

FREETHINKER

Registered at the
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
January 21, 1966

RHODESIA

The British Prime Minister has told the Lagos Conference that the use of force in Rhodesia would bring bloodshed and anarchy. The Kariba Dam might be destroyed, bringing ruin to Zambia. Where now there is a troubled peace in the African subcontinent, a troubled war involving the Republic of South Africa and Portugal could be precipitated.

No one envies Mr Wilson's position. Whatever he does will antagonise somebody. Already in a parlous economic state, Britain cannot afford to get too deeply committed in Africa. At the same time she is most reluctant to call in the United Nations, partly because of fears, which may be groundless, that unco-ordination might result and another Congo situation develop. There is virtue in not over-reacting to crises. But there is no virtue in doing too little too late, in submerging moral principles in short-term political expediency.

If Mr Wilson's pragmatic approach has been flickering like a speedometer with every current of public opinion at home and abroad, there has been no lack of "moral" talk elsewhere. Foremost in this field has been Mr Ian Smith. On November 11 came his Unilateral Declaration of Independence, including the following paragraphs:

Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may be necessary for a people to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them with another people and to assume amongst other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled . . .

Now Therefore, We, The Government of Rhodesia, Do Hereby Declare That it is an indisputable and accepted historic fact that since 1923 the Government of Rhodesia have exercised the powers of self-government and have been responsible for the progress, development and welfare of their people . . .

That the people of Rhodesia have witnessed a process which is destructive of these very precepts upon which civilization in a primitive country has been built, they have seen the principles of Western democracy, responsible government and moral standards crumble elsewhere, nevertheless they have remained steadfast . . .

Now Therefore, We, The Government of Rhodesia, in humble submission to Almighty God who controls the destinies of nations, conscious that the people of Rhodesia have always shown unswerving loyalty and devotion to Her Majesty the Queen and earnestly praying that we and the people of Rhodesia will not be hindered in our determination to continue exercising our undoubted right to demonstrate the same loyalty and devotion, and seeking to promote the common good so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured, Do, By This Proclamation, adopt, enact, and give to the people of Rhodesia the Constitution annexed hereto. God Save the Queen.

Following the proclamation came a speech concluding:

"We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilization and Christianity, and in the spirit of this belief we have this day assumed our sovereign independence. God bless you all."

Both before and after this event the Rhodesia Front received widespread support in this country. Under the appropriate leadership of the Marquis of Salisbury, the Monday Club and other bodies echoed their support for "justice, civilization and Christianity" and "our kith and kin in Rhodesia". The disinterestedness of these avowals might have been more conspicuous if the movement did not include so liberal a sprinkling of Katanga Lobby financiers with vested interests in the country. On to their bandwagon jumped the usual band of racialists.

Perhaps the worst press that the present Archbishop of Canterbury has ever received came when he said that there might conceivably be circumstances when the use of force could be justified in Rhodesia. Pontificating archbishops are always an irritant, but on this occasion the observation arose quite naturally as a personal comment in a debate. Moreover, the people who so loudly abused him might have murmured soothing words about his realistic statesmanship if he had mentioned force to suppress the "wogs" in Aden, Malaya, the Yemen and all other points "east of Suez". Christian pacifism has an interesting way of following political boundaries and commercial empires.

Much publicity and deserved praise has been given to those Rhodesian clerics who have denounced the rebel government and the fundamentally racist policy it supports, however this may be disguised in verbiage about development towards democracy "when the people are ready for it", providing higher wages for black workers than African nationalist governments, and consultations with local chiefs. All this may be true. What is overlooked is that the situation today is simply the result of investment and educational policy in the past.

To hear white Rhodesians talk of the fatherland one would imagine that they were at least as numerous and long-settled as their brothers in South Africa. Most, however, of the 219,000 whites, one-eighteenth of the black population, entered since the last world war in search of quick affluence offered by developers. Among the latter was pious anti-Communist Kenneth de Courcy, now doing seven years for fraud, forgery and false pretences. No white family dates back before 1890. This was the year when Cecil Rhodes, having got a concession, later revoked, from gouty and venal King Lobengula of the Matabele, sent in a band of drunken adventurers on behalf of the British South Africa Company. Not content with Mashonaland round Salisbury, they later invaded Matabeleland round Bulawayo. Biblical maxims were brought in to lighten heathen darkness. They followed Maxims of another sort. Thereafter capital was brought in for white settlers and higher education provided for white children.

It is sheer humbug to say that Christianity has always been the gospel of peace and social justice. For every Christian in Rhodesia opposed to Smith, ten support him. For every Christian outside opposed through pacifism to the use of force to crush the rebellion, ten are opposed through racialism. A recent Canadian Peace Research Institute survey has shown that Christians are more war-like than atheists. Other surveys have suggested they are also more xenophobic. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has based *apartheid* firmly on the Bible, notably on Exodus 9, 25, where God denounces the traditional ancestor of the black races: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

The National Secular Society was among the organizations which urged the Prime Minister to apply oil and other economic sanctions promptly so that the situation would not just drift, with all the dangers of a racial war in the African continent. Now that sanctions are applied the Commonwealth Prime Ministers are prepared to wait till July to see their efficacy. All men of goodwill, whatever their ideology, hope that legal government and social justice for all can speedily be established in Rhodesia, and that West Africa can abnegate the dictatorship, election-rigging and violence whose byproducts lapped round the Lagos Conference.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

F. A. Ridley

PROBABLY the greatest sensation in the religious world during the last generation (if not, indeed, in the course of this century) was furnished by the accidental discovery in a cave near the Dead Sea of that collection of archaic Jewish documents collectively denominated as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

At the time of writing, these now world-famous Scrolls are upon a world-tour of inspection and are on view in the King's Library of the British Museum (until the end of January 1966), when they will go to the principal libraries of the British Isles. As such, these venerable legacies of a remote age are no longer merely hearsay news in the English-speaking world, but are being daily inspected by thousands of curious visitors upon both sides of the Atlantic, for they also include the USA in their world-tour. Legally, the Scrolls rather ironically are the property of the Muslim State of Jordan, for near the Jordan-Israel border they were originally discovered. Their arrival in England is, after all, something of an event. Whilst there are undoubtedly many far more ancient as well as spectacular relics of ancient civilisations stored within the vast repositories of the British Museum, it is unlikely that, at least since the Rosetta Stone, key to Egyptian hieroglyphs, was acquired by the then Museum authorities, any relic of antiquity has been on show at Bloomsbury that has exercised so powerful an influence upon modern scholarship as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

For the modest price of 3/- the seeker after (Dead Sea) truth can purchase a very scholarly and informative guide, entitled with geographical accuracy *Scrolls from the Wilderness of the Dead Sea*. In this introductory document the inquirer will find the main facts of discovery and the appropriate historical and geographical background set out in instructive detail. Though naturally in the National Library of what is still officially at least a Christian country (in which the Archbishop of Canterbury is both the official representative of Christianity and an official Trustee of the British Museum), we will not expect to and we shall not in fact find, any very daring theories or unorthodox conclusions set forth in this official guide-book to these controversial exhibits.

However, what is common ground amongst scholars, both Jewish and Christian, regarding their origin and background is set out lucidly. As is by now fairly well-known, we presume, the Scrolls found so accidentally (or providentially) in the Wilderness of Jordan, appear to represent (for critical opinion is not perhaps yet quite unanimous upon their exact origins) part of the library in the settle-

ment of Qumrân, a kind of pre-Christian monastery founded by the Essenes (or sons of Zadok, as they actually called themselves), who lived there between about 150 BC and 68 AD, when they were forcibly expelled by Roman soldiers at the time of the Jewish revolt which ended AD 70 with the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by Rome. (Masada, the last Jewish fortress to be defended by the Jews, is only a few miles from Qumrân.) In brief, the Dead Sea Scrolls expound an heretical form of Judaism closely similar in some respects at least to that expounded in the New Testament and in particular describe the martyrdom of an earlier Essene Messiah, "The Teacher of Righteousness", in a very similar manner to that of the Jesus of the Gospels, though by Jews and not Romans. The strong resemblances between the Gospels and the Scrolls has naturally been the occasion for much speculation, particularly since the traditional baptism of Jesus took place in the river Jordan quite close to Qumrân, whilst baptism was apparently an already established Essene rite. Was the hermit John the Baptist who traditionally baptised Jesus next door to the Essene monastery himself an Essene or an ex-Essene, and did the earliest form of what later became the Christian Church stem ultimately perhaps from a breakaway Essene movement, a Baptist movement originally founded by John the Baptist who, as recorded by Josephus a generation later, appears to have been an historical person? For what Josephus says about John the Baptist's execution by Herod was certainly not derived from the obviously fictitious account in the Gospels. (A piece of spectacular fiction of which Oscar Wilde later made appropriate use in his play *Salome*.)

It is consequently such topical as well as important speculations about their actual connection with the origins of Christianity that, even more than their antiquity, has given such immense publicity to these otherwise archaic parchments.

Incidentally, forty years prior to the discovery of these Scrolls the German socialist historian, Karl Kautsky, had already drawn attention to the close resemblance between the already known tenets of the Essenes and those depicted in the Christian Gospels, a remarkable proof of his insight and one which, as far as I know, has been entirely ignored in the voluminous literature already extant upon this intriguing theme.

(cf. Karl Kautsky: *The Foundations of Christianity*, 1908).

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EDUCATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Gonzalo Quiogue (Manila)

IN ORDINARY circumstances, formal education consists of knowing the contents of a prescribed set of textbooks. Scholars and thinkers call this "basic education". Enlightenment is formal or informal education plus Something Else. The enlightened man is a sharp, erudite thinker and a tolerant scholar. He is not satisfied with religious dogmas and doctrines as his guides to better living. He knows these were invented by primitive priests in the remote past and put into the mouth of God. They are myths believed as true by religious people. He knows the scientific versions of the origin of life and the origin of the solar system. Some of the science books he reads are as follows :

Origin of Life by A. I. Oparin, *The Physics and Chemistry of Life* by Scientific American, *How Life Began* by Irving Adler, *The Dawn of Life* by J. H. Rush, *The Structure and Evolution of the Universe* by G. J. Whitrow, *The Nature of the Universe* by Fred Hoyle, *The Universe at Large* by Hermann Bondi, *Biography of the Earth* by George Gamow, *The Birth and Death of the Sun* by George Gamow, *The Stars* by Irving Adler, etc. . . .

If God is all goodness, He cannot wish to hide any truth from us. No truth should frighten us. Only theologians condemn facts in conflict with religious dogmas and doctrines. In this light, such men are regarded as obscurants or anti-intellectuals. They fight to the death in defending Church dogmas because, they claim, these are words of God which must be true and cannot be changed !

We have been raised and taught to love and revere our religious beliefs. Many of us have a fearful aversion against anything that tends to weaken or disprove such

notions. This weakness in human nature is being exploited by obscurants or anti-intellectuals, the enemies of a free press.

About 4 thousand million years ago, sunlight caused interactions among inorganic chemicals to produce organic chemicals. Rain water, spring water, ammonia and the hydrocarbons like methane and benzene eventually became compounds of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins. Then sunlight and electricity in nature (atomic and atmospheric) turned colonies of tiny protein molecules into coacervates or clusters of living protoplasm. Thus animal life started in the seas. Organic evolution took care of the rest. Much later some fish evolved into amphibians and then reptiles. Some of these evolved into birds, others into mammals. Darwin's "adaptation to environment" and Schopenhauer's "will to live" are both inherent in nature. These are the dominant phases of organic evolution.

From time to time, in various distant parts of space, hydrogen gas and dust, whirling at tremendous speeds, condense into enormous fireballs called stars (distant suns). Smaller whirling blobs of gas and dust, not having enough mass and pressure to generate stellar heat, condense into planets. Millions of stars or suns in our galaxy alone — the Milky Way — have families of planets, say astronomers.

Reason and science, the ways of Humanism to better living, are the only finders of truth and the only helpers of man in the known world ! To consider the unknown in improving our present lives is to deal with nonsense. We can be sensible and rational only when we express ourselves in terms of and within the realm of present knowledge !

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

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Here we have space only to deal briefly with the possible connections between the Essenes (as represented in these surviving Scrolls) and Christian origins. But actually the extant contents of the Scrolls embrace other matters of historical and literary interest. For they include passages from several books from the Hebrew bible (the Old Testament), Isaiah, Psalms and Habakkuk, at least a thousand years older than any other extant Hebrew MSS. They also contain MSS of historical interest such as letters bearing the signature of Simon Bar Kokhba (son of the Star), the Jewish pseudo-messiah who led the great Jewish insurrection of 132-135 AD that finally led to the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine.

It is not only in the quiet corridors of Bloomsbury that echoes are heard of the controversies aroused by the Dead Sea Scrolls, but in the columns of the daily press, particularly the *Evening News and Star*. They owe this distinction primarily to two erudite but still more iconoclastic articles by John Allegro of Manchester University written presumably at the invitation of the editor. He appears to regard the Jesus of the Gospels as, if not wholly mythical, at least as a composite figure derived partly from the martyred Scrolls leader who also, and a century prior to Jesus, appears to have been crucified without the gates. Strong meat for the popular press of a still ostensibly Christian land ! Can it be that the interpretation of

Christian origins also subscribes to the old proverb "What Manchester thinks today England will think tomorrow".

With what can only be described as gross discourtesy to an eminent scholar, the *News* published a hostile (and one full of personalities) reply by a Christian professor from Cambridge, who may be an expert on Church history but is not as far as we are aware noted as an expert on the precise subject at issue, the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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THIS WORLD

Vietnam

IT is an encouraging sign that protest against war in Vietnam is mounting in many sectors of American public opinion. Just to hand is *U.S. Farm News*, monthly paper of the U.S. Farmers' Association, for November 1965. Though not billed as such, this is clearly a "Vietnam" issue, and one has to look closely for farm news. As background to what was said of the Diem régime in last week's FREETHINKER the following quote is of interest: "Shortly thereafter, Eisenhower, following an expert press-agent campaign by Cardinal Spellman, Dr Tom Dooley and others (financed by Joe Kennedy, father of three U.S. Senators, one President and two presidential possibilities), was wheedled into setting up as premier in Saigon, capital of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic protégé of Spellman who, instead of fighting for the liberation of his country from French rule, had hidden out for seventeen years in Japan and the USA." Another quote: "From the revised New Testament, Gospel according to Lyndon: 'If a man smite thee on the one cheek, send the Marines and the helicopters.'" There is also an Open Letter to American Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge from his fellow Harvardian, distinguished Humanist Corliss Lamont.

My Christmas-New Year Message

SOME irate readers seem to have missed the point that this was a spoof satirical piece.

Humanist Teachers

THE following letter was sent by Miss Dorothy Roberts, Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association, to Mr Bill McIlroy, General Secretary of the National Secular Society. "This is to confirm my statement about the attitude of the Humanist Teachers' Association to the joint Christian-Humanist statement on R.E. in schools. The Association, whilst welcoming the more open approach advocated, felt it did not go far enough, and so we could not support the statement. At our last meeting on December 12th, a suggestion was made that we support David Tribe's book *Religion and Ethics in Schools*. This was approved, and a statement has gone out to the press to this effect."

BHA News

JUST published is *Enquiry into Humanism* (obtainable 4/6 post free from BBC Publications, Box 123, London, W1, or the RPA, 40 Drury Lane, London, WC2). It is a transcript of the recent Home Service series in which A. J. Ayer, James Hemming, Madeleine Simms, Wendy Kaplan, David Pollock, Lord Willis and Lord Francis-Williams were interviewed by Kenneth Harris. These broadcasts sparked off at least as much controversy inside the Humanist movement as outside, and should be welcomed in book form by all Freethinkers.

BOOKINGS are now open for a weekend course at Netley House, Gomshall, Surrey, on February 12-3 from the EU, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8. The subject is "Humanism and Religion", and the tutors Derek Wright, Hector Hawton and Harold Blackham.

Ban the Bible

DR RONALD GOLDMAN, Senior Lecturer in Education at Reading University, has told the North of England

Education Conference at Harrogate that the Bible is bad for primary schoolchildren because it bores them, retards their mind, and gives them crude, materialistic beliefs. "The major enemy today is no longer sectarianism but religious literalism and Biblical authoritarianism which is the death of imagination, spirituality, and religious insight." The same point has recently been made in *New Ground in Christian Education* (SCM Press, 15s) by Harold Loukes, Reader in Education at the University of Oxford.

IT is with an ironic grin that one recalls that the point was made in 1900 by G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball in *The Bible Handbook for Freethinkers and Inquiring Christians*. From their preface: "The Bible is a volume of miscellaneous character. It was written by many authors, some of whose names are known and others unknown. It contains poetry, history, legends, myths, philosophy, ethics, prophecy, parable, and superstition. Good and bad, beautiful and ugly, savage and tender, are wonderfully mixed up in its pages . . . But the Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament; it is forced into the hands of children in our private and public schools; it is used as a kind of fetish for swearing upon in our Courts of Law and our Houses of Legislation. People have been robbed of their children in its name, or excluded from public positions to which they were elected by their fellow-citizens. Men are still liable, at law, to imprisonment for bringing it into 'disbelief and contempt'." Remembering Charles Bradlaugh, excluded from Parliament 1880-6, and G. W. Foote himself, sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment in 1883 by Roman Catholic Mr Justice North, modern Freethinkers may be excused some bitterness at noting how tardily Christian liberalism follows Freethought. And the struggle continues. Dr Goldman and Mr Loukes are themselves "way out" in Christian circles.

A Kind of Fetish

SWEARING in law courts is at present something of a talking point. Some Fundamentalists have always refused to take the oath in courts and elsewhere because of certain Biblical texts, notably Matthew 5, 34 and 37. "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne . . . But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." They have now been joined by a vicar at Leamington Magistrates Court, who objected to the words, "I swear by Almighty God." Commented the chairman, Mr C. J. Smith, "I've never known this before."

OTHER unknown things have recently been brought to light. The state of Queensland in Australia has long prided itself on its liberal views. It boasts of being the first country in the world to elect a Labour Government (in 1899, before Federation). But in the Brisbane District Court recently a 100-year-old law has been found to be still operative. Under this 1867 Oaths Act, ruled on in an 1898 precedent, a person may affirm only if he has religious objections to oath-taking, not if he is an atheist. The Minister of Justice seems less concerned about the civil liberties of atheists than the possibility that they might use the act as an excuse to avoid jury service or giving evidence. A barrister was blunt about the whole system: "It dates back from the days when people really believed that if they told a lie after taking the oath they would be immediately struck down by fire and brimstone from the heavens. Now the oath is a mere formality, something that makes little impression on the witness who is going to tell a lie no matter what."

FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In USA and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

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LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

OUTDOOR

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

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

INDOOR

Bristol Humanist Group (Kelmescott, 4 Portland Street, Clifton), Sunday, January 23rd, 7.45 p.m.: REV. JOHN QUIRK, "A Unitarian's Objection to Humanism".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, January 23rd: W. MCLROY, "Views and Opinions".

The Progressive League, South London Group (1 Elsyng Road, Clapham Junction), Friday, January 21st, 7.30 p.m.: ZOE DAWE, "Sex Education".

The Progressive League (109 Lancaster Gate, London, W.2), Fourth meeting of a series, "Towards a New Morality", Sunday, January 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: BETTY SAVORY, "Love and the Unlovable".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, January 23rd, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "The Meaning of Purpose"; Tuesday, January 25th: E. KLEIN, "What is and What Use is Relativity Theory?".

THIS WORLD continued

A SIMILAR difficulty has just been found in the state of Maryland in the USA, where the Court of Appeals has upheld an appeal by a Buddhist accused of murder. Hitherto all jurors had been obliged to believe "in the existence of God", and the Buddhist — an atheist — successfully pleaded that this question excluded all people who might be of his persuasion from the jury, so that he was not getting trial by his peers. Jurors will no longer be asked about belief in God. Said Francis B. Burch, the lawyer who unsuccessfully fought for public (American) school prayers, this was the "latest blow against the concept of God in our society" (*Age of Reason*, January-February).

Somerset Maugham

TYPICALLY courageous and ironic quote from the late Somerset Maugham: "At my age, all interviewers want me to say that, with death at hand, I want to make peace with my Maker. I'm afraid not. I remain an agnostic. But at the risk of sounding banal, I must add that the ultimate virtue, for me, is loving kindness — what some people call goodness. Now I don't go to funerals. A long time ago I decided that I was not prepared to go to any more funerals — except my own."

Semitism and Anti-Semitism

THERE is at present a bitter dispute over the celebrated passion play held every ten years in the Bavarian village of Oberammergau. To his credit, Cardinal Doepfner of Munich has urged the vetting of all passion plays for anti-Semitism. But influential villagers in Oberammergau are resisting any changes in production plans originated during the Nazi era, whereby the friends of Jesus are blond Aryans and his persecutors dark, villainous Jews. The difficulty of reform is that this presupposition in reality goes right back before the Nazis, through the Middle Ages, to Matthew 27, 25: "His blood be on us, and on our children."

PERSECUTION from outside has not, however, made Jews any less bigoted from within. After the row involving Dr Louis Jacobs and the New London Synagogue, more factionalism has broken out in Jewry. The Orthodox ecclesiastical courts (dayanim) in London and Manchester have ruled that marriages solemnised by Liberal or Reform rabbis are not valid in Jewish law. "Marriages in such synagogues," said Dayan I. Golditch, "are a deception and snare." So, of course, are register office marriages to such pundits.

Genetics

DISTINGUISHED Australian biologist Sir Macfarlane Burnet has created a storm in the pages of the *Lancet* by pointing out that experiments to change the genetic composition of viruses may at first produce more dangerous rather than innocuous strains. "It is a hard thing for an experimental scientist to accept, but it is becoming all too evident that there are dangers in knowing what should not be known." Other leading scientists hastened to reply that this was obscurantist and alarmist. Humanists are likely to believe it is obscurantist, but may not so readily believe it is alarmist. Apart from the risks of accidental escape from laboratories, they will recall the short stories of H. G. Wells. Atomic energy has hitherto produced more bombs than atomic energy for peaceful purposes, and the suspicion remains that any major breakthrough in microbiology would be used more in bacteriological warfare than medicine.

Anglican Abortions

AFTER fulminating against abortion for centuries, a Church of England committee of men and women now admit that under certain circumstances doctors should be allowed to perform a "necessary" operation. There had been some anxiety, confided Canon Ramsey in a radio interview, over the sixth commandment and Jeremiah 2, 34: "Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents." Happily, Anglican skirts were kept unsullied by adjudicating that if a foetus could not theologically be deemed guilty, it could not therefore be declared innocent. The Church of England is to be congratulated on belatedly finding this formula for liberalisation. May they pass it on to our Catholic friends.

A Progressive New Year

THIS is the title of the editorial in *Plan* (January), journal of the Progressive League. Former Chairman of the Ethical Union, Augustine Burall, congratulates Editor Fanny Cockerell on completing her first ten years in the chair. THE FREETHINKER is happy to echo these congratulations. *Plan* has given great prominence to Secularist statements and publications in recent years and has kept up a high standard of readability and general interest. Members of the Progressive League and National Secular Society have stood side by side in advancing secular causes at AGMs of the National Council for Civil Liberties.

INTRODUCED BY FORSTER

Oswell Blakeston

I ADMIRE A. A. H. Douglas for writing *Credo: The Faith Of A Humanist* (Citizen Publishing Co., 3s) more than I admire the poems. His belief is:

That if there is a purpose in Creation
It is, for man, a higher civilisation.

This is noble; but I do not look to poetry for statements that have already been well expressed by others. In poetry I hope to discover the creation of excitement (some new passion or subtlety of the mind or senses) which, through its exemplary presentation, can now pass into life. Alas, the lines in *Credo* seldom seem to me to be more than schoolroom maxims:

Yes, beauty has no transcendental cause,
The root of it is in my brain, and yours.

This conjures for me simply the sound of small voices piping up in the class devoted to ethics.

Why, then, if he is not concerned with the effect of poetry (the uplift of astonishment granted by the senuous body or the delphic clarity) has Mr Douglas put an ABC of Humanism into verse? Is it just an excuse to say again what has been said before?

It is only fair to add that E. M. Forster, who contributes eight lines of foreword to the booklet, believes that the poems celebrate "the private life" and indicate "its profound importance to society". I have done my best to accept the verses in this light but, personally, I can find no more than a public image of a Wayside Pulpit.

NO COMMENT

"During his booking and processing at Brooklyn police headquarters on Bergen Street, Sherman Kahn . . . wore his yarmulka and mumbled prayers, cops said. He is a rabbinical student at Brooklyn College. Taken to a fifth-floor cell, Kahn requested and was given permission to leave the cell long enough to don his phylacteries for the Jewish morning prayer ritual, jailers reported." — *New York Daily News*, December 31.

"The new Railways (Amendment) Bill will make it an offence for any person to occupy and refuse to leave a seat reserved for members of the clergy, when such a seat is required by a member of the clergy." — *Ceylon Times*, December 27.

"A leading group of Scottish ministers, members of the Leighton Club, and led by Dr Charles Warr, has issued a public statement asking Scotland to 'forget the old prelatial connotation of the word "bishop" and all the unhappy memories of past centuries and to accept him as a unifying figure and shepherd of the flock.'" — *Observer*, January 2.

John Allegro and the Myth

VETERAN Freethought mythicist Herbert Cutner reminds us that the myth theory of Jesus propounded by John Allegro is no novelty, and in a modified form was propounded at the beginning of the century by British John M. Robertson and American Professor W. Benjamin Smith.

REVIEW

The Renewal of Worship

EDITED by Ronald C. D. Jasper, this book (Oxford University Press, 9/6) contains essays by members of a Joint Liturgical Group of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists and Methodists. The editor begins: "Among the many recent blessings of the ecumenical movement, one in particular is of decisive importance for the common mission of the churches in our time. It is the current 'rediscovery' of Christian worship — of that twofold 'service' to God and to the world which is expressed in the biblical term *leitourgia* (liturgy) — as the central, determinative act of the Church's life." Later in the book is a quotation from Congregationalist Dr A. E. Garvie, "compelled to ask myself whether this indifference to form is altogether justified". This is in an essay by a Presbyterian who has come to see virtue in the "eucharist". A Church of Scotland minister wants to "agree that we are all one in Christ" ready to "work together on moral and social problems". Another Presbyterian applauds the "Church militant" and "the very stuff of mission" in the eucharist, and regrets "years and years of liturgical starvation".

TO Freethinkers the interest of this book is not its tedious reference to Hebrew, Greek or Latin tags. Beneath a façade of pious and doubtless sincere theology can be seen stirrings of the New Counter-Reformation, with Non-conformism psychologically adjusting to the uses first of Canterbury, then of Rome.

Humanist Letter Network

POPULAR Secularist Mrs Kit Mouat (Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex), author of *What Humanism Is About* and of a letter in today's issue, has made a great success of her international Humanist Letter Network. There are now well over a hundred members, confidentially filed according to interests and personality, most of whom have found congenial pen-friends through this invaluable service. Though a ludicrously small subscription is charged for clerical expenses, profits have still been made for Secular Humanist good causes. Copies of *The Problem of Loneliness*, a free leaflet on this curse of our age, can be obtained from her or from the NSS.

Extra Aid for Catholic Schools?

THIS is the title of an article in the *Catholic Herald* (January 7) on what is described as the promise of two Secretaries of State for Education and Science to make 100% grants to Catholic schools for reorganisation along comprehensive lines. Freethinkers should answer this question with an emphatic NO and let their views speedily be known to MPs.

No Huzzah for Salazar

THE *Portuguese and Colonial Bulletin* (December-January) claims that in spite of "police terror and without opposition candidates" Dr Salazar really gained only 30% support from the adult Portuguese population and not the 70% he announced. After many allegations of political imprisonment, torture and murder it invites support care of K. Shingler, 10 Fentiman Road, London, SW8.

THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC PEN

Christopher Brunel

OF THOMAS PAINE, whose 229th birthday is on 29 January, that magnificent American freethinker Robert Ingersoll said, "With his name left out, the history of Liberty cannot be written."

True, though a number of writers have tried. Until a few years ago, school histories ignored Paine, but since the Thomas Paine Society was founded in England a short time ago, one example after another has come to our attention to show that the name of Thomas Paine is beginning to be mentioned — if only briefly.

The tales of savage persecution of those who published Paine's works or subscribed to his ideas has been told a number of times in THE FREETHINKER, but I want to make it clear that the victims — men like Richard Carlile, Thomas Walker, Thomas Spence and Daniel Isaac Eaton — were not isolated people, tragically carrying on a lone struggle for their beliefs.

Research, for instance in the radical journals of the early part of the nineteenth century, reveals glimpses of the way Paine's birthday was celebrated in dinners in various parts of the country. T. J. Wooller's *Black Dwarf* (21 January, 1818) records a proposal "by some friends of public liberty and consistency of principle" to hold such a dinner to be attended by "a very numerous party" on 29 January. The announcement concludes :

The host of corruption have set an example which the friends of liberty ought not to be afraid to follow. While they assemble yearly, like savages to drink the bloodstained honours of their idol PITT — why should the friends of his opinions any longer neglect to consecrate the memory of Thomas Paine?

The affair was postponed until the anniversary of American independence, "in order to commemorate the truth of his principles, and the brightest example of their success", but so far I have been unable to trace a report of the actual event being held.

Two years later William Cobbett's *Political Register* announced that the anniversary of the birthday of Paine would be celebrated on 29 January by a dinner at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. But, unfortunately, the landlord refused to permit the celebration, so it had to be cancelled.

However, in 1821 Richard Carlile's periodical, issued by him from Dorchester Gaol, *To the Reformers of Great Britain*, recorded celebrations in Leeds with 50 present, and in Edinburgh. The same source noted similar events, held in Bolton (1823), Birmingham (1824), Huddersfield (1824), and at the White Hart Tavern in Bishopsgate Street, London (1824) — and announced one to be held in Leeds in 1824.

In passing, may I hope that readers interested in history will do some research in order to clothe these bare facts with details of what speeches were made, what toasts were drunk, and so on? My feeling is that those at the meetings linked the events of the day with Paine's ideas, for such is the quality of so much that Paine wrote that it has tremendous lasting power.

In 1817 the *Black Dwarf* was linking Robert Owen and Paine :

Mr Owen still perseveres in the hope of making proselytes, and, to a certain length, we may wish him and his labours adequate success, because they will speedily open the eyes of many worthy

individuals who never have dared to think or act for and from themselves; nay, I flatter myself with seeing poor *Thomas Paine in vogue* once more, after so favourite a precursor as Robert Owen: the former broke the bands of *civil tyranny* in America, and the latter is now in a fair way of bursting the chords of religious *impositions* asunder throughout the world, so far at least as to secure *liberty of conscience*, in the most ample degree, to every rational being. The time has actually overtaken us when *common sense* has been triumphant over *kingcraft* in the western hemisphere, to secure one retreat for the victims of despotism in Europe; which they will owe entirely to the *intrepid Paine*; and the period may not be very distant that shall hold up the *undaunted Owen* as the *deliverer* of millions from the *priestcraft*, intolerance and superstition, under which the posterity of Adam have been wretched to the present day . . .

It is easy to go on to appreciate that Paine's views on suffrage should have done much spade-work for the Chartists of the mid-nineteenth century — with their demands for universal suffrage, annual parliaments and so on. He was the heart of the spirit that had made the Chartist movement. About 1842 the National Charter Association published a volume containing Paine's *Rights of Man, Common Sense, Agrarian Justice* and other works with their own Charter to enrich the popular mind with the principles of political truth and to encourage a strong desire for liberty, for the Association say in a preface that "in Paine, liberty finds an ardent friend, despotism a relentless foe; in him virtue has found a fearless defender, while bronzed vice has quaked before the potency of his magic pen".

I recently found more evidence of Chartist respect for Paine in the report of the trial of William Dowling in September 1848 for his part in "The Orange Tree Conspiracy". A police sergeant testified to the finding of the credentials of two Chartists, who had been "duly elected to represent the Thomas Paine Brigade at the delegate meeting to be held at the Orange Tree, Red Lion Street".

Perhaps some student of Chartism can shed more light on the Thomas Paine Brigade. Perhaps also someone can locate more details about the report of the Sheffield Secular Society in January 1859, made in Charles Bradlaugh's *The Investigator*, of what was then the order of the day (apparently in Bradford) for anniversaries in honour of Thomas Paine and Robert Burns. The journal says that "priests have denounced them, but they are rising in the estimation of those who are best worthy of notice, men of literature and 'the mob'."

Charles Bradlaugh, who certainly knew his Paine, took the struggle for free speech and freethought through into the second half of the nineteenth century, but I must jump to the twentieth — to the 200th anniversary of Paine's birth, for on that day in 1937 Harold Laski wrote in the *Daily Herald* :

National education, maternity benefit, social insurance, graduated taxation, the endowment of parenthood and old age, the abolition of the Poor Laws — Paine set out their need and the means of paying for them with unsurpassed insight. And, not least, he saw that their attainment depended upon international peace. War and social reform were, as he insisted, irreconcilable opposites. You cannot arm and do justice to the people.

Laski was making an important political point, and while few today can deny it, the linking of the questions of social reform and international peace still needs repeating endlessly in the modern world — which so well shows Paine's ability to continue to inspire us in the achievement of a better life.

LETTERS

Humanist Letter Network

MAY I through your columns thank members and non-members of the Humanist Letter Network for their generosity and say that, as a result, the following donations have been made during the past two years: to the Agnostics' Adoption Society £7 (plus £6 13s specific donation), Bechuanaland School £3, Bihar Fund £2, Humanist Youth Service and Home £2 each, Humanist Housing Association £2, National Secular Society Centenary £5. They are all most grateful and so am I.

It would be a pity to disrupt this harmony by replying to the strictures of Mr R. Smith, and I am sure your readers are as bored with the subject as I am. I only regret that attitudes attributed to me have, through a printer's error, been fostered upon Mr (*sic*) Mace McCarthy.

(Mrs) KIT MOUAT

A Grave Insult to the Pope?

I AM SURPRISED — and amused — to find Father Paris so put-out about my (unmentionable title). Is it the zoology or the outfit that sticks in his gorge — or the indecent combination of the two? Could it be that in the course of his sacred studies he never met with "Can the 1***** change his spots . . . ?" and has therefore missed the point I wished to make — and still do? Need I now enlarge on it? Surely we must credit a Dominican with something more than the dove-like simplicity on show in these apparently naïve reproaches.

I don't know whether employing a biblical metaphor is "a sign of decency" or "of education" . . . but I do know that "a sign of blind hatred" could go a lot further. After all, I didn't call His Holiness a bug or a louse, did I? Nor did it occur to me to head my article "That Fox" or "The Whited Sepulchre" or "The Brood of Vipers" . . . though my education (such as it is) assures me that such verbal munitions are fully authorised by Holy Writ.

What struck me as curious — and disappointing — was the Rev. Father's notion of "a short answer". Instead of accepting my challenge (to prove that what I said in my first article was all calumny against Pope and Church) he ignores the substance of both articles, and seems obsessed by this sort of ludicrous animal-comic-strip that torments his imagination. Considering some of the things I did say about Church and Papacy the title seems an odd trifle to get steamed-up about!

What is the use of expecting Miss Graham "on sincere reflection" to "feel sorry", when Father Paris dallies with semantics and sentiment instead of getting down to brass tacks? How can she reform her gross ideas about Popery if a learned defender of the faith lets slip such a golden opportunity of guiding her to the truth? Let him drop his mushy verbiage about constructive love and get down to the job of convincing Miss Graham (and anyone else he can persuade to listen) that destructive hatred (blind or otherwise) is, and always has been, and always will be, utterly unknown and unpractised in the Organisation run by Their Holinesses the Popes. We can then produce our abject contrition and all will be forgiven and forgotten. (That is, if we can fool ourselves that we never heard His Present Holiness announce "We must not deny the reality of Hell" . . . because, speaking personally at least, that seems to me a more horrible offence against the human race than even his worst enemy could wish on the Pope.)

But now let me have my last word. "The least movement of hatred" may be guilty merely because it is the least. I go in for the *greatest* I can summon up without actually bursting. I hate what your Master hated, Father Paris. Did He mince words about it? Did He spare the feelings of those who were guilty of the one crime for which He had no mercy? If I remember correctly — and as I have already hinted — His choice in zoology was more repulsive, more personal, more deliberately a "grave insult" than mine.

PHYLLIS K. GRAHAM

I FIND Father Paris's last paragraph rather confusing. Are we not to hate evil?

R. FLEMMING

WANTED

Wanted: bound copy of THE FREETHINKER, about 1900; P. Kay, 8 Greenhill, Wembley Park, Middlesex; please phone ARN 6531.

The Five Saints of Leicester

MAY I elaborate on F. A. Ridley's thumb-nail sketch of Thomas Paine, one of the worthies at the entrance to the Leicester Secular Hall? Paine certainly had contact with Leicester at the time of the publication of his *Rights of Man*; in *Letter Addressed to the Addressers on the late Proclamation* (1792), Paine writes:

"The original edition of the First and Second Parts of *Rights of Man*, having been expensively printed (in the modern stile of printing pamphlets, that they might be bound up with Mr. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*), the high price precluded the generality of people from purchasing; and many applications were made to me from various parts of the country to print the work in a cheaper manner. The people of Sheffield requested leave to print two thousand copies for themselves, with which request I immediately complied. The same request came to me from Rotherham, from Leicester, from Chester, from several towns in Scotland . . ." (punctuation and spelling as in original).

Paine concluded that the best thing was a cheaply published London edition for all places wanting the book.

Incidentally, Paine was born in 1737 (not 1732), and his great work on democratic government is *Rights of Man* without "The" in front of it, as Mr Ridley and so many others write. I like to think that Paine realised that man's rights are not limited and changing, and that is why he chose the title carefully.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

Dimbleby

I HOPE I am not doing the late Richard Dimbleby an injustice, but never in the hundreds of times I have heard him on TV and on the radio did he refer to Christianity; and in the many tributes I have heard and read to his remarkable personality, not one told us that he really was a Christian who believed in "eternal life," in Jesus, and in "Our Lord's" miracles. So we were not surprised that a religious service to his memory was given in Westminster Abbey. After all, it is very hard on our Christian authorities to find so many eminent people, if not actually unbelievers, ignore Christianity so much in their public life.

H. CUTNER

Works in a Mysterious Way

I FIND Christian theology most perplexing! When Almighty God decided to appease His wrath against the world of His own creation by sacrificing His only begotten Son to Himself, He must already have had a Son in heaven, but by whom? His mother is not even mentioned! As the other Son Jesus was "conceived of the Holy Ghost" He was not his Son at all.

I give it up!

M. WATSON

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