

The Freethinker

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IN THE LAST few years the American Deep South has attracted an attention similar to that of a century ago, the time of the American Civil War (1861-5). Whilst the historical causes for that terrible conflict were various and complex, that which attracted world-wide publicity was the legal abolition of Negro chattel-slavery and its replacement by a system of industrialised capitalism. It has since been becoming increasingly clear, however, that whilst now legally free-men, the economic and cultural — and in some Southern states even political — emancipation of the former black helots of the southern planters is far from complete. It is this underlying need for a second revolution (a peaceful one, let us hope) in order to secure full racial equality in the contemporary USA, as expressed most recently in the "segregationist" issue in the schools, that has produced a crisis of comparable severity to that of a century ago. Whilst the American Civil War was not fought—at least officially—for the emancipation of slaves, but (as Abraham Lincoln himself emphasised at the time) for the preservation of the Union, the contemporary American crisis is *directly* racial in character.

Black Ku-Klux-Klan
A further and extremely sinister parallel presents itself in the USA today. Actually it is a parallel in reverse, for just as the conquered South, on the morrow of its defeat, produced the terrorist organisation the Ku-Klux-Klan, so this time the Negro extremists have produced their demagogic (and perhaps in time terrorist?) organisation, the Black Muslims, a highly organised, virtually secret society, expressly dedicated to the forthcoming struggle against white supremacy. Here, as elsewhere, there is truth in the old adage that extremes meet. Like social situations create similar types of organisation.

Mr. X
The Black Muslims themselves claim to be an authentic branch of the world-wide Islamic (or Muslim) religion. How far this claim is accepted as canonically sound by Muslim jurists and theologians I have no information. But from my own studies of Muslim sects, I should incline to the view that, like their distant predecessors, the "Old Man of the Mountain" and his medieval assassins, their claim to Muslim orthodoxy is more nominal than real. Islam is a cosmopolitan, and emphatically not a racist creed. Yet it seems clear that the Black Muslims' basic *raison d'être* is a kind of inverted colour bar. For example, every Black Muslim is known simply as Malcolm — or whatever his prefix is—"X". That letter is substituted for the previous European surname, no member of the organisation being allowed to retain a name assumed to have been a slave-name conferred on him by his former white masters. Thus Malcolm X was until recently second-in-command and chief propagandist of the movement. However, Black Muslims do fraternise with some whites. For the American magazine *Life* recently pub-

lished an illustration of Lincoln Rockwell, the white American fascist leader, at a Black Muslim rally.

In their combination of dubiously Islamic theology and fiercely racist policy, the Black Muslims reproduce a phenomenon which has several past parallels amongst oppressed colonial peoples. Perhaps the Chinese Muslims, who revolted against the Manchu emperors of China in the 1860s, and who similarly combined a virulent racist (anti-Manchu and anti-white) propaganda with a distorted version of Christianity, represent as good an example as any.

The primary aim of the Black Muslims is political, or rather messianic. Following the coming Armageddon which will destroy the "white devils" for ever (clearly a different version from that current amongst, say, Jehovah's Witnesses) the black races will rule the earth — apparently from Africa, which they claim was the continent where human civilisation originated. But until then, they appear to be willing to accept a black republic which will be carved out of the present territories of the United States. In so doing they are actually repeating a demand made by that non-Muslim black demagogue the late Marcus Garvey, the only Negro ever to run for the presidency of the United States—with whom, incidentally, I once had the pleasure of debating.

Malcolm and Cassius Marcellus

Since Black Muslims constitute in reality, a society organised on para-military (and racially ideological) lines, not much really seems to be known about them, and varied estimates are given of their numbers and influence. But it is clear that they are extremely active, and submit to a spartan moral code. This reaches maximum intensity in their Defence Corps, known collectively as "The Fruits of Islam". This represents a kind of Negro SS, which is rigorously trained in at least "unarmed combat" and with particular reference to possible assaults by the white police and police-dogs, which are often used to break up Negro demonstration, frequently, it is alleged, with extreme brutality.

Biographically not so much seems to be known about their leaders, none of whom is anything like as well-known in this country as the moderate constitutional leader, the Rev. Martin Luther King, whom the Black Muslims regard with unconcealed hatred. Indeed, they refused to have anything to do with the Negro march on Washington last autumn, denouncing all such efforts as futile appeasements of the implacable white enemy. The original founder of the sect in the 1930s, W. B. Ford (who apparently went under several names) is dead—or ascended to Heaven, since it is claimed that he was a reincarnation of the Prophet, or even of Allah! The present head of the sect is named Elijah Muhammad X, but he has to live in Arizona on account of poor health and (like the Gilbertian Duke of Plaza-Toro) leads his army from behind. The *de facto* leader until recently seemed to be the ex-gambler, Malcolm X, who is a powerful spell-

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Black Muslims

By F. A. RIDLEY

binder. But he was suspended late last year, and has now left the movement, with the avowed intention of starting a new Black Muslim group, prepared to take "social action against the white oppressors". He it was who converted Cassius Clay, heavy-weight boxing champion of the world—now to be known as Cassius Marcellus X. Whether the latter will join the new group remains to be seen. Certainly the former Mr. Clay has demagogic powers in addition to those as a boxer.

A Black Hitler?

I made a comparison above between the anti-black Ku-Klux-Klan and the anti-white Black Muslims. But

another historical parallel presents itself, at least with the more extremist sections represented by Malcolm X and his followers—and one even more sinister. A generation ago, the "Aryan" Nazi movement was in a very similar position to that of the Black Muslims now. The intensification of the German crisis in the 1930s put Hitler in power. Will an intensification of the American crisis of the 1960s eventually give the Black Muslims the chance to black fascism? Is Malcolm a Negro Hitler in the offing? Certainly a heavy responsibility rests on President Johnson and his advisers to put their hate-torn house in order.

The Opposing Case

By COLIN McCALL

IT IS OFTEN SAID that Freethinkers are the only people who are interested in theology today—apart, of course, from the theologians themselves. And the reason is not far to seek. One needs to know the opposing case in order to formulate one's own properly. Hence the value of *Basic Readings in Theology*, edited by A. D. Galloway (George Allen and Unwin, 45s.), which contains extracts from twenty-one authors from Irenaeus to Kierkegaard, each introduced with a brief biography.

The arrangement is historical, Mr. Galloway assembling his theologians in five periods which he calls: (1) the early formative period up to the decline of the Greco-Roman civilisation; (2) the period of Catholic consolidation from Augustine to Aquinas; (3) the period of the Reformation; (4) the period of experimental theology—the 18th and 19th centuries; and (5) new beginnings. In the first period, as Mr. Galloway says, the fundamental concepts of Christian theology were forged and the basic problems formulated; in the second, the early work was developed into "a massive, stable structure", which is still the basis of Catholic theology. The Reformation, Mr. Galloway sees as "a continuation and exacerbation of Medieval debates", yet at the same time "a quite new departure". It was as though, in that period, the basic concepts had been "put back into the fire in which they were first forged." "Experimental", in the fourth period, is used in two senses: first to mean that "all manner of novel interpretations and approaches" were being tried; second in the older sense of experimental, i.e. treating man's religious *experience* as the centre of interest. Finally, the "new beginners" are Newman, Maurice and Kierkegaard.

Obviously, Mr. Galloway's extracts have to be short: twenty or thirty pages at most and averaging, I suppose, around ten. They do, however, serve as appropriate introductions, and it is the editor's hope that he will stimulate the reader to fuller acquaintance with some of the authors presented. One class of reader, the theological student, may well feel the urge to learn more about say, the Nature of the Atonement, Christian God-consciousness, or the Spiritual Constitution of Man, from John McLeod Campbell, Friedrich Schleiermacher or F. D. Maurice respectively. At least they will provide subjects for sermons! I am not so sure, though, about the general reader, to whom the book is also addressed.

It is useful to have these extracts, and it may be necessary at times to delve further into the various works, for specific purposes. Most of these men, after all, have profoundly affected our history. But, albeit belatedly, we have left them well and truly behind. It would be foolish,

of course, to deny the intellectual capacity of an Aquinas: what I do deny is the intellectual value of his labours. Is it really important to decide, for instance, "Whether Sacred Doctrine is a Science", whether it is "nobler than the other sciences, and so on? I don't find it so. Nor do I thrill to the news that:

The grace of the Holy Ghost which we have at present although unequal to glory in act, is equal to it virtually as the seed of a tree, wherein the whole tree is virtually. Likewise by grace the Holy Ghost dwells in man; and he is a sufficient cause of life everlasting; hence II Corinthians 22, he is called the pledge of our inheritance.

The difference between Aristotle and Aquinas is the difference between one who seeks for truth and one who already has the truth. Aquinas doesn't work to conclusions, he starts from them; and is prepared to use any argument—even the death penalty!—to defend them. Aquinas the Tinker, Richard Robinson has called him "soldering together the Greek and the Christian as post-war smiths solder silver". Indeed, Mr. Robinson might have said Greek, Christian and Jewish, since Aquinas owed a big debt to Maimonides.

J. M. Robertson once remarked that to compare the Christian writers of the ancient world with the pagan thinkers who had preceded them by three or more centuries was to have a vivid sense of intellectual decadence. "From Plato to Clement of Alexandria, from Aristotle to Tertullian, there is", said Robertson, "a descent as from a great plateau to arid plains or airless valleys" (Clement and Tertullian are among Mr. Galloway's theologians). And has the situation ever really changed? Can any theologian be said to have risen out of the valleys? If there, in truth, any one worth reading for his genuine intellectual insight, as opposed to ingenuity? Some, as we have suggested, one needs to know for their historical importance: Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin; possibly Wesley, perhaps Newman and Kierkegaard. But how about F.D. Maurice?

He was, says Mr. Galloway, "in many respects, a man born before his time". Theologically, perhaps, but that is all. No one—I hope—would suggest that Maurice was philosophically in advance of Hume, who lived almost exactly a hundred years before him; Kant, who died the year before he was born; or Mill, who was his contemporary. And while Hegel's greatness is indisputable, he seems a little out of place among the Christian theologians. It is true, as Mr. Galloway says, that Hegel tried to "come to terms" with Christianity. But few would regard the effort as successful. His great disciples, Feuerbach and Marx, were certainly unimpressed.

Chronicle of Inhumanity

By MARGARET McILROY

Black Cargoes, by Daniel P. Mannix in collaboration with Malcolm Cowley (Longmans, 30s.), tells the story of the Atlantic slave trade from 1518 to 1865. There can be no more terrible chapter than this in the tragic history of mankind. It shaped the future of two continents, devastating much of Africa and making possible the rapid economic development of the Americas, leaving in both Africa and America a legacy of racial bitterness and of simple brutality and inhumanity that still bedevils both.

During the three and a half centuries under discussion, probably more than fifteen million Africans were landed in the Americas, where a large proportion of them were systematically worked to death. Thirty or forty million more died in Africa as a direct result of the trade. The sufferings of the slaves were unspeakable, so that a major concern of the slaving captains was to keep their cargo from suicide. The conditions of overcrowding, filth and disease on the voyage, which could last for more than three months if the winds were unfavourable, are well known. Less well known are the consequences of the trade on the whole of African society and institutions. Once human beings became merchandise, merchandise for which the demand was insatiable, all life was poisoned. Kings who before had ruled their peoples justly were tempted into becoming tyrants, multiplying petty offences for which the punishment was enslavement of the "criminal's" whole family. Children were stolen away. Tribes made war upon one another in order to acquire prisoners for the market, and peaceful villages hundreds of miles from the coast were liable to be fallen upon by raiders and their people marched, chained, to fill the bottomless pit of the slave ships. Communities whose moral sense urged them to stand aside from the monstrous traffic could not, for only by selling their neighbours into slavery could a tribe acquire the guns and ammunition with which to protect itself from being enslaved.

So the corruption spread. The slave trade defiled and degraded everything it touched. In the Middle Ages the civilisations of West Africa were equal to those of Europe, but the impact of the European demand for slaves thrust the most advanced part of Africa back into barbarism. It ill becomes Europeans to taunt Africans with backwardness.

European traders did not, of course, bring the institution of slavery to Africa. The idea that every human being had a right to personal freedom was as foreign to most Africans as to their European contemporaries, but for the most part the slave, like the medieval serf, was however oppressed, a member of the community. To keep slaves as household servants is one thing—to export them in bulk as merchandise is quite another, and has a vastly different effect on social structure and outlook. One can imagine what would have happened to medieval Europe if a market had appeared in which every unscrupulous baron could have sold his serfs for a tempting sum, and his neighbour's serfs too, if he could lay hands on them.

One of the lessons of the slave trade is the total irrelevance of race. The early traders enslaved Europeans and Negroes with equal zest, and the African captives were transported to the New World to toil alongside Cromwell's Scottish and Irish captives and Monmouth's rebels. European and African enterprise co-operated in loading the

slave ships, alike, displaying the hardness of heart engendered by their occupation. The brutal slaving captains frequently practised the cruelty for which they were famous upon their own crews as readily as upon their cargoes. In fact shipboard mortality was usually higher among the sailors than among the slaves. The captains had a financial interest in landing the slaves in good condition, but they were not displeased if a sizeable proportion of the crew did not survive to collect their pay. Only later, when the struggle for American independence encouraged democratic ideas, were theories of racial inferiority produced to justify the continuance of Negro slavery. History shows that similar conditions produce similar mentalities quite irrespective of skin colour.

Nor does religion emerge as an important consideration. Catholic and Protestant, Muslim and pagan, all shared the guilt and the profits. That the Africans were not Christians was often given as an excuse for treating them with utter callousness, but, as those who made this excuse treated Christians just as brutally when it suited them, this need not be taken seriously. Religious differences were merely used by interested parties, as they so often are, to blunt consciences and make people acquiesce more readily in acts of inhumanity. Christians today proudly point to the few devoted Christians who led the agitation against the slave trade in Britain, but these men acted as individuals, and slavery and the trade were always defended—with scriptural quotations—by the great mass of churchmen. It is just not true that Christianity freed the slaves.

Probably the main factor deciding Britain to prohibit (in 1807) the carrying of slaves in British ships and their importation into British colonies was the disclosure by the Abolitionists that nearly forty per cent of the seamen employed on slavers were lost annually. This loss of trained manpower alarmed the naval authorities, and the public generally, when the British Navy was an essential protection against Napoleon. Conditions in the navy at the time were notorious, but service on a slaver was so much worse that men longed to be pressed by a warship. This seldom happened, however, as their physical condition was generally so poor that the Navy did not want them.

This book forces one to recognise how distorted and partial a view of history Europeans generally have. Columbus's discovery of America and Vasco da Gama's voyages down the West African coast are presented in our history books as beneficial achievements. If they represented an enlargement of the world to Europeans, this meant the end of it for the Caribbean Indians and for multitudes of Africans. Columbus was personally responsible for the massacre of the peaceful primitives of Haiti, only three years after they had welcomed him with flowers. The record of Christian Europe's dealings with the rest of the world gives Christians little cause for pride.

Black Cargoes is an immensely worthwhile book. It is full of facts which should be more widely known—which are, indeed, essential to an understanding of world affairs today. In addition it is very readable, containing many fascinating anecdotes about individuals—mostly slaving captains—and extracts from diaries. Besides being informative and interesting, the book is excellently produced and illustrated. I heartily recommend it.

This Believing World

It is really too bad of the "Daily Sketch" (March 10th) to expose the "materialisations" which recently took place in Brazil. These had provided many columns and pictures for *Psychic News* as irrefutable proof of Spiritualism though they were a complete fraud. When we claim these seances as sheer imposture, we can only say so to a comparatively small audience. When the *Daily Sketch* does so, its millions of readers get to know the truth.

It looked as if "Psychic News" would have to eat its words. Its story of a nun "coming back from the dead" and its pictures of the nun's materialisation taken from a Brazilian journal turned out to be a "hoax". Reporters who investigated the "phenomena" say that the doctors who "guaranteed" everything as genuine were "hood-winked", taken in by "a good stage illusion like anyone else". We have been saying this for years.

Not that one should ever expect "Psychic News" to acknowledge such a hoax. Editor Maurice Barbanell duly set out to try to show that the *Daily Sketch* had blundered. The nun's photograph, it seemed, couldn't be a fake because it showed her "coming through the bars of the cage"! Yet even Mr. Barbanell admitted that three men, Professor Carlos Petit, a police expert, Paulo Vitale, a criminal expert and Eduardo Saggi, a professional photographer, had declared that the published photographs had been tampered with, after comparing them with the original negatives. Alas, though, these three men were non-Spiritualists, so what could one expect? The *Daily Sketch* has promised to investigate further.

What has become of the Churches getting together and settling—without quarrelling—a fixed date for Easter? We believe they are still thinking about it, but we haven't heard of the scheme going any further. The trouble is very simple: Easter is purely astronomical, and was never in its inception anything else. Many of the pagan gods were sun-gods, and about the date March 25th were said to have risen like Jesus from the dead. Of course, additions to the story in the course of time were made, and one of these is the Easter egg, which is clearly a fertility symbol. Eventually a fixed date for Easter is quite possible, for the Churches dislike the pagan and astronomical nature of the festival.

The truth is that the Roman Church had to admit pagan festivals, pagan ritual, and even pagan deities, into their own religion if they wanted it to be accepted by pagan converts. The word "Easter", for example, is the name of the pagan goddess Eostre, and came over to England with the Northern tribes who invaded England after the departure of the Romans. And as quite a number of pagan "saviours", all sun-gods, had their "resurrection" at Easter, it was quite easy to make it all Christian.

We note, not entirely with surprise, that many of the natives of the Sudan, now that they have achieved a measure of liberty, are leaving the simple and beautiful faith of Jesus which has been taught there for something like a century by missionaries (who are now being expelled). The Sudanese seem to prefer Allah to be their one God with Mohammed as his prophet; and we were shown some excellent films on TV the other day showing the "take over".

In fairness to Christian missionaries it must be admitted that their schools were the first to teach the Sudanese how

to read and write, so that Muslim teachers now are not digging in quite virgin soil. But what was not explained on TV was why Mohammed was ousting Jesus so easily? Surely "our Lord" is a much more worthwhile saviour and He and His father a better God than Allah!

National Secular Society Annual Dinner

OVER SEVENTY members and friends attended the 58th Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society in London on March 14th. Some came from as far as Manchester, Leicester and Birmingham. The Dinner is always a welcome opportunity to meet old friends, and it was also encouraging to see new members, attending for the first time.

After a splendid meal, Mr. David Tribe, the President, proposed the toast to the Guest of Honour, his predecessor Mr. F. A. Ridley, paying a tribute to Mr. Ridley's work as President. Mr. Ridley in his response recalled some of the eminent past-presidents of the Society, and said that his main aim had always been to expose the Roman Catholic Church as the main enemy of freethought today. The Church was far more adaptable, he said, than most people realised—it would canonise the Devil, if it suited its ambitions. A new additional opponent was Christian atheism! But we were living in an age of scientific revolution, which would end the whole structure of supernaturalism.

Dr. Bryn Thomas proposed the toast to the National Secular Society. He congratulated Mr. Tribe on his television appearances, and described the Society as an incisive sword cutting through the excrescences and extravagances of life. Responding, Mr. Christopher Brunel quoted from the works of Thomas Paine passages highly relevant to today's problems, and reminded those present of the unveiling of the new statue of Thomas Paine in Thetford on June 7th.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

WE DO not like asking for money. At times, though, it is necessary, and THE FREETHINKER is, we feel, a worthy cause. Our paper is, in fact, the only Freethought weekly in the English-speaking world and we are proud that it is read in many widely-scattered parts of that world! Lacking advertising, however, THE FREETHINKER cannot hope to keep going without your help, especially in a period of ever-mounting printing and publishing costs. We therefore ask you to give generously to the Sustentation Fund.

Previously acknowledged, £39 15s. 6d. R. V. Ross, £1 14s. 2d.; R. H. Scott, £2 6s. 8d.; Mrs. N. Henson, £10; Mrs. M. Rupp, £5; Anon, 1s.; C. Coates, £1 10s.; Anon, 2s.; H. McMahon, £5; G. A. Kirk, £1 1s.; C. Cullen, 6s.; Anon, 1s.; E. Pye, 2s. 6d.; A.F., 12s. 6d.; S. Merrifield, 3s.; Proceeds Raffle, £5 8s.; Anon, 12s. 6d. Total to date, March 20th, 1964, £65 3s. 10d.

DEE WELLS ON DALLAS

This city, the one-time cow town they call Big D, has more than 800 churches to serve a population of just about a million. And they're proud of it.

It is also, however, the most rabidly narrow-minded, vicious and intolerant Christian community it has ever been my guest to see.

It was one of these Texan Christians who told me that if the coloured Reverend Martin Luther King's name goes into the history books she will "rip the pages out before letting my children read them".

Dallas is not only soulfully religious. It is also soulfully rich. —Daily Herald (16/3/64).

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRÆ 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

Havering Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, Gubbins Lane), Tuesday, March 31st, 8p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Our Moral Confusion—Is there a Remedy?"
North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, March 27th, 7.15 p.m.: A Meeting.
Wales & Western Branch NSS (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff), Thursday, April 2nd, 7.30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER, "Socialism and Religion".

Notes and News

MOST FREETHINKERS have been asked at some time, "Why do you celebrate Christmas?" It would be equally apt to ask the Christians why they celebrate Easter, which is named after a Pagan goddess and is a movable festival? Equally apt, but equally pointless, since both questions attribute some particular significance to a name, as a name. A hint of Romeo's helps us here. Not only would a rose by any other name smell as sweet, but plum pudding and chocolate eggs would taste so.

TWO DIFFERENT, but related, Negro stories are told this week. Margaret McLroy's "Chronicle of Inhumanity" is a review of the recent Daniel P. Mannix-Malcolm Cowley book on the slave trade, *Black Cargoes* (Longmans 30s.), and F. A. Ridley's Views and Opinions deals with the American Negro-racist organisation, the Black Muslims. Two events have brought this fanatical group into the news: the conversion of heavy-weight boxing champion Cassius Clay, and the defection of the notorious Malcolm X.

POPE PAUL, we note, has again felt it necessary to defend Pius XII's actions—or lack of them—during the last war. The part he played was "wise and courageous", Pope Paul said, when unveiling a monument to Pope Pius in

St. Peter's. "Voices of criticism and even an unjust and ungrateful clamour of bias and accusation" had been raised against Pius (*Daily Telegraph*, 13/3/64). Clearly Rolf Hochhuth's play has made a big impression, even at the Vatican. It would be interesting to know, incidentally, if Pope Paul has read *The Representative* yet.

PROSECUTION costs in the Bow Street *Fanny Hill* case were £296 3s., the Attorney-General told Mr. Leo Abse, Labour MP for Pontypool, who accused the Director of Public Prosecutions of behaving like a nanny in the way he had taken proceedings against "this elegant eighteenth-century book" (*The Guardian*, 17/3/64). The prosecution appeared to have been "inspired by spleen as a result of the failure of the *Lady Chatterley* case", said Mr. Abse, and had used an unexpected section of the Act. The Attorney-General denied that the late Director of Public Prosecutions (a Roman Catholic by the by) had instituted any proceedings out of spleen. And, said Mr. R. Gresham Cooke, Conservative MP for Twickenham, there were hundreds of thousands of parents of teenage children who thought that the £296 was well spent. Youth must be protected at all costs.

THE Roman Catholic Bishop of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, may or may not be known to you. He is the Most. Rev. William E. Power, and he is "terribly annoyed" at the Vatican's annulment of Princess Radziwill's 1953 marriage. "This sort of thing does not seem to be proper in the Church", he said in Toronto (*Daily Express*, 10/3/64).

EFFORTS WERE being made, *The Sunday Times* reported (15/3/64) to end the rift caused by the Chief Rabbi's veto of the reappointment of Dr. Louis Jacobs as minister of the New West End Synagogue in Bayswater, London. Meanwhile Dr. Jacobs had apparently expressed surprise at the veto, though the reason seemed not hard to find. Brought up in a strictly orthodox environment, Rabbi Jacobs went to University College, London and "began to doubt accepted beliefs". In his talks and writings, *The Sunday Times* said, "he strongly asserts that the physical sciences, anthropology and archaeology make it impossible to believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible" and he has been "denounced as a heretic by traditionalists". He is, nevertheless, we are told, "acclaimed by a growing number of Jews", some very influential ones among them.

A GROUP of Canadian Jesuits recently expelled from Haiti arrived in Montreal with charges of "deliberate programmes of religious suppression" and "widespread fear among Catholics" on the Caribbean island (*The Vancouver Sun*, 13/2/64). The Roman Catholic "missionaries" were ordered off Haiti by the Francois Duvalier government for "alleged subversive activity" and Father Origene Grenier of Shawinigan, Quebec, said that a retreat house operated by the order may have been the cause of the expulsion. "We received everybody who came to the retreat, including people who may well have been opposed to the Duvalier regime", Father Grenier said.

It is estimated that charity will benefit to the extent of £10,000 from the royalties on sales of the Bishop of Woolwich's *Honest to God*. Along with this announcement (in the *Daily Telegraph*, 17/3/64) came news of the Bishop's latest shock to the faithful. In the booklet of three lectures on Christian ethics delivered in Liverpool Cathedral last October, Dr. Robinson describes the Sermon on the Mount as "quite impracticable".

A Secularist Charter

By DAVID TRIBE

Addressed to all people everywhere

TO MAKE FULL USE of the world's resources and to protect humanity's greatest right—the right to live—there must be world peace. Disputes between nations, as between neighbours, can be solved peacefully and rationally. Moral pressures must gradually replace policies of armed deterrence. In a world accustomed to power politics, sudden disturbance of the balance of power may be dangerous. But progressive disarmament, with an annual reduction of military expenditure, especially on offensive weapons, must be urged on all nations. Whatever their private beliefs or philosophies, they should appreciate that individual or national salvation and real progress are possible only in the absence of fear of annihilation.

With hope restored and budgets trimmed, the developed nations must greatly accelerate aid to developing nations, not only in the name of humanity, but also recognising that instability comes as much from legitimate grievances of the underprivileged as illegitimate inroads by the over-greedy.

World co-operation is not a utopian dream, but an evolutionary necessity; self-interest and concern for others are complementary within a civilised community. With modern communications this is now a world community based on common humanity, where the material, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and moral needs that we share are more important than ideological and individualistic variations. Therefore some form of world government is to be seen as a logical development of the work of existing international agencies, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations.

But internationally, as well as nationally and locally, co-operation is not conformity. There must be respect for people of all colours, races and creeds, and no attempt to force one culture pattern upon people of another. All nations and ideological groups must recognise that they have no monopoly of the truth, and that understanding, and with it progress, comes from constant investigation and experimentation. Even those who believe in a specific revelation should accept that its relevance depends on interpretation, and that this changes from age to age.

Tolerance—more, friendliness and generosity—to people is not to be confused with spineless acceptance of worn-out ideas. Everyone has a right and indeed a duty to examine and often to criticise existing beliefs and institutions in the name of humanity and cultural freedom, without sectarianism or bitterness. Groups of people should have the right to organise to spread their beliefs and access to media of mass communications; while the state and public bodies ought to recognise that in a plural society, where ideological or ethical controversy exists, no single creed should have special powers or privileges and private "vice" must be distinguished from public crime.

Educational systems and ethical codes should emphasise respect for other people. Every individual deserves equality before the law, however much people vary in ability. This cannot be defined by group measuring rods; so that equality of opportunity on the basis of ability must replace criteria based on colour, race, nationality, creed, caste, social class or sex. A truly democratic approach to politics and value systems in aesthetics and ethics does not imply debasement to mob "standards". Nor does a scientific attitude to life imply artistic impoverishment or

dehumanisation, but a rational approach to personal and world problems and a lively interest in the richness and complexity of human nature.

It recognises that technological "advance" that ignores human needs is not progress at all. While progress is not inevitable, neither is disaster. With the world's vast resources and a modicum of commonsense and goodwill, remarkable achievements in the enrichment of human life may be envisaged. Optimism, like pessimism, is self-propagating.

Addressed to people who put reason before faith

In contemporary societies there are many divergent beliefs. People should be valued by what they are, not what they believe. When seeking to adopt children they should be judged by moral worth and practical criteria, while children should not be penalised by religious labels forced upon them. When seeking employment people should be judged on integrity and ability to do the job, and not on religious belief or lack of it, which is a private matter.

Just as there should be no special privilege given to an individual on the grounds of religion, so there should be none for an organisation. This means disestablishment and disendowment of all state churches. Since no prayer or form of service can be "undenominational", so there should be no religious service in state schools or officially associated with public life. Governmental, civic and legal ceremonies should become entirely secular. If public men then attended church services associated with some national event or professional activity, it would be understood that they did so in a personal capacity. This should lead to the progressive secularisation of life, with greatly improved facilities for register office marriages and for affirming in law courts, so that religious alternatives would be optional rather than usual. There would, of course, be no compulsory church parades in the armed forces, prisons and other public institutions. In schools and in broadcasting on public networks, belief and unbelief should be presented impartially; while Blasphemy Laws should be repealed. The law of the land should not impose the beliefs of one group on all. Just as it should not protect any one ideology from criticism, so it should not impose on the body of citizens a specific social view not generally held or democratically arrived at.

Important law reform must include revision of all laws relating to a sacramental view of marriage and divorce, penalisation of "illegitimate" children, and restriction of legitimate business or pleasure on "holy" days. There should be no suppression of family planning information and facilities and legislation of unorthodox sexuality between consenting adults. With appropriate safeguards abortion and euthanasia, which are private matters, should be permitted, while the brutal public practice of capital punishment should be discontinued.

These reforms are advocated in the interests not of irresponsible libertinism, but of a saner and more humane social order, where moral education, stripped of the conflicting and widely unacceptable precepts of religion, will play a more prominent part in fostering interdependence without imposition and hope and charity with or without faith.

G. L. Simons versus G. L. Simons

By ALFRED ARRAN

If G. L. SIMONS wants to help me he must do more than imply that I am a fool—he must prove it. And if he does I won't be happy but I'll be grateful.

It was this view of criticism that induced me to question the statement "God is a logical possibility". When I saw that Mr. Simons, far from maintaining his high standard of argument, had fallen into error I very gently drew his attention to an elementary weakness in his approach which made nonsense of his whole argument. I consider that my criticism was constructive.

In this connection let me quote from *Human Behaviour* by Claire and W. M. S. Russell: "Real self-esteem can never be injured by constructive criticism. For the observation of one's own mistakes, spontaneously or with the assistance of others, is a realistic step towards eliminating them. The mere making of a constructive criticism indicates a belief on the critic's part that the recipient can profit by it". And further, "A true constructive criticism will lower the recipient's false esteem, by exposing a rationalisation, and this is liable at first to be misinterpreted as destructive."

It now lies with me to prove not only that G. L. Simons has failed to accept my criticism as constructive but also that his reply was destructive. Always remembering, of course, Cronwell's dictum: "Bethink ye, in the bowels of Christ, ye may be wrong."

Now to the argument: G. L. Simons in a reasoned and well-written article made the statement "God is a logical possibility." In my opinion this is indefensible. An atheist cannot make categorical statements about God; he may refute them but he cannot initiate them. It is a simple matter for a "believer" to define the God he believes in, but it is no easy matter for an atheist to define a god he is convinced does not exist. Indeed, it is his failure to define "God" that makes him an atheist. With his statement Mr. Simons becomes a "God-maker" and must define his use of the term "God".

When I drew this to Mr. Simons attention he referred me to a previous article of his in which "he had suggested the way in which God can be satisfactorily defined". (This was never in dispute. I know God can be defined in a variety of ways—but not by an atheist. My contention is that Mr. Simons has to define his use of "God" in the statement "God is a logical possibility.") When I referred to his article (2/8/63) I found not only how "God" can be defined but also a complete vindication of my contention that the statement in dispute is in error. In other words G. L. Simons says that G. L. Simons is wrong.

Let me quote from G. L. Simons, the first (2/8/63): "Either God is empirical or he is not. If he is, he can be scientifically investigated. If he is not, how can meaningful statements be uttered about him? I contend that they cannot." And again: "If religious terms are not capable of an empirical definition I suggest that these terms are meaningless." G. L. Simons goes on "As A. J. Ayer says in *Language, Truth and Logic* (p.116), 'The mere existence of the noun (God) is enough to foster the illustration that there is a real, or at any rate a possible entity corresponding to it. It is only when we enquire what God's attributes are, that we discover that "God", in this usage, is not a genuine name.'" Mr. Simons goes on to say "How can religious people use religious jargon as if it had meaning, when in fact it does not?" And I, Alfred Arran,

now ask "How can Mr. Simons, the second, use religious jargon as if it had meaning when Mr. Simons, the first, says it does not?"

It is my opinion, subject to argument, that an atheist cannot make statements about God—he can only refute them. That is why I cannot accept the term "dogmatic". It is for this reason also that I reject the definition of atheism as "dis-belief in the existence of God." That is a priest's definition. My atheism is a "belief" not a dis-belief and I would define atheism as a "belief in the non-existence of God." Knowing, of course, that a logical purist could quibble with such a definition. I make no apology for being a dogmatic atheist. It is my "belief" and that is that.

My understanding of the term "belief" stems from Sartre, who says "Intuition is the business of the mind, and is, or leads to, belief." This means, as I see it, that "belief" can come before and be independent of logic as well as being the product of reason. Hence the priestly saying "Give me a child for the first seven years of its life . . ." It also helps to understand why some atheists (agnostics) have to fight for their atheism all their lives while others cast religion to limbo and never think of it again.

Mr. Simons thinks I must have a large garden. In fact I have no garden. When I said "and now I'll go back to my garden" it was a quote from Voltaire. (That's true enough, said Candide, but we must go and work in the garden.) I'm sorry but I thought I'd made a joke. Now my sense of humour as well as my intelligence will be suspect. Woe is me! But I think Mr. Simons has some explaining to do. I only hope my ageing brain can take it—I have no pure intellect to fall back on.

"The Times" on Religious Broadcasting

A *Times* leader on March 7th, repeated a question in *Gong*, a magazine of Nottingham University Students' Union: "Can theology survive the mass media?" It was a good question, *The Times* said. And *The Times'* response began well. "No one can say that press, cinema, radio or television have shown any neglect of religion. To take only broadcasting, the amount of time given to religious programmes must be considered generous, almost over-representing the degree of interest felt in the subject by the population as a whole". Substitute "greatly" for "almost" and we can agree. We can also agree that "something is lacking in the presentation of religion"; perhaps even that many Christian speakers lack "the professional touch". But the fault lies not with the programme planners or the parsons and priests, it lies, quite simply, with the religion itself. "Faith is perhaps harder in these days", said *The Times*, in another understatement, "but where it exists it will come over more impressively on television than the donnish doubts and difficulties so often broadcast". No doubt it will "come over", but that doesn't mean it will convince.

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VERDI'S RELIGION

In THE FREETHINKER for December 20th, 1963, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner quoted from a letter written by Verdi's wife which showed clearly that Verdi was not a Christian believer. This information was new to me, and sent me enthusiastically to the book from which the quotation was taken (Frank Walker, *The Man Verdi*, Dent, 1962). And I found there some further material of such interest that I am moved to share it with the readers of THE FREETHINKER.

The letter quoted by Mr. Bonner contains the words: "Between ourselves, he presents the strangest phenomenon in the world... He is a shining example of honesty; he understands and feels every delicate and elevated sentiment. And yet this brigand permits himself to be [I won't say] an atheist [but certainly very little of a believer], and that with an obstinacy and calm that make one want to beat him". The phrases in brackets were clearly an afterthought; they do not appear in the first draft of the letter, which is to be found in Giuseppina Verdi's "letter book".

In the *Corriere della Sera* for July 21st, 1942, however, there appeared an article "*Religiosita di Verdi: Quattro lettere inedite di Giuseppina Strepponi*", which put forward four letters alleged to have been written by Giuseppina to her confessor, Don Francesco Montebruno. One of these letters contains the words: "Verdi's soul, since several years ago, has changed much... Much of this change is owing to the work of the Abbé Mermillod... who knew how to find the way to reach efficaciously his soul and his heart. If externally and for reasons concerning politics... Verdi does not appear that which in effect he is, one must not judge him solely by appearances. He is respectful towards religion, is a believer like me, and never fails to carry out those practices necessary for a good Christian, such as he wishes to be... Verdi is a good Christian, better than many others who wish to seem so more than he". No original of this letter exists, but Alpino claimed to have taken it from

an old exercise book into which it had been copied by Montebruno's secretary. The letter is, however, a pious forgery, as Frank Walker clearly demonstrates from the dating and other evidence. (op. cit. pp. 396-8.) He deals with the matter more fully in two articles, "Verdian Forgeries" in *Music Review* for November, 1958, and February, 1959.

MARGARET KNIGHT.

PIUS XII

Roman Catholic authorities—according to the *Los Angeles Times* (March 13th)—"have argued that Pope Pius did not speak out more strongly on the Jews because he feared his words might provoke an even greater slaughter".

How silly do the "Catholic authorities" think we are? Pius XII undoubtedly knew that the Jews were being slaughtered, men, women and children.

A non-Catholic might think that Pius avoided irritating Hitler because that might endanger Rome and the Vatican.

N. E. S. WEST (USA).

BMA AND MRA

The report of the BMA committee investigating venereal disease among young people was a notable triumph for MRA. In that the answer was seen to lie with more religion rather than more medical research. Included in the committee's files, as if it were a serious contribution to the subject, was a ridiculous piece of pietistic McCarthyite nonsense from the August, 1961, issue of *Intelligence Digest*. This publication was, until recently, edited and largely written by Kenneth Hugh de Courcy, a man who had a private chapel where he read prayers to the staff in each of his private homes, and who called his bedrooms Faith, Hope and Charity. Mr. de Courcy is unable to celebrate the report with his usual champagne suppers as he is now serving a seven-year sentence for forgery, fraud and perjury. During many years of financial activities involving small investors impressed by his publications, in the words of Judge Aarvold, achieve your own ends no deception, no untruth, no trickery was too low for you to resort to". A touching tribute to the moral influence of religion.

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