

The Freethinker

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THE WORDS are now legendary: "I would remind you that extremism in the defence of liberty is no vice; and let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." After the immediate hostile reaction in Britain a soothing phase has tended to develop. In "Goldwaterloo" (*New Society*, July 30th), Bryan Magee sighed, "The reaction to Goldwater reminds me of the reaction to McCarthy. Al! the direct damage McCarthy did, and it was considerable, was inside America. He did no one outside it any harm. Yet for years he was front page news in the world's press . . . But people outside America will suffer only insofar as they bring it on themselves by reacting hysterically to something that need not concern them."

It would be nice to think this was true. Unfortunately, the Senator from Wisconsin was not just a bogeyman of world liberal opinion, but a potent force in the Cold War. There is reason to assume that the then American Secretary for the Navy, sections of Wall Street, and Pope Pius XII were actively planning what was variously thought of as a modern crusade or a "preventive" war. Even if this imputation be set aside, there remains the worldwide eclipse of liberalism that aped the American inquisitor's triumphs. Throughout the "Free" World, under US influence or, to put it more bluntly, bribable or blackmailable with American finance, other governments were at pains to show themselves no less "vigilant and reliable." Within the Soviet bloc, the excesses and crimes of Stalinism were able to flourish as self-proclaimed bulwarks against American militarism.

Senator Goldwater

The Senator from Arizona can achieve the same result. Indeed, as a presidential candidate in an election year he is potentially more dangerous. President Johnson can steal or drown Goldwater's thunder only by banging his own war drum. Globke elements in West Germany and OAS elements in France can make common cause respectable. Mr. Khrushchev will be tempted to shout the odds for the benefit of China and his diehard Russian critics. The recent incidents in Indo-China are not, one is inclined to surmise, completely divorced from Goldwaterism. While holding no brief for the political adventurism of Peking, many Western observers have for years been disturbed at the succession of rogues and fanatics, from Bao Dai on, whose only "virtue" has been a frenzied anti-Communism, at times linked with Catholic crusading, whom France and the United States have foisted on the South Vietnam people, and to whose political fortunes they become militarily committed.

It is, however, unnecessary to name individuals and political cliques in stressing the malign influence of extremism. Such propaganda becomes a part of the climate of opinion that influences whole nations, often at the preconscious level. It is something that psychologists imperfectly understand. This is partly because little research has been done on the subject; this in turn is

partly because such attitudes are intimately connected with the religious temper, and are as such deemed to be not only respectable, but even laudable. In Britain much publicity has accrued to modernist clerics who want to ban the Bomb, Apartheid and the Resurrection, and are seeking to spread the notion that Christianity is simply a system of love and ethics (the precise application of which they seem unable or unwilling to outline). This mood has blinded many people to the essential obsessionism of religious belief—an obsessionism never far removed from intolerance, xenophobia, and, in the right political climate, persecution.

Senator Goldwater has gained the Republican

Party nomination through the efforts of a very clever campaign machine backed by big business and political chauvinism. It is an oversimplification to say his support comes entirely or even mainly from racial and religious extremists. Yet such elements as the John Birch Society, Harding College and countless other "Bible" colleges and the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade have for years been sowing the seeds of irrationalism, anxiety and indignation on which political wideboys operate at the chosen time.

American Religion

The influence of the Catholic Church on both hot and cold wars throughout the ages is too well-known to Freethinkers to need comment. But we must not forget the role played by those on whom has fallen the authentic mantle of the "Reformers." Senator Goldwater himself has a Protestant and Jewish background. The American Bible Belt is largely Baptist. The Ku-Klux-Klan is anti-Catholic. To pass briefly to another country recently beset with the most florid extremism, Alice Lenshina of the Lumpa Church derives from the Church of Scotland. (Nor should we forget the hysterically Protestant Exclusive Brethren). Lesson I of a "Bible Correspondence Course" of the Fundamentalist Ambassador College, with headquarters in California but proselytisers in other countries, including Britain, gets down to its main selling point on page 2: "World rule by one great *atheistic* nation seems to loom just ahead. Communism sweeps over vast areas of the earth. *Great mass destruction of the earth's inhabitants appears imminent.*" In *The Anatomy of Liberalism*, an anti-liberal pamphlet by S. E. D. Brown, reprinted from *American Opinion* and distributed in this country by Mosley's Union Movement, is one advertisement. This is for *A Manual for Survival*, a "Counter-Subversive Training and Study Course," whose chapter headings include "The Enemy We Face," "Moscow's Agents in Our Education System," "Brainwashing, Communism's Ultimate Crime" and "What You Can Do," one suggestion being to see that the manual is "adopted by School Boards and Church Boards as a Syllabus." The publishers? The Church League of America.

Other forms of irrationalism have not been slow to jump on this bandwagon in America. Most people asso-

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Politics, Religion and Extremism

By DAVID TRIBE

ciate Dr. Rhine's parapsychology with rather silly, but innocuous, card and dice tricks, and Ron Hubbard's Scientology with an incomprehensible and indigestible, but equally innocuous, combination of oriental mysticism and bogus psychology. But there is another element, which may partly explain why, especially in America, these "scientists" have become household names. In J. B. Rhine's *New World of the Mind* is the following paternal tribute to parapsychology: "It gives support from science itself for the concept of a spiritual force in Man . . . The expansion of communism, however, is but one of the many present-day evidences that might be cited as pointing to the need for more powerful religious guidance among men . . . It may force a realisation of the need to push research on the spiritual armament against communism to its logical scientific limits." V. Keith Gerry's *The Key to Tomorrow*, compiled from the works of L. Ron Hubbard, makes this observation: "Modern science has gone so far as to teach that man arose from mud

and clay alone, has denied to him even a semblance of a soul; and so has not only solved none of the problems of the humanities, but has aided and abetted Godless totalitarian governments."

The Communist system, and, more importantly, the political opportunism of Communist parties and governments deserve to be criticised, but the intrusion of the word "Godless" brings a new, extremist quality to the controversy, where rational argument yields to prejudice. That religious prejudice is no idle academic factor can be seen from the briefest glance at some other world tension spots where God versus the Godless is not the issue, but God A versus God B. The two groupings on the Indian subcontinent are virtually indistinguishable to the naked eye, or rather, both groups cover the whole range of racial origin. Greek and Turkish cypriots are likewise almost identical but for one factor. Jews and Arabs are both Semites. In all these cases the dividing influence is religion.

Humanism

By E. R. ROUX

THE MEANING of the word "Humanist" has changed appreciably since the turn of the century . . . It implies that he [the Humanist] sees no reason for believing in a supernatural God, or in a life after death; that he holds that man must face his problems with his own intellectual and moral resources, without invoking supernatural aid; and that authority, supernatural or otherwise, should not be allowed to obstruct inquiry in any field of thought.—Margaret Knight in the Introduction to her *Humanist Anthology*.

The Humanist and the Catholic have at least one thing in common: they believe in the uniqueness of man. There, for most theoretical though not practical purposes, the agreement ends. In facing a social "question" Humanists and Catholics may adopt similar attitudes. For example, there may be agreement on the question of apartheid in South Africa (though here the verdict of local Catholics is not as unanimous as that of local Humanists). On the other hand there may be fundamental disagreement, as for example on the question of family planning and world over-population. Where there is disagreement this is due to basic differences of view concerning the nature of man and his place in the universe.

The Catholic view of man is essentially a medieval one and it has not changed very significantly since the time of Thomas Aquinas. A difference between a Thomist and a modern Humanist is that the latter is influenced in his *Weltanschauung* by the vast amount of information concerning man and the world which has resulted from the scientific revolution, whereas the former is not. The ignorance of Aquinas, which he inevitably shared with his contemporaries, is illustrated by the fact that he was able to indulge in a serious argument as to whether the location of the Garden of Eden was east or west of Jordan. He probably believed quite literally in Adam's rib and Noah's ark.

It may be urged that one's understanding of the nature of man need not be influenced by the discoveries of astronomers, biologists and psychologists. This the Humanist would deny.

We may discuss the difference between the medieval and the modern view of man and the world in terms of space, time and evolution.

The medieval world was a sort of pancake overarched by the dome of heaven. The stars were holes in the dome through which divine light penetrated. God and

his angels lived above the dome. Beneath the earth were the ever-burning fires of hell, the abode of the Devil and his minions. This edifice had been made by an anthropomorphic God, who had placed man on the earth, while everything, including plants and animals, had been designed for man's sustenance and entertainment.

Creation had occurred a few thousand years ago and the world would "end" in a comparatively short and finite time, when the bodies of the dead would be resurrected. The souls of the righteous would join God in heaven while those of the unrighteous would go to hell. This would be the end of time and the beginning of eternity.

Consider now the picture which the scientific revolution has produced. Geocentrism has gone. Time and space have expanded a millionfold. Life appears as a product of the concatenation of atoms and may be repeated elsewhere for all we know, in forms strangely different.

The teleology of Aristotle and Aquinas has disappeared from the known universe since Darwin showed that that which is without purpose may produce purposeful beings.

In this situation the Humanist finds purpose exhibited only by organisms that carry out purposeful activities, and finds himself unique or almost unique in this respect as far as the earth is concerned. He does not seek a transcendent or supernatural explanation of intelligence, for reasons that could be elaborated at some length by reference to the neurophysiology and experimental psychology of man and the "higher" vertebrates. Man's kinship with other forms of "life" is clear enough from all the biological evidence.

Humanists reject the idea of an immortal soul, the survival of the personality and the resurrection of the body. For these primitive beliefs there is no satisfactory evidence.

It is sometimes asked why Humanists continue to act purposefully since they reject cosmic purpose, why they propound moral sanctions, and why they are concerned about the future of mankind. These questions should be referred to the psychologist. Briefly, Humanists behave in this way because they are human beings.

With the future of man and his mental well-being, Humanists are in fact more concerned than most religious people. This is (a) because they consider that human

(Concluded on page 276)

Reply to a Critic

By F. A. RIDLEY

In a RECENT article I made the surely relevant suggestion that the birth of the great astronomer, Galileo, also in 1564, was surely at least as worthy of commemoration as is the present flush of eulogies of the Immortal Bard, William Shakespeare, upon which a correspondent, Mr. Robert M. Young, in the columns of this paper proceeded to take me to task for (a) holding that the Bard was a Tudor courtier; (b) for not myself writing a commemorative article on Galileo; and (c) for substituting one on the reformer, John Calvin, who died exactly four centuries ago this year.

I am afraid that with all due respect to Mr. Young who voiced these sequential complaints, I shall have to plead not guilty to all three of them. For, with regard to (a) to state that Shakespeare was a Tudor courtier would surely be to (in Disraeli's phrase) "expatiate on the obvious," since the fact stands out the proverbial mile to anyone even moderately acquainted with both the Tudor era and Shakespeare's own writings. To indulge in a piece of surely harmless alliteration, the Bard bends over backward wherever he makes reference to the "Divine Right of Kings." It is surely quite as unnecessary to harp upon so obvious a fact as it would be, say, to insist upon the equally obvious facts that Dante was a Ghibelline or Milton a republican.

Whilst, as for Mr. Young's second complaint, the reason that I did not myself write a commemorative article on Galileo is firstly, that the subject itself has been so often dealt with in THE FREETHINKER, and also that I really lack the profound knowledge of this famous case which at this time of day would be necessary in order to shed any new light, or even to say anything of fresh interest upon this so much discussed episode in the conflict of religion with science.

Last, but the reverse of least, with reference to Mr. Young's last and principal point, I disagree entirely with his criticisms of my article upon John Calvin. When he says that in Scotland and elsewhere, Calvinism was often cruel and superstitious, he is only stating what everyone knows and what, incidentally, I myself referred to quite recently in my reply to my Maltese Dominican critic, Fr. Paris OP, when I stated explicitly that the Calvinist (Presbyterian) Kirk in Scotland, was as ruthless in its dealings with witches as was the Spanish Inquisition itself. However, whilst all this is quite true as far as it goes, it in no way affects either my reasons for writing a commemorative article on Calvin, or my estimate therein that Calvin, as and when taken (as every major historical figure is surely entitled to be taken) in due historical perspective, must surely be regarded as an important and up to a point (this limiting clause must always be borne in mind) as an historically progressive figure, and one as such who deserves a commemorative article in THE FREETHINKER.

To consider the contemporary significance of Calvin (or for that matter of any of the major figures in the complete drama of the Reformation) without concurrently taking into account his influence upon that stupendous upheaval, or conversely the influence exercised upon world history by the Reformation itself (again on the whole) is impossible. Was the Reformation itself (again on the whole) a progressive event and what, and in what direction was Calvin's influence upon it? To take the first of these sequential points, I do not see how anyone with

even a glimmering of historical understanding—let alone any self-styled Freethinker—can, or ever could, deny that however great its limitations and blunders, the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, that historic watershed between the stagnant theocracy of the Middle Ages (which it first effectively challenged and finally overthrew) and our modern era of progress, toleration and ultimate religious democracy itself constituted a highly progressive event in positive comparison with the medieval age and world from which it originated.

And secondly, if the Reformation, taken collectively as a single event must be regarded as a major event in human evolution, it is equally certain that it owed much to Calvin and indeed, it is actually doubtful whether the Protestant Reformation could even have survived the ferocious attacks later made on it by the Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation but for the dynamic impetus that Calvin and Calvinist theology and militant church discipline gave to the Reformation. For Calvinism represented the left wing, the Church militant of the Reformation. Most of the Protestant revolutions against Rome, both successful and unsuccessful in England, Scotland, Switzerland, France and Holland throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, were due to Calvinism and were led by avowed Calvinists (e.g. Knox, Cromwell, William the Silent etc.). I repeat, it appears to be very doubtful historically whether the Reformation could have survived without Calvinism. If, accordingly, the Reformation represented progress in its time and place surely the same must be held to have been so of Calvin and Calvinism also, which were so largely responsible for its eventual survival and international success.

In the course of his rather irrelevant diatribe, Mr. Young describes both the late Archibald Robertson and myself as "revolutionaries." And if so, what? For I am at any rate in good company. In so far as any Rationalist rejects (as Mr. Young presumably rejects) the authority of tradition in the religious sphere, at least he can only be logically said to be in revolt against traditional orthodoxy and is, accordingly, to that extent at least, a *bona fide* revolutionary. (How far, especially in our present-day increasingly integrated world one can logically be a rebel in the sphere of religion without being simultaneously a rebel in other closely related spheres, represents an increasingly crucial problem that contemporary Freethinking movements will eventually have to sort out for themselves).

At any rate, whatever may be the case today, there can be no room for doubt at all that the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, and in particular its Calvinist advance guard was a *bona fide* revolution, an authentic revolution in the religious and cultural spheres, and very often even in the social and political spheres as well. Its enemies at least understood very clearly that in the words of "the wisest fool in Christendom," James I of England (and VI of Scotland—Mr. Young's countryman), "no bishop, no king." Calvinism in the religious sphere meant inevitably the advent of a republican democracy on the political terrain. When that most able historian, Archibald Robertson (like his socialist predecessors in this field, Karl Kautsky and Ernest Belfort Bax) emphasised these revolutionary aspects of the Reformation in general and of Calvinism in particular (as I also

(Concluded on page 276)

This Believing World

Our readers will no doubt be delighted to learn that the Rev. A. C. Reynolds, vicar of Ramsey, Essex, owes "a debt to psychic science" (*Psychic News*, August 15th) because "it has established the truth of many Bible stories." Up to now, we always thought that God Almighty had established the truth of them *all*, backed up of course by the Jewish and Christian Churches; and we must confess that in the face of such tremendous authorities we cannot understand how any parson could possibly have had any doubts of their truth.

★

But at last these doubts have been dispelled, and Mr. Reynolds has no doubt whatever that the stories of Elijah flying to heaven in a fiery chariot, Lot's wife changed into a pillar of salt, Balaam's talking ass, Joshua stopping the sun and moon, winged serpents, Jonah and the whale, the aerial adventures of Jesus with a devil, dead saints becoming alive, and dozens of similar Biblical yarns are all true. No wonder that faith can move mountains!

★

There is nothing the Christian Churches hate more than competition, hence their angry denunciation of "Black" Magic, especially when its devotees worship Satan in the graveyards of country churches. As this is a free country, we cannot understand why, if people prefer the Devil to Jesus, they shouldn't be allowed to pray fervently to him, to drink his blood, to eat black bread instead of white as a Sacrament, and even to have revival orgies as Christian believers have.

★

It is true that "white" witches as well are opposed to Black Magic. Here we have Mrs. Boone of Tooting (*News of the World*, August 9th) who is the leader of a white "coven" emphatically declaring that they will not tolerate this Black Magic business—"It gives witchcraft a bad name." In fact, she wants the police to be told of any Black Magic ceremonies. Be this as it may, it does seem to us that the Black Magic cult offers its adorers a far bigger kick than the pale pink of true Christianity.

★

In these happy times of holiday travel not even the most devoted Christian can call Jesus the greatest traveller the world has seen. So we were not surprised to find this distinction—or something near it—given to Paul in one of the London *Evening News*' most pious "Saturday Reflections" (August 8th). "In the New Testament," we are assured, "some of the most arresting passages are the vivid descriptions of St. Paul's travels." And as he was always preaching "Jesus and the Resurrection," the *Evening News* writer insists that "it is still true that religion must come first if a man is to be properly adjusted to life."

★

Religion here means the Christian religion, and it must hurt to be told that increasing numbers are giving up "Our Lord," especially when on holiday. Jesus appears to come in mostly at christenings, white weddings, and burials; and on these days he is hardly ever wanted at other times. Why? Well, nobody can produce any evidence that he ever does anything. And what good is a God who does nothing for anybody?

★

Much to the surprise of his readers, that slayer of what he calls bad plays, Mr. Bernard Levin, has had a most un-religious smack at Bible language. He quotes Canon L. T. Ramsey, Nolloth Professor of the Christian Religion at Oxford, who maintains that "Biblical language is out

of date, and in consequence "meaningless to many people today;"—though we thought that the New English Bible was especially designed to make God's meaning crystal clear.

★

However, Mr. Levin gives us a specimen of Genesis in modern English, though we doubt if Canon Ramsey will unhesitatingly accept it. Here is the opening paragraph (*Daily Mail*, August 10th) "When the hooter went, the guv'nor created the Heaven and the earth. And the earth was in a right old mess, and you couldn't see a thing. And the personnel manager said, Strike a match somebody; and somebody chucked him a lighter, thinking he wanted a fag . . ."—and so on. Perfectly clear of course, but with every scrap of holy reverence wiped out. No wonder angry believers poured in their infuriated protests at this juggling with Holy Writ. We wonder if Mr. Levin has ever heard of Leo Taxil?

HUMANISM

(Concluded from page 274)

survival depends entirely on man's ability to react intelligently to natural forces and tendencies which might destroy him, and (b) because Humanists have an empirical, experimental or utilitarian approach to morals.

As a clear example of how these two views of Humanists clash with Catholic views, let us refer again to contrasting attitudes on the twin problems of over-population and birth control.

Most Catholics are not seriously concerned with over-population because they believe: (a) God placed man on earth and told him to multiply; (b) God will provide for man's sustenance provided man does his part in utilising God's gifts. Presumably God will also provide space for the added billions. Failing this, God will by natural means restrict man's fertility.

Explicit in this is the idea of an overall control of the world by a purposeful and omnipotent deity.

Those Catholics who have some appreciation of man's philoprogenitive tendencies and of the limits of space, food and other resources on the earth, and who realise that population limitation is desirable, still wish to limit fertility control to certain "morally justifiable" methods. The basic view is that sexual impulses were given to man by God for the purpose of reproduction and that they must be used for this purpose or not at all.

Catholic views on birth control are in fact being modified today as a result of social forces. In other words, morals (or codes of social behaviour, even Catholic ones) are changing to suit new circumstances, and this is a concession to the Humanist point of view.

[Reprinted from *The Rationalist* (South Africa), May and June, 1964].

REPLY TO A CRITIC

(Concluded from page 275)

did in several books), he was able to make a significant contribution to the critical study of the Reformation in a way that could not have been done by any writer who confined himself rigidly to its purely confessional manifestations.

I would accordingly suggest to my critic that an appreciative commemorative article on Calvin is not necessarily out of place in *THE FREETHINKER*. As that witty old humbug, the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad might have phrased it, "It all depends from what angle it is written."

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: 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.

Notes and News

"EXACTLY WHAT happened at the Vatican Council?" asked Canon C. B. Mortlock (*Daily Telegraph*, 13/8/64) in his review of two recent books, *Thaw at the Vatican: an Account of Session Two of Vatican II*, by Bernard and Barbara Wall (Gollancz, 28s.) and *The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II*, by Michael Novak (Darton, Longman and Toad, 35s., paperback 18s.). Mr. Novak sees the Council as the struggle of a "well placed powerful few" against a majority wish to open the Church to the modern world. And he is not carried away by the sensational voting success of the "progressives." The second session has been "an almost universal disappointment," he says: too many crucial issues have ended in words, and out of 17 *schemata* only two have been finally approved (cf. N. E. S. West's article, "Is it Wrong to Blame the Jews?" *THE FREETHINKER*, 14/8/64). For Mr. Novak, the hope of the Council solidifying its gains is fading. The Walls are—in Canon Mortlock's words—"more cautious."

THE CRUCIAL difference between the two sessions of the Council—though the Canon makes no mention of it—was, of course, the change of pope. John XXIII was prepared to intervene, when necessary, to get things done: Paul VI has not done so. It seems, wrote Geoffrey Moorhouse (reviewing the same two books in *The Guardian*, 14/8/64) that the present Pope is "waiting for the conservative element in his Church to die out." But he is a protégé of Pius XII! Be that as it may: in eleven weeks of the second session in St. Peter's the debates amounted to less than 84 hours—no more than two hours a day. "Maybe the Council of Trent could afford to

dawdle along for 18 years," said Mr. Moorhouse. "The Roman Catholic Church, Christendom itself, hasn't got that much time in the twentieth century." In fact, it's living on borrowed time.

★

BRIAN INGLIS, in the ITV programme, *What the Papers Say* (13/8/64) rightly called a *Daily Sketch* feature on Archbishop Makarios, "hysterical." "I detest this priest, this bloody-hearted, hairy monk," began the *Sketch* columnist, Fergus Cashin (10/8/64). "I hate Archbishop Makarios." "I hate, as I have never hated before, this terrible, soul-blackened priest. I hate him as I hate the devil," Mr. Cashin continued. And then, successively: "I hate with all my blood Archbishop Makarios. I hate with all my heart this hateful apostle of war. I hate with all my soul this manicured butcher who dares wear the ornaments of God"—all printed in capitals. But at last, with Mr. Cashin's mere lower-case cry, "Oh God, how I hate this mangy priest," the hysteria was over.

★

FLAVUS, in the *New Statesman* was one of the only two journalists, so far as we know who saw fit to mention that the Exclusive Brethren was not the only religious sect that broke up marriages and family life. "So, sometimes do the Roman Catholic and Jewish kind—if less arbitrarily and publicly," Flavius (Editor John Freeman) wrote (14/8/64). "So, I suppose did the early Christians." The essence of religious tolerance, he added, "is that civilised people should insist on the distinction between wrongful acts and wrong-headed beliefs." And he recommended legal action to redress specific wrongs rather than "the current sport of hounding the pathetic Brethren from one camera to another and cursing them collectively on the leader-pages." We agree. Particularly revealing, in fact, has been the way our "Establishment" papers—from the *Sketch* to the *Telegraph*—have denounced their Exclusive (but Christian) Brethren.

★

DR. BRYAN WILSON, Reader in Sociology at Oxford, pointed out that many groups had practised the principle of separation from kith and kin, and instanced the Amish Mennonites and the Christadelphians as well as—like Mr. Freeman—the early Christians (*The Observer* 9/8/64). The following week, L. G. Sargent, editor of *The Christadelphian*, explained that his sect had "never advocated separation between husband and wife where they differ in religious beliefs, nor would they condone a refusal to take meals at the same table." Christadelphians "would not feel" that such actions were "in accord" with 1 Corinthians 7, 10-11 or 1 Peter 3, 1-2. But, whilst having no wish to disrupt homes, Mr. Sargent said, "we deprecate marriage of Christadelphians to those not of their own faith."

★

"ANY ATTEMPT to teach religion as a compulsory subject is foredoomed to failure," wrote a sixth-former, M. J. Cain, of Bolton, Lancs., in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* (18/8/64). Before a subject can be usefully taught in class, discussion has to be allowed, Mr. Cain argued. "Yet discussion about religion brings forth doubt and this doubt combined with the natural aggressiveness of youth often crystallises into an aggressive atheism." But what are the poor Christians to do? Compulsory RI might produce a reaction, but they are loth to relinquish it. What hope would they have with no religion in the schools?

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NEXT WEEK, our Views and Opinions will be a new article by Margaret Knight on "Morals Without Religion."

Marcion

By AKIBA

THE ORIGINS OF Christianity are shrouded in some mystery. The principal figures, Jesus of Nazareth and Paul of Tarsus have been the subject of extensive interpretation and overmuch speculation. The very existence of the founder of Christianity has been questioned, and even Paul of Tarsus has been removed from the pages of history by some of the extreme mythicists. It is only when the Christian scholar and the Freethinker mention the name of Marcion that the disputes about historicity cease to confuse the long-ranging discussions over the evolution of Christian theology and dogma. No person has questioned either the fact of Marcion's existence, or his importance in the life of the primitive Christian Church, though Christians naturally tend to minimise his impact.

Distinguished scholars as different in their approach as Caspar René Gregory and Zahn, agreed on Marcion's crucial importance in the history of the New Testament canon. Gregory wrote that Marcion was "in every way the most active and influential man, bearing the name Christian, between Paul and Origen;" and Zahn stated that "No Christian teacher of the second century holds so significant a place in the history of the ecclesiastical canon as the heretic Marcion." Marcion's work laid both the foundation of the New Testament canon, and the structure of the theology and practice of the Christian Church—on this point there can be little argument. That Marcion's heresy or deviation, as it was later called, became anathema to the "Catholic" Church at a subsequent stage, only reinforces the strong suggestion that Marcionism remained unchallenged for some decades before the conservative forces within the Church sought to counter its extremist conclusions.

Of Marcion himself, not much is known. He came from Pontus, living in Rome in the late 130s. His father, it is said, was the Christian bishop of Sinope. Marcion was expelled from the Roman community around 140 AD, but propagated his doctrines with great zeal, forming the chief heretical movement in the early centuries of Christianity. The charge that he was expelled from his community for seducing a girl may be dismissed as mere slander, according to John Knox in his *Marcion and the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, USA, 1942). He says: "If there had been any ground for this accusation, Tertullian would have known about it, and, if he had known about it, he was not the kind of man to be silent about it, especially as Marcion emphasised a high, even ascetic morality."

What were the principal distinctive tenets of Marcionism? Firstly, Marcionism took the docetic view of the Gospel story, affirming that it was not Christ himself who was crucified, but his "shadow." Secondly, it drew a distinction between the God of the Jews, the God of the Old Testament, the Creator of the material world, and the Christian Logos, who came into the world to save mankind. Marcion repudiated the Old Testament, substituting for it a "New Testament" compiled of the "Gospel" and the "Apostle" (consisting of ten of the "Pauline" letters).

Marcion's theology can be summarised as follows: 1. The Creator of the World, the Demiurge, is different from the higher God, revealed through Christ. 2. The Demiurge is the Jewish God, just but harsh, whilst the God whom Christ revealed as Father, was a God of Love. 3. Justice is the prerogative of the Creator of the Universe,

but redemption is the free gift of the God of Love. 4. The Old Testament represents the true revelation of the Creator of the Universe, but this does not represent the truth from the higher God with whom, Christ alone had contact. 5. Christianity came not to fulfil the Jewish Law, but to overthrow it. 6. The Logos did not take a fleshly form, but only "appeared to do so" (docetism). 7. The resurrection of the flesh does not take place, and 8. Only Paul was the true Apostle to whom Christ gave his gospel—the other apostles were "false."

The undoubted fact that nearly all records of the Marcionite Church have been lost, or not recovered testifies to the rigorous persecution and extermination of a Church which stood in the way of the "orthodox" Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, and Origen. However as John Knox remarked, all the great Christian teachers of the period (the 2nd Century) the writers of the Fourth Gospel of Hebrews and of Revelation, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement, Papias, Marcion, Tatian, and many others were orthodox or heretical, according to the point of view of the critic. One may claim that in a sense that is always true—"orthodoxy is always our own doxy," as someone has said—but it is important to note that after 175 AD there existed an objective ground for distinguishing between the orthodox and the heterodox which was lacking before 150. The author cites the establishment of the Church of Rome around 175 AD, "bringing the polity, cult practices and beliefs of other churches into conformity with its own," as the turning point in emergence of a Catholic orthodoxy and the consequent break with Separatist or non-conforming local orthodoxies, such as Marcionism, docetism etc.

The compiling of the first New Testament canon by Marcion precipitated a counter-movement towards the establishment of a universal orthodoxy and Catholicity. A united front of Churches accepting Rome as "*primus inter pares*" (in the first instance), brought together the four gospels and reworded the "Pauline" epistles in a clumsy editing and re-editing process, the marks of which are left in the finally accepted Catholic versions. It was not only however, in the determination of a New Testament to rival and replace the Old Testament that Catholicism has to thank Marcion for his pioneering work. In the organisation of the Church, too, Marcion made his distinctive contribution to Christianity. "The organisation of the Marcionite Church was parallel to that of the Catholic Church [more likely it preceded and anticipated it—A.] comprising catechumens, elders and bishops; Marcionites met for worship in their own buildings, they observed the same holy days, and the same sacraments as Catholics, most important of all, they had their own Canon of Scripture" says E. C. Blackman in *Marcion and his Influence*, (SPCK, 1948).

Marcionism represented a threat to the Roman Church, because it sensed that its total rejection of historic Christianity, its extreme asceticism and esoteric teaching made it unintelligible to the broad masses to whom Christianity had to address itself. Nonetheless the vigour of the reaction against Marcionism was in inverse proportion to the vigour with which Marcionism proclaimed its uncompromising creed, a creed having no link with Jewish Christianity or Judaism.

The other pressures pushing the Church into opposition to the Marcionites was the probable survival of important

historical elements and traditions going back to the apostolic days, which contradicted the orthodox gospel myths. Thus the Gospel of "Marcion" begins: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. In the days of the Governor, Jesus Christ Son of God came down from heaven and appeared at Capernaum a town in Galilee." The elaborate myths regarding the Virgin Birth, and the youthful days of Jesus are not so much as mentioned, and an entirely mystical "descent" from Heaven is indicated (See P.L. Couchoud's *The Creation of Christ*, 2 Vols., Watts and Co., 1939).

Here, a gospel is written which contradicts the synoptic gospels and traditions. It is not surprising that the Church was anxious to remove all traces of this non-synoptic tradition. Other sections of the "Gospel of the Lord" to give it its proper name, also shed light on otherwise obscure passages in the canonical gospels. The hints of a conflict between the disciples of John the Baptist and the followers of Jesus are given substance in these significant passages:

John learning in his prison
The works of Christ
was scandalised.
He sent his disciples to say to him
Art thou he who comes
Or shall we await another?

Jesus rebukes John in these words:

I tell you,
Greater than all the sons of women
Is the prophet John
But the least in the Kingdom of God
Is greater than he.

The Marcionites had to be suppressed not only because their extremism undermined the Church's ability to survive in Roman society but because they preserved traditions that could not co-exist with either the synoptic tradition or the Trinitarian theology, which had to be constructed to invest the Church with a theoretical and practical system for administering its ever widening affairs.

From France

The following report appeared in the newspaper, *Le Lorrain*, of June 9th, 1964: "Bless, we pray you most humbly, this furnace; preserve it from the wiles and cunning of the Devil and make it useful and productive. May the workmen obtain from it, by virtue of a well managed fire, good metal."

Such was the prayer offered up by the Curé of Our Lady of Franchepré, the Abbé Jacques, yesterday morning before blessing the huge new furnace of the Wendel works. An altar had been set up in the vast hall in front of the round base of this mighty 250 ft.-high mass of metal.

Messrs. De Mitry, Henri de Wendel, Mme. Maurice de Wendel and all the directors and management of this great steel works were present at the benediction.

(Translated from the *Courrier Rationnel*, August, 1964, by C.B.B.)

GRIEG ON THEOLOGIAN

Letter of Edvard Grieg, the composer, to George Brandes (1882). [In Norway] "a great many of the professional reviewers are theologians, more or less disguised; and these gentlemen are, as a rule, quite unable to criticise literature rationally. That enfeeblement of the judgment which, at least in the case of the average man, is an inevitable consequence of protracted occupation with theological studies, betrays itself more especially in the judgment of human character, human actions, and human motives."

Church Tax Exemption in the USA

By JACK ODOM (California)

OUR GENEROUS American laws granting tax exemption to religious institutions are "windfalls" for the Roman Catholic Church, which is rapidly becoming the richest and most powerful property owner in the United States. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, that Church spends more money on new construction every year than any individual or organisation except the Federal Government. Not only are its churches, convents, schools and luxurious parish houses exempt from taxes, but many commercial money-making business enterprises are placed under an umbrella of "church property" in order to get favoured treatment at the tax office. For many years the "Christian Brothers" order used the political pressure of its Church to get undeserved exemption from federal income taxes on the huge profits of its multi-million dollar liquor industry in California. This fraud was finally exposed and brought to public attention by POAU (Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State). Since then the Church has been forced to pay its liquor taxes as other distilleries do.

An outstanding example of how the Catholic Church abuses its tax exemption privilege is found in the operation of its hospitals. They evade their share of taxes by a claim of being "non-profit," although their rates are about the same as other hospitals who must compete with them while paying taxes on their property and their income. Their tax-free status, plus the fact that their hospitals are staffed largely by nuns who are forced to work for little or no wages, makes them the best investment the Church has from a money-making standpoint.

Our government in Washington is top-heavy with devout Roman Catholics who use every means at their disposal to enrich their Church at taxpayers' expense.

Any property acquired by the Church is promptly removed from the tax rolls and added to the billions of dollars worth of tax-free property owned by this powerful Rome-controlled political corporation. This much-abused privilege of tax exemption is an indirect subsidy of tax money to the Roman Catholic Church since it forces honest taxpayers to pay the taxes the world's richest corporation is permitted to evade.

Catholic congregations do not own their property as other Churches do. Neither do they have any voice in the use or control of it. All Catholic property of whatever nature is recorded in the name of the bishop of the Diocese in which it is located. Since the bishops are appointed by the Pope as his direct representatives, it can be rightfully said that all Catholic property in this country is owned and controlled by an alien potentate. This vast, tax-free empire controlled from Rome is expanding daily at an alarming rate. In many communities tax-exempt property exceeds taxable property in value. The taxpayers' burden increases every year as the tax base decreases. The result is that many honest citizens are forced to sell their property that they are no longer able to pay taxes on. The Churches grow richer and more powerful as their tax burden is shifted to tax-paying citizens. Where will it all end? Since County Tax Assessors are elected officials, few of them have the courage to risk political retaliation by the Catholic vote by refusing a demand for tax exemption on any Catholic property.

The Crimes of the Popes (A chapter from *The Crimes of Christianity* by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler) Price 6d. postage 3d.

From Germany

THE FOLLOWING information may be of interest to foreign readers. This country has turned the clocks backward to an extent that the few of us who understand what is going on can only be alarmed at what will happen when we are asked to take any decision regarding the international situation.

Neue Juristische Wochenschrift, a weekly, with the highest circulation among competent journals in matters of law, published a few statistics in No. 29 of July 16th, 1964 under the headline: "Information from the Universities."

According to official Federal Statistics at Wiesbaden there were 265,168 students enrolled in the winter 1963/64 at 48 universities and colleges of similar status, including 17 institutions with philosophical—theological subjects only, and ecclesiastical colleges. Chosen subjects were:

- 15.4 per cent technical,
- 15.0 per cent economics,
- 14.8 per cent (natural) sciences—chemistry, biology, physics, pharmacy,
- 11.8 per cent medicine,
- 8.2 per cent law,
- 5.8 per cent teachers of elementary, secondary, grammar, professional schools, and
- 20.7 per cent theology and philosophy! 10 per cent of these being from foreign countries.

Think of it, every fifth student a dreamer! Teachers are trained either at special colleges or at philosophical colleges, but they are bunched together here. Technical colleges are either separated from general universities, or counted with the sciences. Of interest is the fact that it is impossible to decide from these figures how few are studying theology. Though a separate subject at each university, it is not given separately here. What we call *Kultur* you call civilisation. Religion has something to do with *Kultus*—cult. But the *Länder* has ministries for *Kultur*, dealing with schools, churches and other matters at one and the same time.

I attended lectures only last month on the Philosophy of Law, given by a young lecturer who previously held a position in the Ministry of the Interior for Bavaria at Munich. What he offered was a mixture of various Jesuit authors with the stress on this: that there is no evolution in any thinking, philosophical or other. Only when a notion of divinity is a priori accepted, from the order of things as they appear can one find a standard for justice!

CORRESPONDENCE

CALVIN

The Reformation has been the happy hunting ground for professional theologians for three-and-a-half centuries, but its real motives—economic—are always obscured.

John Knox was an outstanding life-denying, joy-destroying fanatic. The Roman Church owned half the entire land revenues of the country, with Church taxes (or tithes) on all the products of all the tenantry, on all estates. The Reformation was an economic movement of rising commerce, not a religious revival. Even Knox himself had to admit his failure: "The Papistical tyranny has only changed into the tyranny of the lord or the laird." On his deathbed he denounced the "nobilitie" who had "greedily gripped the possessions of the kirk." The triumph of Calvinism was ably described by Buckle in the third volume of *History of Civilisation* (Chapter 4, pp. 268-9):

"To be poor, dirty and hungry, to pass through life in misery and to leave it with fear, to be plagued with boils and sores and diseases of every kind, to be always sighing and groaning, to have the face streaming with tears and the chest heaving with sobs, was deemed a proof of goodness. Whatever was natural was wrong. The clergy deprived people of their holidays, their amusements, their shows, their games and their sports; they

repressed every appearance of joy, they stopped all festivities. Then truly did darkness sit on the land . . . Men became troubled, melancholy and ascetic."

No wonder Ingersoll describes the meeting of Calvin and Knox in Geneva as like the meeting of two jaws of a wild beast.

D. FYFE.

HUMANISM AND HAPPINESS

Mrs. Mouat thinks it is a pity that I rely on Kierkegaard for a description of Humanism, but I think that it would do her well to study Kierkegaard for herself. He was a man of genius writing for the sake of truth, and not a mere puppet writing for some Christian sect or organisation. He therefore had no need to give a false description of Humanism.

Mrs. Mouat says that she distrusts people who revel in their misery, and thinks them to be callous towards the sufferings of others. But my wordly wisdom has taught me otherwise. It is usually the seekers after happiness who are the most callous, especially when their ends are being thwarted.

Did not Bernard Shaw say: "Hell is the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness?"

A. SMITH.

OBITUARY

Margaret Agnes McCall, who died on August 14th, a few days after her 74th birthday, had been a Freethinker most of her adult life, and active in the movement until deterioration in her health prevented it.

Born in Yorkshire, Mrs. McCall spent the greater part of her life in Manchester where, with her late husband, she was a keen supporter—and for some time an official—of the local branch of the National Secular Society. They were both great admirers of the late editor of *THE FREETHINKER*, Chapman Cohen. She is survived by a son and a daughter, the former being the present editor of this paper.

The cremation took place quietly, with no service, at West Herts. Crematorium, on August 18th.

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