

# The Freethinker

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## The Quatercentenary (1564-1964)

### Shakespeare Speaks for Himself

#### THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN

All the world's a stage,  
 And all the men and women merely players;  
 They have their exits and their entrances;  
 And one man in his time plays many parts,  
 His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
 And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel,  
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
 Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad  
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
 Seeking the bubble reputation  
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
 In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
 With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,  
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
 His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide  
 For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
 Turning again towards childish treble, pipes  
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
 That ends this strange eventful history,  
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

—Jaques, *As You Like It*, II, 7.

#### HAMLET

*Hamlet.* Let me see—[Takes the skull.]—Alas! poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio; a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chapfallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithce, Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Horatio.* What's that, my lord?

*Hamlet.* Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

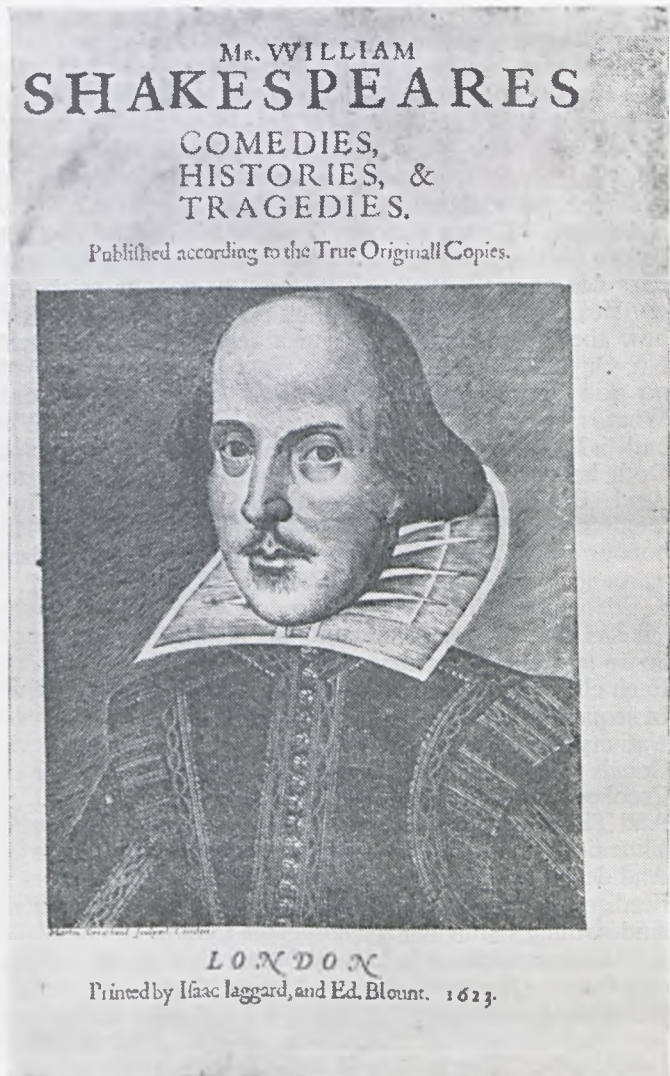
*Horatio.* E'en so.

*Hamlet.* And smelt so? pah!

*Horatio.* E'en so, my lord.

*Hamlet.* To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

*Horatio.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.



Title-page of the first folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, 1623, with the portrait by Martin Droeshout.  
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*Hamlet.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? turneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam, and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
 Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:  
 O! that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
 Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw.

—*Hamlet*, V, 1.

## Shakespeare Speaks for himself

(Continued)

### JULIUS CAESAR

Cowards die many times before their deaths;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.  
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;  
Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.

—*Julius Caesar*, II, 2.

### MACBETH

Had I but died an hour before this chance  
I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
There's nothing serious in mortality,  
All is but toys; renown and grace is dead,  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

—*Macbeth*, II, 3.

### FALSTAFF

*Prince*. Why, thou owest God a death.

*Falstaff*. 'Tis not due yet: I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter; honour pricks me on. Yea, but how if honour prick me off when I come on? how then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? a word. What is that word, honour? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? he that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. It is insensible then? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it: honour is a mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism.

—*Henry IV, Part I*, V, 1.

### SONNET

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end;  
Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:  
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

—*Sonnet LX*.

### ANTONY

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch  
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.  
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man; the nobleness of life  
Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair

[Embracing Cleopatra]

And such a twain can do't, in which I bind.  
On pain of punishment, the world to weet  
We stand up peerless.

*Antony and Cleopatra*, I, 1.

### POLIXENES

*Perdita*. For I have heard it said  
There is an art which in their piedness shares  
With great creating nature.

*Polixenes*. Say there be;  
Yet nature is made better by no mean

But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,  
Which you say adds to nature, is an art  
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race: this is an art  
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but  
The art itself is nature.

—*The Winter's Tale*, IV, 3.

### PROSPERO

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
As I foretold you, were all spirits and  
Are melted into air, into thin air:  
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.

—*The Tempest*, IV, 1.

## Appeal

### YOUNG SPANIARD TO BE EXTRADITED

Francisco Abarca, a young Spaniard well known for his anti-fascist activities, is in danger of falling into the hands of the authorities he has been fighting against.

Abarca has been in jail in Belgium since last October, on the basis of unsubstantiated allegations that he was involved in the sabotage of a Spanish aircraft at Geneva.

He strenuously denied these charges and the Belgian legal machine has been unable to prove his complicity. Despite this he has been detained in prison ever since.

What makes this case all the more deplorable is that this has taken place under the government of Henri Spaak's Socialist Party, the Belgian equivalent of the Labour Party.

Abarca spent 23 days on a hunger strike in protest at this unjust treatment and he had to go into hospital as a result.

Now the Swiss government has requested an extradition order on Abarca which would place him in their hands. It is feared that the Swiss government might turn him over to Franco's fascist regime.

It takes little imagination to guess what the fate of this young anti-fascist would be under Franco. We call upon you to demand Abarca's release in letters and telegrams addressed to:

M. Pierre Verneylen, Minister of Justice, 4 Place Poelaert, Brussels, Belgium.

(Issued by the National Confederation of Labour of Spain in Exile, Liaison Committee in Great Britain, 159 Ledbury Road, London, W.11.)

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £65 3s. 10s. Mrs. C. Minett, £2; E. Henderson, £2; Mrs. A. Watkins, £1; S. Young, £1; W. Gerard, £1; E.C.R., 5s.; F. F. Brown, £1 1s.; Mrs. E. Hay, 5s.; I. F. Forsyth, £1 1s.; J. H. McMahon, £1 10s.; M. McCaig, 5s.; H. Fitton, 12s. 6d.; A. A. Quinn, £3; P. A. L. Young, 5s.; Anon, 10s.; T. Smith, £1; Mrs. A. Fairhall, £1; F. W. Harper, £5; J.C., £1; R. C. Mason, £2; E. Drabble, 7s. 6d.; Dr. & Mrs. A. W. Laing, £10 10s.; W. Atherton, £1; A. Montagu, £1; Consterdine, £1; D. Starkey, £1; R. Underwood, £2 2s.; J. Wilson, £5; L.H., 1s.; D.C., £2 2s.; D. Wright, £1 1s.; H. Appling, £1; S. C. Merrifield, 4s. 6d.; W.H.D., 10s.; P. Stoddard, £1; J. Cavanagh, £1; J. G. Burdon, £1; W. R. Price, £1; O.A.P., £1; R. Brownlee, £2; W. Stewart, 10s.; Mrs. M. Knight, £3; P. Knight, £1 1s.; R. Atherton, 3s.; T. H. Lee, £1 2s. 6d. Total to date, April 10th, 1964, £133 2s. 10d.

The Editor wishes to thank readers for the splendid response to his appeal for support for the Fund.

# Moses and Modern Judaism

By F. A. RIDLEY

*The Sunday Times* recently featured an article on the theological controversy which is agitating English Judaism; a controversy which centres around the reforming figure of the Jewish Modernist Rabbi, Dr. Louis Jacobs. For Dr. Jacobs, some time ago, published an heretical book (that is, from the standpoint of orthodox rabbinical theology), *We Have Reason to Believe*. In this, he applied a critical exegesis, based upon modern historical and archaeological research, to the Jewish Bible, and in particular to the hitherto sacrosanct Mosaic law, the traditional bed-rock of orthodox Judaism.

I have not yet read Dr. Jacobs's iconoclastic volume, but I recently met its author and had the opportunity for some personal discussion with him on his heterodox views. Whilst there have been heretics before, Judaism has always been a rather isolated affair and, apart from Spinoza, Jewish heretics have attracted little attention in the outside Gentile world. And unlike his most famous heretical predecessor Dr. Jacobs has not, so far, been publicly excommunicated! However, whilst not very important numerically in the contemporary world, the generic influence of Judaism as the oldest religion of Semitic origin and the stepfather of both Christianity and Islam has certainly been enormous. The impact of modern scientific and historical criticism is nowadays reaching out beyond Christianity to other theistic religions including Judaism from which Christianity and Islam both ultimately stemmed. Both religions would appear to have originated as heresies on the fringe of orthodox Judaism; as such, what we may term the Mosaic controversy has a special interest for modern students of comparative religion.

Pharisaical Judaism assumes the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and in consequence its complete historical accuracy. Accordingly to it the Jews have been "the Chosen Race", ever since the time of their legendary founder, Abraham, and as such have been the recipients of the unique revelation embodied in the Jewish Bible. The heart and core of this divine revelation has been the Mosaic law revealed on Mount Sinai to Moses who, under divine guidance led Israel out of Egypt to the confines of the land "flowing with milk and honey", Palestine, of which the Chosen Race later took possession under Moses's successor, Joshua.

From then on down to the Babylonian Exile, Israel lived under the Mosaic law and a succession of kings of whom David was the greatest and "did right in the sight of the Lord", though there were backsliders suitably castigated in the Bible as "whoring after strange gods". After the Babylonian Exile, Jehovah saved a remnant out of Zion who returned to Palestine but were subsequently expelled by the Romans after the burning of the Temple. But ever since then—and through all their many misfortunes from Titus (the destroyer of the Temple) to Hitler—the Jews have remained the Chosen Race, and have lived under the Mosaic law in its integrity miraculously preserved by God until the coming of his Messianic prophet at the end of the world. Such, or something like it is an outline of Jewish history construed and interpreted in the light of Talmudic orthodoxy.

However, modern Biblical criticism soon began to pick holes in this monolithic interpretation of Jewish history and today, in fact, archaeology and Biblical criticism have

pretty effectively broken down this traditional view, a significant change that Dr. Louis Jacobs and his fellow Jewish modernists realise. To take one example, the most important perhaps of all to a theist: the Old Testament is a record of the evolution of Jahveh himself, along with the evolution of the ancient Jews from the primitive barbarism—depicted in the early professedly historical books of the Bible (Judges, Samuel, etc.)—to a relatively advanced ethical and cultural level.

In the early Biblical books, Jahveh is consistently depicted as a primitive, capricious and vindictive savage (like his worshippers) and in blatantly anthropomorphic form ("walking in the cool of the day" or as showing Moses his hinder parts). Gradually, he is evolved into the remote and ethically-minded being who is portrayed in the best of the prophets and Psalms. The Jewish Bible is not a record of God's revelation to man, but an actual account of the evolution of a god from the primitively barbaric level to that of a relatively advanced ethical civilisation as, for example, in Isaiah, Jonah and other later Biblical books. Far from God having educated the Jews, it was conversely the Jews who educated God!

As Grant Allen aptly pointed out long ago (in *The Evolution of the Idea of God*), a major landmark in the chronological evolution of Jahveh was represented by the disappearance of the Ark, the stone box in which the primitive Jahveh actually lived at the time of the Babylonian Exile. Thereafter, the God of the Jews became a universal deity without any visible dwelling and as such, later passed over to Christianity and to Islam.

What we have noted above was a theological—or rather ethical—evolution. It has also been accompanied by an equally evolutionary transformation, not only of the character of Jahveh himself, but of the divine law which he is supposed to have dictated personally to Moses on Mount Sinai. For modern Biblical criticism has conclusively demonstrated that, whilst the Mosaic law is a fact, its attribution to the perhaps legendary law giver, Moses, is a demonstrable myth. This can be demonstrated both historically and ethically. Historically it is clear from internal evidence that the Mosaic law was intended for a settled, at least semi-civilised community, whereas Israel in the time of Moses, is depicted as a tribe of primitive Bedouin, wandering interminably in the desert. Ethically, neither Jahveh nor the Chosen Race as the earliest Biblical books consistently depicted them were any more than barbarians, totally incapable of even the rudimentary social ethics portrayed in the Ten Commandments.

From the point of view of modern Biblical criticism, the Mosaic law—the historical founders of which were probably the Jewish prophets rather than the legendary Moses—was the end-product of a slow process which actually developed long after the remote epoch ascribed to Moses and at a time when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, thanks to contacts with their more civilised neighbours in Egypt and Mesopotamia, had already acquired the rudiments of both civilisation and of social ethics. Traditional Jewish orthodoxy, like its Christian successor, rests upon legends and myths.

We must suppose that such views will soon become as widespread in modern Judaism as they already are in modern Christianity. No doubt Dr. Jacobs represents a Jewish "Bishop Colenso" or "Bishop Barnes" or perhaps  
(Concluded on page 132)

## This Believing World

For once we are in thorough agreement with a vicar. The Rev. W. Snow, Vicar of Bognor Regis, Sussex, thinks that "religion should be paid for by weekly contributions like the National Health insurance" (*Daily Mail*, April 8th), and therefore everybody who wants religion should be forced to contribute. Dr. Snow thinks that the Government should face the question—"Is the work and influence of the Church a valuable part of the Welfare State?" but what we fear is that the Government—whichever it is—would be afraid to face the question. The answer might well be that it is a nuisance to any Welfare State. On the other hand, we would like to think that the people who want a Church should pay for it by contribution. Alas, such a project is but a Church in the air!

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The Bishop of Woolwich, who dethroned God Almighty from a seat in the clouds, wants to form a trust to "help the Christian religion . . . financed from his own writings" (*Sunday Express*, April 5th). However, the journal is not satisfied that a trust would be the best way of doing it, and has thought of a much better idea, namely that the Bishop should resolve "not to write another book which could shake ordinary people's faith in the greatest Book of all".

★

Television religion, in spite of interviews with parsons, priests, and bishops, does not seem to have brought inspiring results. Even Christians cannot be persuaded to go to church, and empty churches, or sparsely attended ones, are not much good to spread the Gospel. So ITV, in desperation, is giving us the views of a number of ordinary people who discourse on "Why I believe". The one we heard was a Mr. Philip Race who wholeheartedly, and indeed most enthusiastically, proclaimed his unshaken belief in Christ Jesus.

★

It appears he came from a very pious church-going family, and from childhood was carefully taught everything possible about Christianity, from which proceeded his complete faith in the Holy Spirit. Then, in his early twenties, he became converted to Christianity—just as he might have been under the aegis of Dr. Billy Graham. This veritable life story of a passionate believer should help to bring back the straying sheep to the fold—but perhaps most viewers were in bed before Mr. Race had time to convince them of his unalterable faith in Jesus—after 11.45 p.m.

### New Secretary of Manchester Branch NSS

MR. WILLIAM RUSSELL, who had been largely responsible for resuscitating the Manchester Branch of the National Secular Society a few years ago, and who had arranged an extremely interesting series of indoor meetings during the winter, has regrettably found it necessary to resign. Fortunately, the Branch has been able to fall back on the services of an old and trusted member—and a past secretary—Mr. William Collins. Mr. Collins's address is 46 Andrew Lane, High Lane, Stockport, Cheshire. Mr. Russell, will, we are glad to note, remain a member of the Branch.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

A short colour film depicting Jesus as a clown and the world as a circus will be shown daily at the Protestant and Orthodox pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

—*Daily Telegraph* (10/4/64)

## VD and The Doctors

By DENIS COBELL

ENOUGH HAS ALREADY been said about the British Medical Association report, *Venereal Disease and Young People*, to convince the uninitiated that unbelievers are personally responsible for the national decline in morality and increase in VD amongst adolescents. The report was a joint endeavour produced by a committee of doctors, clergymen and a few others; it places great emphasis on the decay of religious practices as a cause for these social ills. It recommends a return to the ostentatious practice of regular churchgoing as a helpful cure.

One of the more amusing asides to this report, is the reactionary correspondence it has inspired in the columns of the *British Medical Journal*. Fine phrases ring out: ". . . hope for the future only exists by a return to the Christian virtues of chastity and continency." Sentences such as this might well appear in the pages of the report itself; these amateur moralists do not stop to discover what Christian virtues are—or which interpretation is to be relied upon.

The report has been aptly decried as a very poor effort, by some sections of the serious press. Its use of statistics is extremely dubious. True, there has been an increase in attendances of young people at VD clinics in recent years, but this in fact dropped in 1962, the last year the report quotes. Furthermore, although the population has increased by 6.5% and venereal disease by 73% between 1951-62, it might equally well be stated that between 1925-62 the VD increase was only 12% against a population increase of 29%. Depending upon how large the range of years taken, one has a morality variation which alters according to personal prejudice.

It is sad to realise that many doctors are prone to religious taboo of sex. Many of them advocate "return" to a situation that has never existed in practice; but I like this sentence from a letter in the *British Medical Journal*: "It is, for instance, both heartbreaking and funny to hear people recommending religious belief [presumably Christianity?] to members of a nation who frequently do not even know the essential dogmas of this religion, and who could not accept them if they did". The recent small increase in VD is not a cause for alarm or pontification. Promiscuity is not common and chastity is pious hypocrisy. Most people know and practice the answer to the superficial problems raised by this report: personal responsibility.

### MOSES AND MODERN JUDAISM

(Concluded from page 131)

Spinoza, who was a Biblical critic as well as a philosopher. However, in its task of reconciling modern Judaism with modern knowledge, Dr. Jacobs and his successors will have a marked advantage over their Christian opposite numbers. For Judaism, like Islam but unlike Christianity, is a creed largely ethical in character and untroubled by metaphysical subtleties like trinities, incarnations, sacraments and suchlike mysteries. It should be much easier accordingly, for Judaism (and Islam) to develop into an un-dogmatic unitarianism, or even into a purely ethical humanism, than would be the case with Catholic, or even Protestant Christianity. We shall follow future developments in Jewish theology with great interest; perhaps, to quote the Scriptures, "a star has come out of Jacob"—one that may enlighten contemporary Judaism.

### FOOTNOTE

As BBC-2 normally closes down before BBC-1, viewers of the former, are spared "God save our gracious Queen" at the end of each night's programmes.

# THE FREETHINKER

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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 (Tie 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

Mercyside 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

Mining and Technical College (Coalville, Leicestershire), Tuesday, April 28th, 3 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "The Aims and Objects of the National Secular Society".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, April 24th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.

Parish Church, Puttenham (near Guildford), Friday, April 24th, 8 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "Ancient Wisdom or Modern Heresy?"

First of a series of four lectures on Humanism entitled, "Know Thyself—the Proper Study of Mankind".

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Community Centre, Room 5, Wednesday, April 28th, 8 p.m.: E. MILLS, "Does God Exist?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1). Sunday April 26th, 11 a.m.: V. V. ALEXANDER, "Religion, Depth Psychology and Humanism".

## Notes and News

IN THIS issue we commemorate the quatercentenary of England's greatest poet and dramatist in what we believe to be the most fitting way, by letting him speak for himself. This Sunday, however, is a very different anniversary—one that we forget at our peril. On April 27th, 1937, *The Times* reported that "Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques and the centre of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent raiders". Picasso, perhaps the greatest painter of our time, has ensured that Guernica shall not be forgotten.

CAN IT be that the English Roman Catholic hierarchy thinks that Pope John XXIII went too far when—in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*—he urged the banning of nuclear weapons? That would seem to be the implication of a letter from M. Venner of Flackwell Heath, Bucks (*The Guardian*, 14/4/64). "Justice, then, right reason and humanity urgently demand that the arms race should cease . . . that nuclear weapons should be banned", said the late Pope. And, he added, "it is hardly possible to imagine that in the atomic era war could be used as an instrument of justice". Yet, in spite of the wide acclaim

that this encyclical has received, "most Catholics in England are", according to Mr. Venner, "ignorant of its content". It is sad, he says, that "it should be necessary for the bishops to ram the message home at all, but clearly it is necessary, and it is this very necessity that the bishops have failed to appreciate". Then comes Mr. Venner's suggestive query: "It is surely not that they are reluctant to follow the guidance of Pope John?"

★

AS THE news came through that the Danish publishing firm of Thanning and Appel had been found not guilty of attempting to publish obscene literature by printing *Fanny Hill*, the case against the Manchester firm of C. Nicholls & Co., began. Messrs. Nicholls & Co., printers of the Mayflower 3s. 6d. edition of John Cleland's book, were summoned to show cause why 3,116 bound copies, 720 unbound copies, and 38,000 sections seized by the police should not be destroyed. Appearing in the Manchester City Magistrates' Court, on April 13th, Mr. Montgomery Hyde said that the book was of historical value in relation to the development of the novel and the age in which it was written. It dealt with sex, a subject widely dealt with in modern novels, and one of its themes was the victory of love over lust. There wasn't a single "four-letter word" in it. Mr. Norman Glidewell, prosecuting, described the book (*Daily Mirror*, 14/4/64) as "no more than an episodic account of the physical sensations of a prostitute during intercourse both normal and abnormal".

★

"ONE wonders whether our self-appointed moral guardians . . . realise how much they themselves contribute to public 'immorality,'" exclaimed Charles Skilton, Chairman of the Divorce Law Reform Union, in a letter to the *Sunday Times* (12/4/64). Mr. Skilton was referring to a claim by the Secretary of the Moral Law Defence Association that they helped to kill the main provision in Mr. Leo Abse's Divorce Bill, divorce after seven years' separation—"long enough, surely, and proof positive of the breakdown of marriage." Why, Mr. Skilton asked, "should a minority impose their suffocating views and continue to block what would be a great and late victory for common sense and human happiness in the matrimonial sphere?" Why, indeed? But the more pertinent question it seems to us, is why should they be allowed to? The answer is simply and deplorably, because of the timidity of MPs of all parties when it means opposing the Christian Churches.

★

YET, although the Archbishop of Canterbury led the opposition to Mr. Abse's Bill, he was, the *Sunday Times* ecclesiastical correspondent informed us, "clearly worried about the existing law". Dr. Ramsey thought that divorce by consent after seven years' separation "undermined the sacramental basis of Christian marriage"; he is now anxious to find a middle way between Mr. Abse's proposal and the present laws. And, should the Archbishop's study group be successful in its search for "a new principle or procedure in divorce law", he might sponsor or find a sponsor for the measure in the House of Lords. What should happen, of course, is that Parliament should inform Dr. Ramsey that, legally, marriage in this country is secular not sacramental, and that the interests of the state—i.e. the people—should come before the prejudices of the Churches.

★

AS IT is, the Archbishop study group (comprising twelve men and women in addition to the Chairman, the Bishop of Exeter) has been instructed that any new principle or procedure it recommends "should not clash with the view of marriage as a life-long covenant" (*Daily Express*, 10/4/64).

# Some More Early Christian (?) Documents

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

(based on Georges Ory, *Bulletin* 105 of the Cercle Ernest Renan)

*The Epistle of Clemens Romanus to the Church at Corinth:* Clemens or Clement of Rome is claimed in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as the fourth pope of Rome, date c.96 AD. If the letter is genuine and this Clement did exist at that time, there would be some proof of an early form of Christianity. The *Epistle* contains many references to the Old Testament, but none to the Gospels, though there are texts similar to passages in Luke and Matthew; and also texts which are to be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, who lived c.150 AD, which look as if they had been taken from the same source. There are indications that the author knew the Epistle to the Hebrews, and probably the Acts of the Apostles and the First Epistle of Peter. He quotes many of the sayings attributed to Jesus. It is interesting to note that passages quoted apparently from Pauline Epistles are among those often considered as interpolations. The first reference to this epistle according to Eusebius, writing about 300 AD, was to be found in the works of Hegesippus, c.150-180 AD; and it was one Denys of Corinth who first attributed the letter to Clement of Rome. M. Ory thinks the letter cannot be earlier than 145 AD.

*The Shepherd of Hermas* contains what may be a reference to Clement, the author of the above epistle. The *Shepherd* consists of three sections: "Visions," "Mandates" and "Similitudes" and is probably the work of several hands. It is claimed to be a message to the Christian Church at Rome, though it does not contain a single reference to Jesus Christ, and it describes the Son of God as "a man of gigantic stature, surrounded by glory," just as, in the Gospel of St. Peter, Christ is a giant overtopping the heavens. Nor is there any reference to the crucifixion, to the death of the Shepherd, or to the redemption of mankind by divine sacrifice. On the other hand baptism as giving life (immortality?) is taught. The initiate, as he goes down into the water of baptism, dies to his former life; having been sealed, he comes out divine. This baptism is in the name of the Son of God, not the Trinity. Hermas makes no reference either to the Old or the New Testament, but to the Book of Eldad and Modat, as yet unknown today. He speaks of members of his sect (who were not necessarily Christian — in fact do not seem to know of Christ) being interrogated by magistrates in a manner suggestive of the period of Trajan and Pliny, therefore subsequent to their time, i.e. c. 150. What then could have been this sect at Rome which knew nothing of friction between Gnostic and Judeo Christians, or of a Passion which had taken place at Jerusalem a century before? The divine Shepherd tells Hermas, in the Similitudes, "to seek with Me a more exact knowledge of all these mysteries." What mysteries?

All the same the *Shepherd* was later read in the Christian churches as a divine revelation, but was it the *Shepherd of Hermas* as we know the work today?

*The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles:* This work, too, is commonly claimed by the orthodox as "early Christian." Is it Christian at all? It was discovered in a Constantinople monastery in 1873 (Patriarchal Library in 1875) and published ten years later. The original title would seem to be *Didache* (Teaching) only. It has two divisions; the first of six chapters, in which the second person singular is used, is a book of moral precepts,

beginning with "There are Two Ways," and is a modification of an earlier work known as *The Two Ways*. This part is, in J. M. Robertson's opinion, wholly Jewish, without a single reference which can be taken as certainly Christian. The Two Ways are those of Life and of Death and are to be met with in Hesiod, Plato, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, etc. They would appear to have been a commonplace in the mysteries, in any case in the Greek mysteries (see also Matthew, 7, 13-14, on the narrow gate to life and the wide gate to destruction). A Latin version of *The Two Ways* found in 1884 does not contain any allusion to the Sermon on the Mount. This omission, joined to other significant details, suggest that the Sermon was not an original part of the *Didache*. Despite the inclusion of Twelve Apostles in the title, only one is mentioned in the work. Moreover, what is noteworthy is that the *Didache* contains no reference to the New Testament, only to the Old. The mention of a Gospel several times does not show any acquaintance with those of the New Testament. In short the *Didache* appears to be a pre-Christian work written, or compiled, about 90 AD. and later re-edited for use as a Christian manual at some time after the composition of *The Shepherd of Hermas* and the Clementine Letter, probably about 170-200 AD.

M. Ory further divides the second half into four. First comes a section employing the second person plural instead of the singular, prescribing baptism in the Three Names, suggesting Montanism; then the Lord's Prayer with notable variations from Matt. 6, 9-13; and the Sermon on the Mount as it is found in Matthew. The Eucharist is to be given only to those baptised "in the name of the Lord," not as above in the Three Names. There are several differences here from the New Testament Gospels. The second section deals with the hierarchy; the apostles are inferior to the prophets, who are high priests. This is followed by another short section, evidently added later, according to which the Eucharist should be given daily, and bishops and deacons are elected by the community. The final chapter (16) exhorts the faithful to be steadfast in the days soon to come when the Deceiver will precede the Advent of the Lord; this is generally accepted as earlier than the rest of the second part.

Shortly, an analysis of the *Didache* produces little to favour the Gospels of the New Testament, which it contradicts in many places. If the re-edition of it was by the editor of *Apostolic Constitutions*, as has been suggested, this may not have been till the fifth century. *The Epistle of Polycarp of Smyrna to the Church at Philippi:*

The importance of Polycarp lies in the claim that he was a link between the Apostle John and Irenaeus. He was supposed to have lived from 69 to 155 AD (or 160), becoming Bishop of Smyrna c.100 AD. In a much criticised Letter from the Church at Smyrna to the Philippians, the persecution of Christians and martyrdom of Polycarp are given in minute detail. Apart from this and the references in Irenaeus (*Adv. Haeres.*) little is known of him.

Of the many letters which Irenaeus said Polycarp wrote "to the neighbouring churches," one is claimed to survive, an *Epistle to the Philippians*. If this is authentic, it is not wholly so, since chapter 13 contradicts chapter 9, and launches the *Epistle* into the controversy concerning

Ignatius of Antioch; for it would seem to have been inserted in support of *Ignatian Epistles*. In this epistle Polycarp, though a partisan of Paul, nevertheless condemned as anti-Christ those who declared that Jesus did not appear in the flesh, referring perhaps to Marcion and Valentinus. He draws on the *Epistle of Clemens Romanus*; and his letter must have been compiled between 150 AD and his death whenever that was.

This brings us to Ignatius of Antioch and the *Epistles to the Ephesians, Trallians*, etc., and to Polycarp which have aroused great doubt as to their genuineness. The orthodox accept them and date them c.115 AD. Ory, following Turmel, is of the opinion that the writer of these epistles, who calls himself Theophorus, was a Marcionite bishop of Syria c.170-180, who preached a gnostic Christ to the Churches of Asia Minor, and was an opponent of the judaising party. These epistles were revised in the name of Ignatius — who had been martyred in c.166 — and brought into line with Catholic teaching. To do this Ignatius was made out to be a bishop of Antioch and interpolations were made, inspired by the Gospel of Matthew, preaching a carnal Christ born of Mary and descended from David in place of the original spiritual Christ appearing in the form of a man. These alterations have produced obvious contradictions in doctrine; it is these interpolations which have attracted the attention of the orthodox as being, according to them, the first declarations outside the New Testament of a "son of Mary and a Son of God," "of flesh and spirit," etc. Couchoud, however, accepted the *Ignatian Epistles* as similar to the fourth Gospel which both attacks and defends Marcionite doctrine. Turmel and Ory separate the two elements, giving priority to the Marcionite Theophorus. If they are correct, the *Ignatian Epistles* are not evidence of an historical Jesus, but the contrary.

## Righteous Riches

By F. H. SNOW

"THE CHURCH is not so rich as may be supposed." I read this newspaper assertion with astonishment. The inference that the Church — any Church calling itself Christian — has the right to amass riches, caused me to reflect that, had Christendom faithfully observed the precepts of Jesus, that statement would not be possible.

Not so rich! Not only would the comparative term be impossible, but there would be no Christian Church, as constituted to-day. The very system under which it came into being, with its vast numbers of cathedrals and grandiose churches, could not have been established. Christ's ideology opposed its inception. Jesus enjoined upon each of his followers the formation of a spiritual, all-sufficient temple within himself. They were to be as lowly, in all things, as it was possible to be — prizing only spiritual wealth, giving anything in excess of their immediate needs to those without sustenance or succour. And, in that day, what poverty and misery prevailed! In this age of ecclesiastical affluence, poverty still persists.

How could the Christian Churches have attained their affluence — how could the host of massive buildings in which Christians worship have arisen, had the injunctions of Jesus, to disdain earthly riches, take no thought for the morrow, help those that needed help, even, if necessary, to the sacrifice of all their means, been observed? Christians aver that Christ didn't mean it that way, as His gospel couldn't have spread over the world without churches and finance. But no utterance of Christ's suggested that which stands for Christendom to-day, yesterday and many centuries past. The Church He visualised was

the body of those who would live according to His mandates. His Church was to be the community, however small or large, of those qualifying for salvation by literal observance of His precepts — which observance, entailing the surrender of earthly gains in the interests of the needy, and permitting only pursuit of spiritual riches, rendered impossible the erection of costly edifices and the accumulation of personal wealth. Had this condition of things prevailed, there would be no Roman Catholic millions owning as head a bejewelled Pope — no Christian Church as we know it, and Christendom would be a highly altruistic community, worshipping in humble meeting places, aspiring to the acquirement of celestial property through rejection of the earthly, in conformity with the dictates of its alleged founder.

But desire to modify the severity of the mode of life Jesus had instituted — to adapt it to natural demands and condone a measure of worldly comfort — germinated amongst the successors of the early Christians. Christ's failure to redeem His promise to return to earth during the lifetime of His generation, gave further incentive for departure from literal acceptance of His mandates. His devotees had to give a new meaning to that promise, or believe Him to have been undivine. They therefore assigned His second coming to the nebulous future, and proceeded to interpret His severer precepts so as to loosen the restrictions they imposed, sanction the acquirement of wealth, and render the Christian faith amenable to far greater numbers. A hierarchy arose which abrogated to itself the right to decide the complexion of belief, and devoted worldly means to the building of imposing places of worship and the financing of a great priesthood. For the vast majority of Christ's adherents, the injunctions of the Messiah became mainly figurative, and the religion of poverty and self-sacrifice largely one of ritualistic practice. For the many, saintliness and suffering became no longer synonymous, and today Christians conduct their lives in highly secular comfort.

We atheists, agnostics and freethinkers would not have it otherwise. We wish for everyone the way of life they desire, compatible with humanitarianism. We think it ridiculous to expect men to shape their lives in accordance with the harsher of the adjurations attributed to the Gospel Jesus. We do not condemn Christians for seeking to live in reasonable comfort. What we condemn is their twisting of Christ's injunctions to mean what they did not, in order to justify their claim to live according to them, whilst living in the worldly ease which those injunctions forbade, and pursuing the attainment of that worldly wealth which they explicitly denounced.

Christ's attitude towards riches was clearly defined by His charge to the rich young man who wished to follow Him, to first sell all he owned and give it to the poor. His statement that it was harder for a rich man to enter Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, signified that worldly wealth was an obstacle to spiritual wealth and its celestial reward. What kind of Christians, then, are they that own lucrative properties and amass fortunes? To argue that our society couldn't function if by the literal observance of His precepts, funds for the advancement of industry, science, commerce and education were made unavailable, and that therefore Christ could not have meant them literally, is false reasoning. Christ did not want a society such as ours, which is what it is because of the interpretation of His precepts in the interests of ambition and secular comfort — because of the inability of all save a fanatical few to endure the restrictions and sacrifices those precepts imposed. That God's supposed son did not foreknow the latter fact belies

His divinity, even if there were not His failure to redeem His vow to return to earth in the lifetime of some of His hearers, to belie it.

Nevertheless, His divine image is retained, and those who venerate him are guilty of the uttermost dishonesty in identifying His pronouncements with a way of life foreign to both the letter and spirit of them. No professing Christian should live luxuriously — no Church heap up wealth in a world disgraced by the preventable disease and starvation of millions. Nothing more eloquently proclaims the hypocrisy of Christendom than its riches.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### HUMANISM AND TRAGEDY

I notice in Colin McCall's "Shakespeare and Religion", he takes his quotes from Shakespeare's tragedies in order to show the anti-religious attitude of Shakespeare. But I rather doubt whether this article will impress religious people or even Humanists.

For Humanism is opposed to the tragic view of life as much as religion is. The utterances of despair and the role of the tragic hero have little or nothing in common with the ideals of Humanism. The Humanist aim is to give more hope to man for a better life of happiness, pleasurable living, and social advancement.

Humanists may regard *Hamlet* as a masterpiece, but *Hamlet* has as much in common with Humanism as it has with Christianity. If a man were acting and speaking like *Hamlet* in real life, probably the Humanist would be the first to tell him: "if that is your attitude to life, then we say there is always a way out for you".

Humanism is anti-tragic, and therefore Humanists are just as hypocritical as Christians in praising Shakespeare's tragedies.

R. SMITH.

[Colin McCall writes: *What Mr. Smith seems unable to appreciate is that one can be entertained and moved by a play without sharing its viewpoint—assuming that it has one. The reason I "enjoy" Shakespeare is, I suppose, that I find him satisfying on various different levels—poetic, psychological, and so on. This, in spite of his exaggerations, his inconsistencies and his sometimes impossible situations. Where Shakespeare—and incidentally Hamlet—has much more in common with Humanism than with Christianity was, as I said, in regard to death.—ED.]*

### VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS

In the issue of April 10th, you remark that voluntary schools should be voluntarily supported. Agreed; but what reply would you make to Benj. R. Tucker's devastatingly logical question: "If common folk should not be made to pay for uncommon schools, why should uncommon folk be made to pay for common schools?"

HENRY MEULEN.

### GEORGE SANTAYANA

The passage which R. Smith quotes from Santayana, always seems to me one of his most obscure. But again and again in *The Life of Reason*, one comes upon blunt statements consistent with only an atheist outlook. He definitely denies any belief in a hereafter. "The fact of being born," he says, "is a bad augury for immortality". The general impression I get from his work is entirely in accord with that of Corliss Lamont.

Santayana's drawback was his hankering after what he regarded as the beauty of Catholicism, which he called "that splendid error". He seems to have loved the Catholic Church as a man still longs for a beautiful woman who has deceived him. "I do

believe her though I know she lies."

Somebody once summed him up by saying, "Santayana believes that there is no God and that Mary is his mother".

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

### HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

I would like to challenge the basis of Denis Cobell's article, "Scientific Existence" (3/4/64). While I can well understand his pessimism regarding the threat of nuclear war and the future survival of mankind, I cannot accept as necessarily correct his contention that war, nationalism, etc., is due to the nature of man. The question of environment appears to have no importance, for he doesn't bother to mention it.

He argues that because the primitive apes were carnivorous killers and that we evolved from these apes mankind is naturally aggressive. In the first place it is by no means universally accepted that man evolved from these apes, but rather that the various stages of ape and man had a common ancestor (*Proconsul*) and that apes and hominoids evolved as distinct lines of ascent.

I cannot accept that mankind is naturally aggressive, but that his aggressive manner is the result of the particular way in which he has developed. The apes, ape-men and early man had very little choice to be other than they were, because of the particular harsh conditions in which they existed, but this certainly doesn't apply to modern man with his vast store of scientific and technological knowledge. I can't accept the equation of the social behaviour of the apes with that of man. The hominoids had very little choice but modern man certainly has. Its not so much a question of changing human nature as it is of changing human behaviour, and there's a world of difference between the two. War and nationalism, etc., are the result of human behaviour and not human nature and as such are subject to change.

The lesson therefore is, that hitherto, all existing societies have been governed not by the attributes of human nature, but by objective social laws and, will continue to do so, until mass understanding consciously intervenes to change the existing objective laws of social history. Therefore, it's not a question of changing human nature, but of the objective laws that govern mankind, which in turn will transform human behaviour.

STAN MILLS.

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