upon it I realise that a large measure of our trouble was due to a certain mental feeling—a kind of vexation of spirit, as the preacher would say—that accompanied our physical torture. The hymns, the prayers, the preacher's frequent mention of temptation and sin and repentance, in fact the whole solemn performance, so remote from our normal everyday experience, left us with a feeling that there must be something wrong with us. Those two hours in the church pew may have done us good, but when it was all over we were pretty certain that there was something bad in us though we had not the least idea what it might be.

This feeling stayed with us all the way home, and it was not until we had changed into our everyday clothes, taken our bows and arrows, and had a run up the wooded creek that we forgot all about our "sins" and really felt good again. And I think it may have been somewhat the same with my parents, who had been just a little solemn throughout the day. But in the evening everything returned to normal again, for then Mother would read to us from *Tom Brown's School Days* or *Huckleberry Finn* as we lay stretched out on the carpet around her. How we would laugh and beg time and again for just one more chapter! And Father, from his big chair in the corner, would laugh with us and join lustily in our demand. We had completely forgotten what the preacher had said that morning about the evil in man's heart, about the Tempter

being always near, and about God keeping his eye upon our every thought and act.

And now, so many long years afterwards, as I pick up my morning paper I catch an item obscurely located on the 14th page. It is a quotation from a man of education and high scholarly attainments, David Holbrook, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, England. He says: "There seems to me little doubt that much teaching of religious morals, instead of adding to the child's sense of his own goodness and value and beauty of human relationships, makes him feel guilty and bad".

[Reprinted from *Progressive World*, USA, January 1964.]

## Thomas Paine and "Tonight"

THE BBC programme *Tonight* is not afraid to take sides when necessary, and there was no doubt which side it was on in the dispute over the Thomas Paine statue to be erected in Thetford. On February 12th, Fyfe Robertson not only referred to Paine as "one of the most remarkable but also one of the most maligned of Englishmen", he questioned a number of Thetfordians who objected to the statue, and he revealed quite clearly how ignorant and stupid they were.

A woman who regarded the statue as "a wicked waste of money" obviously didn't know that it was being paid for by private donations, and a man who claimed to have "all the gen on this Paine and the things that he done" was shown to know very little. Mr. Robertson gave a good brief summary of Paine's life and work and the feature as a whole was admirably presented.

## EXHIBITION IN AID OF OXFAM

ON FEBRUARY 11TH, Sylvia Sims opened an exhibition of paintings in aid of Oxfam at the John Whibley Gallery, 60 George Street, London, W.1. The exhibition, which will close on February 22nd, contains a picture given by our own contributor, Oswell Blakeston. Eva Bartok was among the other donors.

## ST. PAUL AND CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

(Concluded from page 59)

Second Epistle of Peter, the author denounces these Gnostics as "twisting the Scriptures" to their own damnation. Even as late as 200, Tertullian described Paul as "the Apostle of the Heretics".

The Second century synthesis between Galilean Messianism, which taught the historical existence of an earthly Messiah, and Pauline Gnosticism, which taught a divine Christ was finally expressed in the present ecclesiastical tradition, according to which, Peter and Paul worked and eventually died together. Their real relations according to the Pauline Epistles themselves, were much less friendly. For whilst Paul may be viewed historically as the second founder of Christianity, he seems to have known nothing of any earthly Jesus at all similar to the Jesus of history—or at least of the Gospels.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### FROM "PSYCHIC NEWS"

The majority of your readers will not have read the story in *Psychic News* to which you refer in *This Believing World* in your January 31st issue. They will, therefore, have a completely distorted view of the facts.

Though *Psychic News* often takes you to task over the facts printed in your journal which are wrong, they are seldom corrected in your columns. For that reason I am writing personally. Though we have different views on the subject I am sure you would not want to be accused of deliberately hiding the truth from your readers on psychic matters, and I trust you will correct your previous statements.

The American lady who "came forward . . . as soon as the tragic murder of President Kennedy was announced . . . with the remarkable story that she had predicted it *many years before*", did no such thing! To our knowledge she never came forward to announce this. The story was clearly stated in great detail in *Psychic News*, November 30th, 1963. These are the facts we published:

In 1956 Jeane Dixon, a wealthy property owner and well-known as "the Capitol Seer", told American journalist Jess Stearn that the president elected in the 1960 election would be assassinated or die in office—though not necessarily the first year of office. This prediction was first published in *Parade* magazine, then in Stearn's book, *The Door to the Future*. It was reprinted by the American *Fate* magazine for October 1963: a month before the assassination. A portion of this article—which we read at the time and kept in our office—was published on our front page.

Furthermore, despite your comments that she was unable to name the president or the time of death are grossly inaccurate. We printed a week later (*Psychic News*, December 7th) a report which also appeared in the *London Evening News*. It told how, as the day of Kennedy's assassination drew closer, she told many people of his great danger and tried to warn him. She described the assassination clairvoyantly, saying he had been shot in the head. She also named the day he would die. There are witnesses to all these statements, and they were named.

When a story as detailed and clear-cut as this appears, there is absolutely no excuse for making such inaccurate comments as were made. When THE FREETHINKER incorporates a little "clear thinking" as well, it might well earn a greater respect.

There is no element of doubt regarding this story. All the facts are on record and can easily be checked by your readers. Please print this letter in full if possible.

ROY STEMMAN,  
Editorial Office, *Psychic News*.

### MR. CUTNER REPLIES

Is not Mr. Stemman protesting just a little too much? He writes as if he had read all the original documents and met all the witnesses. Jeane Dixon told Jess Stearn "that the president elected in the 1960 election would be assassinated or die in office". Wasn't she sure which? Didn't she predict the name of the president? Can it be that she didn't know his name. "There is no element of doubt regarding this story", says Mr. Stemman. Is he really as credulous as that? If I predict that Dr. Nkrumah or President de Gaulle will either "be assassinated or die in office", and my prophecy is fulfilled, I hope Mr. Stemman will stoutly defend me.

The truth is that "predictions" stated in general terms at first, like that of Jeane Dixon, would have quietly been forgotten—as no doubt many of her other "predictions" have—had President Kennedy not been killed. For example, a book published by *The Two Worlds* (then an active Spiritualist journal) in 1939, just after the war had begun, gave us some predictions. The book was *Foretold by the Stars*, by C. E. Mitchell, and in it one can read that "an armistice will be called for in 1940", that "before this Hitler will have left the stage", and that "there will be no military defeat for either Germany or the Allies". Is Mr. Stemman prepared to defend these predictions?

In a letter it is impossible to go into detail, to sort out the exact words and time of the prediction and how many others that didn't materialise were uttered at the same time. All is clear cut for Mr. Stemman and *Psychic News*, but the facts are, I should guess, less so.

H. CUTNER.

### INDIGNANT CATHOLIC

The Indignant Catholic's letter (7/2/64) is typical of most Catholics on the birth control subject. I could dissect her letter but it would be a waste of time, she and others would not accept it, but I cannot let her remark about intercourse pass unchallenged. Priests have said whenever a chance occurs, that intercourse is not for fun, but for the *procreation of children only*.

If "Indignant Catholic" looks in the dictionary for the definition

of "pleasure", she will get a shock. She says, "intercourse is a God-given pleasure". Whether it is God-given, or just ordinary pleasure, there is only one definition or series of definitions. One is "sensual gratification"; and, the definition of sensual is "carnal as distinct from spiritual"!

So they should analyse every word before using it, in case they contradict themselves. But that would spoil *our fun*!

L. RALEIGH-GILBERT.

### THE PROBLEM OF DEATH

For a man who, like Mr. David Tribe, claims that perhaps death will always be the supreme tragedy, his article on death is very superficial.

Death would still be a problem even if there were no religion at all. Secularism may reveal death as no more to be feared than sleep, but nevertheless, that view does not solve the problem.

As there is no universal way of living, there is neither a universal way of dying. Some people put up a tremendous fight against death—so well described by Dylan Thomas, the Welsh poet, "Do not go gentle into that good night . . . rage, rage, against the dying light".

The fear of death to some rationalists seems to be the greatest unmentionable as sex was to the Victorians.

But for the vast majority this fear exists, and rational knowledge of death cannot abolish it in all cases. The problem remains.

R. SMITH.

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