

The Freethinker

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In chapters 23-26 of the Acts, we also have an account of a conflict of competence between the Jewish and the Roman authorities concerning the question as to whether the Apostle Paul—a Roman citizen!—ought to be tried by a Jewish or a Roman court. Acts 26: 10 puts the following declaration on the lips of Paul: "On the authority of the senior priests, I sent many of the saints [Christians] to prison. When they were put to death, I cast my vote against them." The relevant point when appraising the significance of this declaration, is not whether Paul actually uttered these words or not. Nor does it matter much whether the statement here ascribed to him is historically correct. Of significance is the fact that the author of the Acts, writing in the latter part of the first century, had Paul make this statement. If jurisdiction in capital cases was in Judaea reserved to the Roman governor, it would have been common knowledge among the readers of the Acts of the Apostles that Jewish criminal courts had no right to carry out capital sentences and that Paul the Apostle could not have taken part in proceedings of this sort. Yet, in the Acts, Paul makes the above quoted statement to the Roman governor's own face. Would the author of the Acts have deliberately invited contradiction by attributing a statement to Paul that his readers must have known to be incorrect?

Evidence of Jurisdiction

Even in later centuries, several Fathers of the Church preserved knowledge of the fact that in the time of Jesus Jewish law courts in Judaea exercised unlimited jurisdiction over Jews who were being tried for capital offences. Origen describes the condition of the Jewish judiciary after the year 70, and explains that it lost its capital jurisdiction as a result of the victory of Roman arms.⁹ In another passage, Origen mentions that Jewish law courts continued to administer the death penalty even after the year 70, but were now compelled to do so clandestinely in order not to risk a conflict with the Roman rulers whom they were defying.¹⁰

Origen wrote in the early 3rd century. Still later, Augustine of Hippo, when commenting on the passage of the Fourth Gospel which denies the Jewish leaders any right to carry out sentences of death,¹¹ offers the following explanation: "This is to be understood in the sense that the Jews could not carry out an execution because they were celebrating a festival."¹² Thus according to Augustine, the Jews of Jesus's time were not deprived of the right to put sentences of death into effect; they voluntarily refrained from exercising their legitimate right on a day that was a holy day. John Chrysostom of Antioch has the same explanation.¹³

Those who contend that the Sanhedrin lacked the power to administer the death sentence it is alleged to have passed on Jesus¹⁴ are therefore giving inadequate weight to the evidence which the New Testament itself provides. What is more, they fail to draw the logical conclusion from their argument when they maintain that the Sanhedrin

was authorised to pass a sentence of death, yet not authorised to carry out this sentence without endorsement from the Roman procurator. For if it were indeed the procurator's duty to confirm or set aside a death sentence passed by a Jewish court, he would have been required to review the case in terms of Jewish law—that law that had been applied by the inferior court which passed sentence. Unless the procurator were an expert in the procedures and substance of Jewish law, it would have been impossible for him to do this. The Romans, however, true to their maxim not to become embroiled in the religious affairs of subject or associate nations permitted the Sanhedrin jurisdiction in all cases, including capital ones, where Jewish religious law came into question.

But even supposing that Jewish authorities were prevented by constitutional limitations from putting into effect a death sentence which they had passed on religious grounds, they would still not have needed to invent a political charge of sedition. It is ridiculous to assert, as some quasi-scholars do, that Pontius Pilate would have taken no cognizance of an accusation on religious grounds, that he might have "shrugged his shoulders" if the representatives of the Sanhedrin had asked him to confirm a sentence passed for blasphemy. When Rome took over the political administration of Judaea (at the wish of the Jews themselves, who hoped to enjoy a greater measure of autonomy under Roman domination than they had done under the misgovernment of the Herodian dynasty), the Emperor recognised Rome's obligation to uphold the ancestral Jewish law and religion in the country. And Roman law provided the death penalty for religious offences. We know from Josephus that a Roman procurator sentenced a Roman soldier to death because that soldier had shown disrespect for a scroll of the Jewish Scriptures.¹⁵ In other words, the Jewish religion, to use a modern expression, was "the religion of the State" in Judaea, even in procuratorial times. Hence, supposing that the Sanhedrin was not in a position to put into effect its own judgment and therefore referred Jesus's case to Pilate, the Jewish councillors, if they were bent on destroying him, could simply have accused Jesus of a religious offence.

Different Ideas of Jesus's Function

It may be argued—and not without justification—that the charge of sedition on which Jesus was tried and executed was made by his enemies, Jewish or Roman, and that it says nothing about his own aims or of the state of his own mind. Owing to their nature and their origin, the Gospels are unsuitable as documents that would allow access to the mind of Jesus. They contain a number of his authentic sayings; they give a general outline or a fleeting picture of what sort of man he was; but they provide us with no information of his aims in particular situations of his life such as his last visit to Jerusalem. The Gospels do contain, however, traditions of undeniably Christian origin which assert a claim to kingship on behalf of Jesus. In two

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Trial of Jesus (2)

By PAUL WINTER

of the Gospels, for instance, we find the genealogies of Jesus, intended to trace back his descent to David¹⁶ and thus establish the legitimacy of his royal rights as David's heir. In one Gospel, we find the solemn announcement of Jesus's birth, made by an angel who promises Mary that Jesus will inherit his royal ancestor's throne and reign over the house of Jacob. In two of the Gospels, we find on Jesus's lips a declaration to his twelve disciples that they will sit on thrones and judge the tribes of Israel. In one of the Gospels we also read that Jesus's followers, after the shattering experience of their master's death, voiced their despair in the words, "We had hoped that it would be he who comes to redeem Israel."

Now the Gospels (all written two and three generations after the death of Jesus) reflect a great variety of traditions that developed in different surroundings and at different times. These traditions express divergent concepts of the character and function which various groups of people, all in some way attached to the memory of Jesus, assigned to him. The clearest indication of the differences in their outlook lies in the titular designations they gave to him. Sometimes he is called "teacher", sometimes "the Son of Man", sometimes "the Prophet", sometimes "the Son of David", sometimes "the Messiah (Christ)", sometimes "the Son of God"; he is also called by several other names. These titles are by no means synonymous. Each describes a distinct social status or a specific theological concept, pointing to a different role in the eschatological drama of history which the followers of Jesus expected to unfold.

Messiah and Christ

The title which in due course came to supplant all the others is, of course, *christos* ("Christ" in English) which is Greek for the Hebrew *mashiah*, meaning "The Anointed One". Anointing was in ancient Jewish custom the formal act of investing the holder of the highest office in the Jewish polity with authority over those under his command, the act by which his legitimate appointment to the leadership of the nation was made known to one and all. What coronation is in British constitutional law, anointing was in Jewish law. The Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, was thus a title of honour, due to the highest functionary of the Jewish state. By the time of the Apostle Paul, however, the concept of messiahship, or rather christhood, had already advanced far beyond its primary connotation and towards the meaning which it now holds for Christians, denoting to them a Being of supra-historical significance and of transcendent character. This change resulted—to simplify a complex process—from the gradual amalgamation of two distinct eschatological concepts which were in vogue among Jews in the New Testament era: the expectation of a messiah who would re-establish Israel's political independence; and the expectation of the coming of the Son of Man, a mythical figure who would restore man to the primordial glory that was his before Adam fell from the friendship of God. A certain group of Jews, who believed that Jesus of Nazareth would take on a paramount role in the impending last act of human history, thought and spoke of him as the *Messiah*; another group of Jews, no less convinced of Jesus's vocation, thought of him in terms of the apocalyptic *Son of Man*. The two groups mixed, their members coalesced, and the combined group continued to use for their cult-hero the designation "Christ" (a title borrowed from legal-political terminology) while now attributing to the Christ the characteristics and functions of the transcendent, supra-historical Son of Man. The spread of Christianity to parts beyond Galilee and Judaea and the influx of converts with pagan antecedents accelerated the process of change, for to converts from the Gentile world the primary meaning of the

word "Christ-Messiah" was unknown. There is already in the New Testament, the Gospels as well as the Epistles, a difference between what Christians meant when they used the expression "Christ", and what "Messiah" meant in Jewish usage. Yet the fact that certain of his followers chose the title "Messiah" for him, and that their choice prevailed over others, indicates that an influential section within the early Christian fellowship connected with their belief in Jesus the expectation of political independence from foreign domination. In no other way can their choice of the title "Messiah" or "Christ" be explained.

But if the Gospels make it clear that it was Christians who harboured hopes of Israel's emancipation from political subjection hopes for the re-establishment of the ancient Jewish dynasty, and who believed that the final triumph of Israel over Rome would be the triumph of Good over Evil, the victory of God over Satan—the Gospels do not tell us whether these hopes arose in the lifetime of Jesus or only after the disciples' experience at Easter. We can say without hesitation that Jesus's followers cherished aspirations of Jewish national independence. We cannot say whether they were encouraged to such aspirations by Jesus himself. Only what his followers hoped, what they thought and expected, finds expression in such Gospel passages as Matthew 1:1-16 or Luke 3:23-31, in Luke 1:33, in Matthew 19:28 or Luke 22:30, or in Luke 24:21. What Jesus himself thought, what his aims were, what he asserted or what he expected, we simply do not know.

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9. "Synagoga quae habet Legem deserta vero et vaga, ac sine ulla potestate legis vivens . . . Homicidam punire non potest nec adulteram lapidare: haec enim sibi vidicat Romanorum potestas", Origen, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*—VI 7 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 14, columns 1072, 1075).
10. Origen, *Letter to Africanus* 14 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 11, column 84).
11. John 18:31.
12. Augustine, *On John*, Tractate CXIV 4 (Patrologia Latina, Vol. 35, column 1937).
13. Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXXIII 4 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 59, column 452).
14. Mark 14:64b; Matthew 26:66.
15. Josephus, *The Jewish War*—II 231. For similar instances of Roman deference to the susceptibilities of the Jewish population, see *The Jewish War*—III 246 and *Antiquities*—XX 136.
16. Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-31. The two "family trees" were manifestly revised before being incorporated into the Gospels. In the evangelists' presentation, the line of Jesus's descent from David is broken (in Matthew 1:16 and Luke 3:23) as a result of rewording.

CHRISTIANITY AND INSANITY

THE primitive treatment of lunatics as illustrated by Hogarth's engraving of Bedlam, was, said David Thomson in the *Radio Times* (1/4/65), "strictly at variance both with early Christian and latter-day psychiatric methods". Mr. Thomson, like A.D. White (in *The Warfare of Science with Theology*), sees sweetness in Jesus's treatment of the insane. Yet, as White showed, the Greeks and Romans had made considerable progress towards a genuinely scientific attitude to madness (Hippocrates, in the fifth century BC, called it simply disease of the brain) whereas "the Christian Church at an early period in its existence virtually gave up the noble conquests of Greek and Roman science in this field, and originated, for persons supposed to be possessed, a regular discipline, developed out of dogmatic theology". And the belief in demoniacal possession—the cause of incalculable suffering for nearly 18 centuries—derived direct from Jesus.

Objections to "Objections"

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

Objections to Roman Catholicism (Constable, 18s.) has been hailed in some quarters as if it were a completely new departure. It is worth close analysis to see how far that is true. It has also been suggested that this is the first time the laity have dared to raise their voice in criticism of the Church. This, of course, is nonsense: read, for example, Kautsky. But it would be more pertinent to ask where such criticism has led them. The truth is that very often it has led them out of the Church. It is not without importance that we note on p.12, "To have attempted to produce this book with the Catholic *imprimatur* would, of course, have been absurd".

Objections to Roman Catholicism represents a certain airing of grievances, but does it go any deeper? Take the inflammable subject of birth control; despite all the talk, and a considerable amount of lay disobedience, all that has actually happened is that Archbishop Roberts has been silenced, and two priests suspended—suspended because they could no longer speak for the Church. A priest must speak for the official view of the Church. The Church, from her position of the centuries, knows very well how to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. This is an age, for secular reasons outside her control, much exercised by sexual and population problems. This has inevitably given rise to much re-examination of doctrine on these points. But while she keeps the Catholic housewife—subject to the pressure of non-Catholic views in her home neighbourhood—hopeful, we have yet to see any official change. The Church is not so flexible that it will depart from basic principles—it holds its ultimate duty to humanity as the guardian of divine truth too seriously. It cannot "save" itself at the cost of betraying itself. Birth control may prove to be *the* heresy of the present age. The Church has never pandered to human concupiscence: God who died on the Cross may have placed this cross on the shoulders of Catholic womanhood. If she had changed her doctrines in the 16th century she might have retained hold of large areas of Europe, but she would have ceased to be the Church.

It is elementary that the history of the Church is the history of heresy. From the beginning there were demurrers. A reading of Hughe's *History of the Church* or Belloc's *Great Heresies* shows that, generally speaking, in the earlier centuries, these were limited in numbers, and limited, also, as far as the doctrinal issue was concerned. As the Church hammered out its doctrine, it is inevitable that some there were who went the other way. From the 16th century onwards, heresy became more widespread, and more amorphous.

Well, then, it could be protested, there have been reform movements *within* the Church. Certainly, there have, and not just for the purpose of correcting blatant abuse, and scandal, laxity, simony, and the like, but a moving with the spirit of the times, a rethinking of old views into new world conditions.

Those who have suggested that *Objections to Roman Catholicism* is propaganda to deceive the non-Catholic world—for the Church is always the same—have been accused of cynicism. Such people would like to throw a bridge across to "enlightened" Catholics. Of course there have always been liberally-minded Catholics. It was the presence of such which enabled the present writer to remain in the Church more years than she might otherwise

have done. But one may well ask whether perhaps *they* are not trying to throw a bridge over to us. There is nothing, here and now, to prevent liberal-minded Catholics becoming even more liberal, and coming over to *us*. As a fact, historically, this generally is what has occurred. Either, as with Fénelon, the man is silenced, preferring to remain in the bosom of the Church, or, as with Modernism, too great a departure is made from basic tenets, and condemnation follows.

Personally, I consider the importance of *Objections to Roman Catholicism* has been exaggerated. In itself, that is; it is one little publication in one little point of place and time in the Church Universal, and people who see it as anything more are guilty of a false optimism. But it is symptomatic of a wider movement.

Avoiding the twin pitfalls of cynicism and optimism, there is, I would suggest, a middle path of *realism*. To discover this, let us ask the true nature of the *aggiornamento* of John XXIII. I think the clue to this lies in reminding ourselves what, in the Church's own eyes, is the work of the Church. In Catholic eyes, the Church is only the outward embodiment of a basic deposit of spiritual truths whose sole purpose is the *redemption* of men. Christ, did not give revelations—though, if He was God, He could have—about relativity, or molecular structure, or electricity—but He chose twelve apostles, and instituted the sacraments. "I am come that men may be saved." His work on earth done, He ascended to His Father, promising Divine Guidance—"I am with you all days"—and promising to send the Holy Spirit, the comforter (as is alleged to have occurred at Pentecost).

Now the Church today is not concerned with science, technology, and art. "All things are loss that I may gain Christ". Where she has fostered such things, and where she uses them, she still is not primarily concerned with them except as a means to an end, the salvation of souls. She has therefore always been concerned to think out, in each day and age, the means to secure this. In earlier centuries, when warfare was endemic, monasticism provided oases and havens. The monks were not there to do illuminated MSS, but to gain eternal life. In the 13th century, the itinerant friars went out to the people. After the Reformation, highly trained regular clergy strove to salvage as much of Europe as possible.

In the present century, owing to (to a very great extent) forces and movements quite outside the control of the Church, the Catholic layman in western Europe has become daily and increasingly an inhabitant of a material world less and less moulded by Catholic thought, views and influences. One does not need to enumerate these—TV, films, radio, subliminal advertising, the percolation of the ideas of Marx and Freud. He cannot but be affected—infected, even—by them in greater or lesser degree.

The idea of the layman playing a part in the Church is not new! It is he who constitutes the Church, for whom it exists. While congregationalism is rejected, even the Mass is offered as, "*Your sacrifice and my sacrifice*". But perhaps we are beginning to witness an even greater participation of the laity in their own self-direction, so to speak. There is nothing in the essence of Catholicism which would seem to make this impossible; indeed, all the likelihood, since this is at least supposed to be the age of democracy

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This Believing World

WHAT USED to be a trump card for the Roman Catholic Church was its attitude to what it called "mixed" marriages. Before a Catholic was allowed to marry outside the faith, he or she had to have the other partner's assurance that any child of the marriage would be brought up as a Catholic. Moreover every effort would be made to convert the non-Catholic spouse. It must have been a great wrench for the Vatican to give this up unconditionally; to allow the couple to settle the future for themselves irrespective of the Church.

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POOR Dr. Robinson has been attacked enough (one would have thought) for his *Honest to God*, in which he unseated God Almighty from his throne in the clouds without exactly telling us where God is sitting now—unless it be in the inmost depths of our being. Dr. Robinson's latest book, *The New Reformation*, is considered by the Rev. D. F. Strudwick, Vicar of St. Clements, Dulwich (writing in the *Evening Standard*, 3/4/65) to be "utter rubbish". Indeed, the Vicar angrily denounced the Bishop for referring to "faithful parish priests and their flocks as 'Christian ghettos'". We haven't yet read the book, but we did read Dr. Robinson's recent article in the *New Statesman* (9/4/65) in which he expressed himself "not depressed" at the state of Anglicanism today.

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HE WOULD be if he thought there were to be an intensifying of "the struggle to keep on the roof and step up the full-time professional ministry and 'get the people back'". But Dr. Robinson believes there are "sufficient signs of a radical minority prepared if necessary to let these things fall in, in the overriding conviction that if the Church is to find its life it must lose it—for others." But this does not mean . . . And so the Bishop goes on with his word play. The Church of England, we gather, is dying only to be resurrected. We don't know who Dr. Robinson is trying to "kid" unless it is himself.

★

DR. LOUIS LEAKEY'S report on the latest archaeological excavations in Tanganyika (*The Observer*, 4/4/65), will probably cause some surprise. He believes that "nature experimented with various primitive man-like creatures before deciding on a satisfactory stock that led to present-day man," that it was not a question of "single jumps within a single species". Dr. Leakey's discoveries reveal a *Homo habilis* (able and mentally skilful) dating back two million years, and he estimates one skull discovered belonging to this species as at least one million years old. Yet there are still hundreds of millions of Christians, who still believe in dear old Genesis and its "divine" dates.

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AND NOW the *Sunday Mirror* has given us a long article on the weighty problem—can a dog be a Christian? The question, it seems, has "started a storm". This first burst when the owner of a Great Dane put a £90 cross over its grave when it died. Many Christians considered this blasphemy, but it was argued in defence that the dog came "from a Christian family" The Rev. R. Acworth, Vicar of Chobham, stepped in however, and pointed out that the dog had not been baptised, and no one can be a Christian unless he (or it) was baptised. In heaven, he maintained, even "a dog won't turn into a human", for "it's a different species".

Philosophy of Science—Some Facets

5—PERCEPTIONS AND CAUSES

By DOUGLAS BRAMWELL

WHEN the sun shines on a fall of snow, and the snow begins to melt, we think of the sun as acting on the snow and causing its change of condition. And, an assistant in a science laboratory will light a water heater in the confident belief that it will cause the boiling of the water that he needs for an experiment. All our behaviour, in fact, is based on this intuitive belief that the things in the world act on each other and cause changes in each other.

However, David Hume, the 18th-century philosopher, showed that our senses give us no grounds for this belief. All that they show us are recurring patterns of events without any indication of causal connection between them. The sun comes out and, a little while later, the snow begins to melt. A heater is lit and, a little while later, the water begins to boil. Repetitions of such sequences lead us, by induction to expect similar repetitions in the future. There is never a direct experience of the action of the sun on snow or of heat on water.

Similarly, when one billiard ball strikes another we are never aware, through the senses, of how movement is imparted from the one to the other. Nor are the mathematical-mechanical concepts of mass, inertia and momentum a demonstration of the means by which the billiard balls interact; they might be regarded as an accurate means of describing the often repeated pattern of events in a game of billiards.

The philosopher A. N. Whitehead, who died in 1947, agreed that ordinary sense perception alone could give us no way of escape from Hume's scepticism. But Whitehead also maintained that, in fact, ordinary sense perception is not our only window into the world outside us.

In addition to the clear, but causally insignificant, sense data presented by our sense there is a second mode of perception. This second mode, which is also associated with our sense organs, yields a direct but vague sense of causal connection. Normally, the functioning of this causal mode is in the background of our experience.

Our awareness of this second mode of perception is heightened, Whitehead reminds us, when ordinary sense perception is for any reason at a low level of activity. In a darkened room, for example, there is a strong awareness of the presence of the outside world that allows us no doubt that man and his environment interact and cause changes in each other.

OBJECTIONS TO "OBJECTIONS"

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and the common man, seems to point in the other direction. This, however, is only a matter of means. De la Bedoyere reminds us himself (*Objections to Roman Catholicism*, p.14) that "In its spiritual and moral teaching the Church of Rome cannot change". Two and two still make four, whatever new methods the maths master adopts to drive the fact into his pupils' heads. The Church remains solely concerned with the radiation of what it believes to be saving and divine truth through the evanescent forms of material life. If we reject those basic beliefs, this book changes nothing for us. This is not cynicism; it is realism. Insofar, however, as it gives the Church new talking points, and arouses fresh non-Catholic interest, it does become—at least temporarily—significant.

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Lecture Notices. Etc.

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OUTDOOR

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Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Brighton Young Socialists (179 Lewes Road, Brighton 7), Tuesday, April 27th, 8.15 p.m. Public Debate, "That Religious Instruction and Collective Worship should continue in State Schools". NSS speaker: MARGARET McILROY.

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton), Sunday, April 25th, 7.30 p.m.: MR. and MRS. WATTS, "Problems of Humanist Parents".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, April 25th, 11 a.m.: DR. STARK MURRAY, "Dilemmas of the Modern Doctor".

Surbiton and Malden & Coombe and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, April 23rd, 8 p.m. A meeting.

Notes and News

THIS week we print the second, concluding part of Paul Winter's, "The Trial of Jesus", and we remind readers that a more analytical and more detailed study of the subject will be found in the author's book *On the Trial of Jesus*, published a few years ago by B. Blackwell & Co. Oxford (40s.).

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POPE PAUL—it was announced from the Vatican on April 7th—intended no offence to the Jews in a sermon he preached on Passion Sunday. He had merely been explaining the Gospel lesson to the faithful attending mass, showing how even today the world was rejecting Christ as he had been rejected in his lifetime. The Pope was reported to have said in his sermon that the Jewish people "when Christ came, spoke and showed himself, not only did not recognise him, but fought against him, slandered and injured him, and finally were to kill him" (*The Guardian*, 8/4/65). A telegram of protest to the Pope from Dr. Piperno, President of the Italian Jewish community expressed "sorrowful amazement for the confirmation of the accusation against the Jews of . . . decide, the source of centuries of tragic injustices towards the Jews to which the solemn statements of the Vatican Council have put an end for ever".

In an interview published in the *Sunday Times* (11/4/65) the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Cobbold, told J. W. Lambert that religious plays caused him the most difficulty, and the single play that had given him "the most preoccupation" was *The Representative*. In the end he had asked for "one or two references to Pope Pius to be modified". Asked what he would do if he were confronted with a play which "deliberately set out to be a savagely satirical attack on Christianity", Lord Cobbold replied: "Well, I should have to look at the actual play and judge it on its merits. But I would start with a bias against it." And then judge it on its merits?

★

JOHN OSBORNE (in the same issue of the *Sunday Times*) was the only one, to our knowledge, who thought—as we do—that the newspaper critics had contributed to the downfall of *Not So Much a Programme*. Most of the stones have—as Mr. Osborne said—been hurled at David Frost and Ned Sherrin. For these two young men the middle classes had "stretched themselves in their search for a dialectic of morality to a range of language that goes all the way from the everyday 'cheap sneers', 'puerile', 'undergraduate', that reliable old standby, and 'bad taste', to Cassandra's thundering 'embarrassing smug adolescent exhibitionism' and on to the visible frontiers of bourgeois protest with 'peddlars of filth and smut and destroyers of all that Britain holds dear.'" Though not mentioned by Mr. Osborne, the *Guardian's* Roman Catholic TV critic Mary Crozier was one whose typewriter rattled "in spite of a great deal of simulated boredom". Even the *Sunday Times'* own critic, Maurice Wiggin wrote of "the snide and heartless Sherrin"—as Mr. Osborne noted.

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IN a letter to the *New Statesman* (9/4/65), Sir Hugh Carleton Green denied that he had "caved in" to the critics of *Not So Much a Programme*. The programme was ending its run on the scheduled date and he hoped to have "something better next autumn". So now we must wait and see. But in the meantime we shall—like one of the exceptional critics, Maurice Richardson—miss Mr. Sherrin's programme.

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THE March issue of the *Essex Teacher*, magazine of the Essex County Teachers' Association NUT, contained an article on "Religion in Schools" by the President of the National Secular Society, David Tribe. Teachers have been quiet too long, Mr. Tribe said. "Day schools are not the places to promote religion. This is a job of churches and Sunday schools . . . teachers must insist that the school curriculum is worked out according to academic principles and not ecclesiastico-political compromises devised outside the school". Another (anonymous) writer in the same magazine suggested an experiment to test the sincerity of those who daily parade for the "corporate act". The schools should be opened at 8.30 a.m. for a voluntary religious service to be followed by a compulsory "secular" assembly for notices and announcements.

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"INVITE parents to co-operate by sending their children to school early enough to attend the service," the writer continued. "Let the staff be in no doubt that they, too, are free to absent themselves. (I know the statutory position and I know, too, that head-teachers can and do exert pressure.) It would be interesting to see what the response is". It would indeed. It might be even more interesting—and enlightening—to hold the service after school hours and see how many children and staff stayed on for it.

David and Solomon

By H. CUTNER

THERE are still many disbelievers in Adam, Noah and even Moses, who think that David and Solomon were historical personages, with successors who have been named in Assyrian literature. How could Manasseh and Hezekiah have lived if they had no ancestors, and why should not these be David and Solomon?

Unfortunately, no doubt moved by the laudable desire to keep his letter short, "Ben Yehudah" (*THE FREETHINKER*, 19/2/65) gave no "chapter and verse" for his statement that Manasseh and Hezekiah are mentioned in Assyrian literature. I do not doubt that they are, but I should want to know the dates assigned to this literature. And I should want to compare them with the date assigned to the Book of Kings where they are mentioned in the Bible.

And, at the outset, let me quote what the *Encyclopedia Biblica* asserts in its long article on "Names". In column 2375, it says that "a considerable number of names in the Old Testament must be regarded as fictitious". Down to Abraham they are "all fictitious"—in some cases "of non-Hebrew origin". The writer of Chronicles, says the *EB*, "mentions many Levites whose names rest upon no better documentary evidence than the description of the religious services performed by the said Levites according to the post-exile ritual". It is a fascinating subject, and the *EB* devotes 55 columns of very specialised analyses to the problem.

The upshot is quite clear. The greater percentage of the names in the Bible are of people who never existed. The *EB* would perhaps not agree that David and Solomon belong to that category, but it does admit that "the chronology of the life of David is most uncertain". And as for his name, you can take your choice. It might be "Dod" or "Dodo" or "Dodiel". And "to accept the round number of forty years assigned to David and Solomon as strictly historical would be uncritical". Like his chronology, "the early history of David is most uncertain". In fact it is most difficult to get at any fact, as opposed to legend. Winckler "indeed denies that there is such a kernel of facts in the romantic" early history of David. And all we know of David's early history is that he had a father called Jesse.

As for that favourite story of our childhood, David's encounter with Goliath, "it has been interpolated from some lost history of David", but it "has not the truth of history". The truth is that if one believes in the Bible and accepts its narratives, then one will accept David. If one does not accept the truth of the Bible but considers it to have been constructed from various kinds of current stories with a very strong element of sun and star worship on which almost all ancient religions rested in part (the other part was phallic), then the story of David is as mythical as that of Vulcan.

I see no reason in fact to treat the story of David any differently from the story of Esther which the *EB* asserts "has no historical kernel". Haman was the principal God of the Elamites, Mordecai was the great God Marduk of the Babylonians, Esther was Astarte, often called Venus, and so on. It is all fiction, if interesting fiction. And it is only because we have been so indoctrinated with the Bible that we still believe in David.

Solomon, we are told, built a magnificent temple. Yet not a shred of evidence has ever been produced that this temple ever existed. Not a brick has been found in any archaeological discoveries in Palestine.

The books in the Bible which deal with David are known as those of Samuel, and about all we can get from the critics is that they were certainly not written by anybody called Samuel. He died in the first book, and seven chapters follow without his name being mentioned; nor is he mentioned in the second book. When and where it was written nobody knows. In fact, Samuel, as we have it, is an edited version of documents of quite unknown authenticity. Its value is probably no more than that of Esther.

But what about the Assyrian literature? In *Researches in Oriental History* by G. W. Brown, M.D. (1894), which has a chapter dealing with Assyrian history in relation to Judaism, it is alleged that anything which is *fact* in the Pentateuch, was taken from Babylonian records—he quotes Professor Sayce, the great Assyrian authority—and that the stories of Jacob and Joseph as well as the names of Saul, David, and Solomon, are the names and stories of Babylonian *inferior* Gods. Dr. Brown, however, admits that the exact details extracted from Sayce would never be "admitted" by believers in "the mythical history of the Jews". It was the facts drawn from mainly Christian authorities, which compelled Dr. Brown to assert that nearly everything in the Bible is completely mythical.

But let me assure "Ben-Yehudah" that I have read dozens of other works confirming Dr. Brown; and if I have not dealt with Jewish myths very much in these columns, it is because Christianity is a bigger, and for that matter, a worse influence than Judaism.

Humanism and the Post War Generation

By ROBIN M. DERRICOURT

It is becoming increasingly apparent to Christians and Humanists alike that the generation which has grown up since the war does not recognise those moral standards which previous generations more or less accepted. The causes of this are many and complex, but it seems to me that the "drop" in morals is not unconnected with that increasing scepticism in religious dogma which we call rationalism. In education moral training has long been completely connected with religion. When the basis of the morality—the divinity of Christ, the Bible, a personal god, etc.—is challenged by an individual, the morality is likewise challenged.

Christians might agree in this connection between the lapse in popular religious beliefs and the lapse in morality. To them young people may seem to have slipped into sin, to be in need of a religious rebirth. To Humanists, however, it should seem that the criticised generation has progressed rather than regressed: it has challenged the orthodox and irrational values of its Christian forefathers.

It is surely necessary that some change be made to obviate the results of the low or, rather, absent morality. I do not believe in the glories of a high moral code, but for the benefit of the members of society it is desirable that violence and anti-social traits be ended. This can be achieved best by a synthesis of social and personal readjustments.

It is the task of the sociologist and social psychologist to discover what social readjustments are needed to remove those causes of anti-social behaviour which are dependent

on environment and upbringing. One change which some Humanists might consider it reasonable to recommend is that moral training be not dependent on religious training nor be at all intense.

I believe, however, that young people nowadays will challenge values given them by their elders, whether with religious justifications behind the values or not. This is where the Humanist movement can help to solve the problem of teenage morals better than the Church, with regard to personal readjustments. The Church says bring religion back to young people; this would solve problems of morality and delinquency. But once someone has seen through religion it is difficult to persuade him to readopt it. Unless it actually becomes a *fashion* to be a Christian, the Church has little hope of success.

The only kind of moral philosophy which is practically achieved is a non-religious one built up by agreement, a social rather than an individual decision, but a decision agreed to by all. Let young people decide their own morality, and let us have no more moral instruction and demands by churchmen, educationalists, sociologists or Humanists, for this is likely to lead to a complete rejection of these moral standards.

How then do we bring it about that young people consciously select a morality beneficial to the individuals of their social group and others? Discussion is perhaps the best way, and why not discussion as the Churches use it—in the youth club? The report on the first Humanist youth club (*Humanist News*, April 1964) seemed of great promise. In this report the hope is voiced that the youth club will help the members "to evaluate a positive moral ethic". This is, I am sure, the only way a morality can be brought to young people—no screaming from pulpits that so-and-so is wrong.

It is to be hoped that the recently formed and commendable Humanist Youth Service Committee will work in this direction, and will not fall into the trap of copying the Churches and dictating a morality. Their efforts to involve Humanists in youth service provide a praiseworthy beginning.

Not all young people would join such youth clubs, though they might feel easier joining a club which was not bound to a church. The positive morality evolved by the members of these clubs should, however, set a new standard of teenage society which would influence the less rational members. Humanist youth clubs should not endeavour to put forward a quasi-Christian idea of an ethical universe, of man's duty to country, government, laws and so on, but should provide a forum for young people to develop ideas and patterns of behaviour in contact with each other. Only experiments will show whether this approach to morality works: we can but try.

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From Canada

By LANJE GARDYEN

SINCE the start of the current school year—the Ontario *Windsor Star* reported on March 13th—a young Roman Catholic schoolteacher has been organising his class along Nazi lines, and has held up two "great leaders of man", Adolf Hitler and Jesus Christ as models to emulate.

Brother Rene Lahaie, aged 22, a member of the Order of Christian School Teachers, is in charge of a class of seventh-grade students (aged 13) at La Mennais French-language school in Montreal. Above the blackboard in his classroom is the standard crucifix, flanked by two pictures drawn by him. On the right is Christ and on the left Hitler. Above the former is a cross; above the latter a swastika. The students are given military ranks such as corporal, lieutenant, or, for the top students, SS after Hitler's *schutz-staffel* storm troopers.

In an interview with the French Montreal paper, *La Presse*, Brother Lahaie argued that "Hitler and Jesus Christ had many common qualities". Both of them had "large quantities of human courage, perseverance, tenacity and generosity, and both had a great effect on the world," he said. Asked the meaning of the phrase "Heil Christ" on the blackboard, Brother Lahaie said it was a slogan meaning "Christ wills it", which the students repeated as they stood at attention with arms outstretched. On some mornings this replaced the usual prayer and sign of the cross. Hitler had been introduced into the classroom as an experiment to arouse the interest of students and "pep them up".

The school director, Brother Hector Asselin, defended the teacher's idea. He had tried to make students understand that there were people who had great influence upon men, who had been leaders. And Brother Asselin could not understand the sudden interest shown by the press. There was no secret about the class; parents knew about it and "many" had visited the classroom in person. The room was also used for adult English-language night classes, and "hundreds" of people must have seen the pictures.

Jean-Marie Mathieu, teaching director of the Montreal Roman Catholic school commission denied all knowledge of the "experiment". "I swear to you," he said in an interview, "that this is the first news that I have had about it". There would, he promised, be an inquiry. But he could not, for the moment, make a judgment, "for I don't have all the facts." At first sight, though, he added, it seemed "decidedly extraordinary".

From French-Canadian Catholic priest to Dutch atheist couple, the Bergsmas, who were denied citizenship by an Ontario judge because "The things we believe in this country stand for Christianity . . . believing in Christ's teaching." Judge Lech's amazing ruling has now been upheld on appeal.

I say "amazing", because the Canadian Citizenship Act does not make belief in God a requirement for naturalisation. Moreover, Article 5 of the Oaths of Allegiance Act reads:

All persons allowed by law in civil cases, in any part of Canada, to affirm instead of making oath, shall be permitted to take an affirmation of allegiance in the like terms, mutatis mutandis as the said oath of allegiance.

Such affirmation of allegiance, taken before the proper officer, shall in all cases be accepted from such persons in lieu of such an oath, and shall as to such affirmants have the like effect as the said oath of allegiance.

It is encouraging to note that the press strongly dissented from the court judgment. "We hope," said the *Montreal Star* (March 19th) "this case will go to the Supreme Court

of Canada and that there the arguments of the learned judges in Ontario will be struck down." But if the judges' reading of the Citizenship Act was correct, the act was "an iniquity", and "Parliament should change it as quickly as possible".

There are, in fact, some signs that Parliament will change the act in the light of the Bergsma case.

Ethics and Humanity

By A. WRIGHT

ACCORDING to the ancient view ethics is normative, i.e. it teaches what ought to be. The Christian view is that ethics is indeed normative in the sense of a doctrine, but not in the sense of efficacy or influence. Doctrine alone is without effect; strength and help must come from another quarter—God.

Virtue to Socrates was a knowledge of the good. But what did he mean by good? It might be asked, "good for what?" The answer is obviously, "good for us", and by that token it becomes a merely relative good.

Knowledge indeed can never make the will wholly good. It can only alter its direction momentarily and make us cease seeking our happiness. This agrees with Spinoza that good is simply anything that is relative to any purpose that we happen to have.

Again to say that virtue is a knowledge of the good is all very well in its way to show the strong faith of the Greek mind in reason (a faith that is found even in neoplatonism) but then Socrates himself could not shut his eyes to the fact that men knew what was apparently good yet often did what was apparently bad.

Schopenhauer did not believe that virtue could be reasoned into man on rationalistic principles. "The question handled by Plato and Seneca, whether virtue can be taught is to be answered in the negative" says Schopenhauer. "And just as little as all the professors of aesthetics could impart to anyone the power of producing works of genius, i.e., genuine works of art, so little could all the professors of ethics and preachers of virtue transform an ignoble into a virtuous and noble character, the impossibility of which is very much more apparent than of turning lead into gold." Schopenhauer also says that the search for a system of ethics and a first principle of the same, which would have practical influence and would actually transform and better the human race, is just like the search for the philosopher's stone. Schopenhauer's view is that ethics is not at all normative; it can neither determine life nor throw any light on how it should be determined.

When we seriously consider the evil, and the misery and the suffering in the world and ponder upon all the systems that were supposed to raise the human race on high, we come to see quite clearly how profound Schopenhauer's philosophy and ethics were.

From what has been said, how can we as intelligent people seriously believe that where Buddhism and Christianity have failed, Humanism will succeed? The suffering in the world was Schopenhauer's evidence. Is there any less evidence available today? Can we assert there will be less tomorrow?

TV REMINDER

AS intimated last week, David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, will be appearing with Methodist minister Dr. Donald Soper in the Independent Television programme, *The Sunday Break* on April 25th.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. R. Smith (THE FREETHINKER, 26/2/65) has accused me (*ibid.* 12/2/65) of making comments unbecoming a rationalist. Rather than turn in my badge, I should like to take him to task for saying that my assertion of the existence of pain fitting in quite understandably with a rationalistic view of the world was "ridiculous". He then goes on to say that I am promoting an optimistic system to explain misery away.

First of all I get the definite impression Mr. Smith thinks that explanations are only used for explaining things away much as Mary Baker Eddy did with sickness; however, most of us use explanations to relate what we think is the nature or mechanism of a phenomenon. Secondly, optimism or pessimism need not even enter the picture in such an explanation but would enter it during any discussion as to whether misery can be alleviated solely by human efforts (a rationalistic approach) or whether these efforts are doomed to failure. From his remarks I take it Mr. Smith is a pessimistic rationalist.

Many forms of pain are at variance with an all-loving God but since rationalists do not believe in God, this aspect of the pain problem does not arise for them. To counteract the involved Christian theories of misery being caused by sin, the devil, divine chastisement, or what not, the rationalist simply shows how some forms of misery are caused by naturally occurring disease, improper distribution of resources, unkindness and so on. If these are valid causes of pain then is it ridiculous to explain misery on these simple grounds, and furthermore where does optimism enter the picture unless one goes on to assess the chances of success of methods to alleviate misery?

I confess that I am an optimist. To be a pessimist, and to be consistent in one's actions with this outlook, is to bring about a paralysis of remedial endeavour since all attempts are dogmatically foreordained to failure. I have the sneaking feeling that the professional pessimist is disappointed when his attitudes are proved wrong through the advent of something worthwhile.

D. M. CHAPMAN

May I say how much I resent the R. Smithology in which life is spent contemplating death and women are only "womanly" when as irrational as the men who generalise about them? I suggest that so long as our own death is likely to cause more bother than relief, we have a duty to delay it as long as possible. Emotion and energy spent on dreading the inevitable are wasted and would be better spent on trying to decrease the suffering of mankind. As Mr. McCall has said, death is only one of many facts and by no means the most interesting. Only the very young can have time for everything there is to do that is interesting and constructive.

Those who have had stomach ulcers know that depression is one of the symptoms. Anyone who is constantly depressed should consult his or her doctor and should not be allowed to try and persuade others that their resentment of life is healthy.

I believe that Democritus of Abdera (c.420 BC) said that to live badly is not to live badly, but to spend a long time dying. The Humanist, Mr. Smith, wants to spend a long time *living* and to do that we must be pro-life all the way.

KIT MOUAT

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