

WE BEGIN OUR 27th YEAR

The American

ONE DOLLAR
MAY—JUNE, 1982

RATIONALIST

REASON APPLIED TO RELIGION

TOM UNGER gives a number of explanations for nonreproductive sexual intercourse in human evolution in

The Functional Significance of Human Behavior

In what way do cults differ from the so-called orthodox religions? BERNARD KATZ explains how they all emerged from

Occult Cults

Creationists take advantage of American's ignorance of science and its methods by creating a "scientific" Bible history. DR. DELOS B. McKOWN directs some science on

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WALTER HOOPS gives us a short story about a wise philosopher in an age-old search for a natural morality

A Life Unscrutinized is Unworthy of Man — The Essence of Socrates

ARWAY

BUT IT'S A RELIGION!

It is funny how brainless fundamentalists can use the same argument from both sides in different situations. On the one hand, they claim that "Secular Humanism" is a religion and therefore its doctrines *cannot* be taught in the public schools, while at the same time they say that creationism, whose doctrines come straight out of Genesis in the Bible, *must* be taught in the public schools. While there is considerable doubt that any doctrines *specific* to Secular Humanism are being taught in the public schools, there is little doubt that so-called "scientific creationism" is anything but religion in disguise.

The important point to be made here is that logical consistency has never been of much concern to the fundamentalists. As long as it is *their* religion which is being taught in the schools, they are in favor of it, and will go to any lengths to see that it is taught. As soon as it is the *other fellow's* ideas which are being taught (religious or not), they will go to any length to see that they are *not* taught. There is a word for this process. That word is *intolerance*.

Of course, this will not be the first time that fundamentalists have been accused of intolerance. We feel that part of the value of a system of ideas (e.g., Christianity) can be measured by the kinds of behavior it produces in its supporters. It goes without saying that the truth of a system is also of concern. When we see the wonderful "tolerance" which ardent belief in Christianity seems to bring, we mark it down as another "strike" against this inadequate belief system.

THE DANGER OF NON-SITUATIONAL ETHICS

A number of fundamentalist groups are horrified with the idea behind situation ethics. They can't imagine that the right decision on a matter could depend upon the given situation. It might be right, under unusual circumstances, to steal, for example. Rather than argue what the very real "abuse potential" of situation ethics could be, we are instead going to demonstrate that there is much *greater* danger and abuse potential from *non-situational* ethics, or ethics that are unchangable and said to come from a supernatural source, such as God.

Whenever men make rules, men can change them. Whenever a rule is supposedly made by a god, only a god can change it. Gods have a peculiar habit of not being around to consult when one needs them. They

also tend to act through self-appointed "spokesmen," who have the latest revisions of the rules, just when you don't need them. Of course, these "revisions" always have come straight from God, according to the spokesmen. The net result is a rigidity of possible response which makes ethics based upon this system almost unworkable, and virtually unchangable.

Men have argued for centuries what "Thou shall not kill" means, exactly. Does it apply in war or self-defense? The only one who can authoritatively settle the issue is God, and he's not talking. As a result, *men* have had to make situational interpretations of what that Commandment means. In short, it has become a piece of situational ethics. The very inflexibility built into god-given edicts has meant that they have to be interpreted situationally by men in order to be useful to humanity. The talmud is mostly the record of such interpretations among the ancient Jews. It runs to well over 100 volumes. Even man-made laws are too rigid to fit all possible situations. That is why we have thousands of volumes of judicial decisions which are consulted by lawyers and judges, much as the talmud was consulted by rabbis.

In short, we are always dealing, in a practical sense, with situational ethics with *every* ethical decision each person makes, even a fundamentalist. The fundamentalist just doesn't realize this. The thought of ethics which fits the situation shouldn't bother anyone, for that reason.

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The Functional Significance of Human Behavior

BY TOM UNGER

When religionists feel the need to justify a particular aspect of their moral philosophy, as they sometimes do, they usually turn to the bible. Within its pages there is more than an ample supply of absurdities to back up just about any moral dictate, however divorced it may be from the realities of human nature. Of course such biblical "justifications" are not to be taken seriously, and there is no need to debate them. One does not argue with groundless mythology. One simply dismisses it.

On occasion, though, religionists step out from behind the protective custody of their "holy" scriptures, and when they do, they open themselves up for attack. Thus when non-fundamentalist Christians turn to nature in an attempt to find justification for their misguided ethical philosophy, they consistently misinterpret the biological significance of most human behavior. As a classic example, consider the lamentable fact that certain church doctrines continue to maintain that the primary role of human sexual behavior is the insemination of wives by husbands, because this is supposedly the natural order of things. As a rationalization for this view, church leaders often point to the animal world, where sex is allegedly designed exclusively for reproductive purposes. To this "evidence" the church sometimes adds the idea of natural-law theory, which is based on the supposition that immutable mandates are placed by god in human nature.

The church's "wisdom" on these matters is based on at least three erroneous assumptions, i.e. 1) that natural laws are prescriptive and need enforcement, 2) that nonreproductive sex in humans is functionless, and 3) that functionless behavior is inherently evil.

As any good scientist knows, the laws of nature are not prescriptive laws, as church doctrine often implies, but rather mere descriptions of observable patterns. Thus the church's philosophy is based on a failure to differentiate prescriptive and descriptive laws, a classic mistake of dabblers. Prescriptive laws are the kind that humans invent for themselves and must therefore enforce themselves. Natural laws, on the other hand, are nothing more than scientific statements which depict regularities in the characteristics of natural phenomena. The biological laws of behavior were written by natural selection, not legislatures, and as such they do not require enforcement either by religious or secular authorities.

Next, the religionist contention that animal sex serves exclusively reproductive functions is highly questionable. As a matter of fact some of the world's foremost authorities on animal behavior (e.g. Wilson, 1978, Wallace 1979) maintain that animals, particularly primates, regularly engage in sexual activity for a variety of nonreproductive reasons. A female chimpanzee in heat will, for example, copulate with just about any male who shows the slightest inclination, even long after she has presumably been inseminated. She will even stoop low to make herself accessible to tiny adolescent males. Indeed, sex among chimpanzees is something of a free-for-all, and it extends far beyond what might reasonably be expected necessary for efficient insemination. This fact has led several authorities to the reasonable conclusion that chimpanzee sexual behavior is an important bond-builder. It may help to keep a troop of chimps together by serving as a sensory reinforcement.

Other primate species, especially baboons, use sex in yet another way: to express dominance. Thus a dominant male often demonstrates his superior class-standing by mounting a subordinate male just as he would a female. In fact, a subordinate male sometimes attempts to placate the wrath of the dominant by "presenting" himself to be mounted.

So, in nature, and especially among higher primates, sex appears to have roles other than reproduction. And what is true for the higher nonhuman primates is even truer for humans. As James Erickson correctly pointed out in a previous issue of AR (Jan-Feb 1981), sex among humans is widely believed by behavioral scientists to serve the function of cementing the pair-bond between the male and the female. This function may have been so vital during the early stages of proto-human evolution, in fact, that the human female lost the estrous cycle that is otherwise a universal feature of mammals. This loss of estrus apparently occurred in conjunction with the evolution of the adaptive significance of nonreproductive sex. The human female may have evolved continuous sexual attractiveness and copulability as a "strategy" for recognizing and maintaining the allegiance of her offspring's biological father. This is because in humans, there is an extraordinarily long period of infant dependency, such that the female could not possibly have cared for herself and her children without help. So anything

that contributed to keeping the father around (including nonreproductive sex) was presumably adaptive. Indeed, if human sexual behavior served none other than a reproductive function, the human female would never have lost her estrous cycle. The very fact that human females do not experience estrus and are capable of sexual receptivity at times when they are not fertile constitutes strong evidence that in humans nonreproductive sex is highly functional and adaptive. Accordingly, the idea that nonreproductive sex is inherently "unnatural" or "nonfunctional," either among humans or non-humans, just doesn't hold water.

So the religionists are simply wrong when they contend that sex is designed exclusively for the purposes of reproduction. Their misinterpretation of nature in this matter is unequivocal. And on this point alone their sexual prohibitions are baseless. Yet their misunderstanding of the whole matter of design and purpose in nature is much more profound. For even if they were right about the reproductive function of sex, it would not necessarily follow that all nonprocreative sexual behavior should be banned. To illustrate what I mean by this, let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that the religionists are right and that sex did in fact evolve solely as a mechanism for effective reproduction. Would such a state of affairs justify the interdiction of nonreproductive sex? To wit, is it in any way inherently perverse or degenerate to utilize morphological characters or behavioral capacities for purposes other than those which such characters evolved to serve?

Consider the biological distinction evolutionist G.C. Williams (1966) makes between *function* and *beneficial effect*. Williams maintains that of all the effects produced by a particular biological mechanism, at least one may correctly be called its *function*, or purpose, or goal; but not all beneficial effects may accurately be called function. To say that a given beneficial effect of a biological trait is the function of that trait is to say that the machinery involved was molded by natural selection to produce that effect. When such a relationship does not exist, the effect cannot rightly be called a function. In biological circles, disputes sometimes arise concerning whether certain effects are produced by design or merely as incidental by-products of some other function. This is because the functional significance of a particular character is not always clear. Normally, however, a function can be distinguished from an incidental effect insofar as it has been produced with such obvious precision and efficiency to rule out chance as a possible explanation of its existence. The vertebrate eye is a good example. Its detailed structure constitutes almost incontrovertible evidence of functional design for effective vision and indicates selective pressure for this purpose throughout the evolutionary history of the vertebrates.

On the other hand, an observed benefit may be the result of chance instead of design. As a presumably noncontroversial example of such a fortuitous beneficial effect, Williams proposes the case of a fox that makes its way to a henhouse for the first time

after a heavy snowfall. On the first trip the animal may encounter considerable difficulty in digging its way through the deep snow. On subsequent trips to the henhouse, however, the fox follows the same path and has a much easier time, because it utilizes the furrow it has already tramped down through the snow. Thus the creation of a path through the snow helps the fox save time and energy on future raids, all of which may contribute to its biological fitness. In spite of the obvious benefits of snow-removal, though, there is nothing in the structure of fox feet or legs to suggest that they were designed for snow-packing. That is, there is no evidence that natural selection ever favored foxes whose feet were more efficient at snow-removal over foxes whose feet were less efficient for this task. The structure of fox feet and legs can be explained as adaptations for running and walking. The capacity of fox feet to furrow through the snow is simply a fortuitous side-effect. The fact that some foxes take advantage of this capacity will probably not lead to any significant evolutionary changes in the structure of their limbs, however, because most foxes would be able to survive and reproduce just as well without utilizing this latent capacity.

But in some cases the ability of an animal to survive literally depends on its readiness to actualize all of its behavioral potentialities, regardless of their original function. This is truer for our own species than for any other. Indeed, there is considerable evidence that at several points in the human lineage, our ancestors had no alternative but to engage in nonfunctional behaviors or perish. It is a matter of fact that a good deal of the morphological and behavioral traits that are functional for us today were at some time in the distant past nothing more than the incidental concomitants of more adaptive characters. Tool-using and tool-making are classic examples. At first, the latent capacity of our distant hominid ancestors to make and use rudimentary tools was probably not adaptive. This is, the manual dexterity and intelligence which made it possible for our ancestors to manufacture tools originally evolved for other reasons. Manual prehensility and dexterity, for example, more than likely were designed as mechanisms for climbing trees and foraging for food. And intelligence evolved primarily to create the flexibility some organisms needed to adapt to changing conditions in the external and social environments. Among early proto-humans, then, tool-use was not patently functional. Strictly speaking, when our ancestors first began to tinker with artifacts, they were not using their hands and brains in ways that nature had intended.

Fortunately our Miocene ancestors did not stop to contemplate the philosophical and moral implications of their tool-making activities. Like most creatures, they did what they had to do to survive, even when that meant using their bodies (and their brains) in completely novel ways. If they hadn't, our species would more than likely have become extinct posthaste. For there is evidence that our ancestors eventually became dependent upon tool-use for survival. And so it was that, because of changing environmental conditions and selective pressures, early

man's capacity to make tools, though originally a fortuitous effect, became highly functional.

This kind of thing happens often in evolution. The typical sequence of events goes something like this: A behavior evolves for a particular function. In addition to its primary function, at least some fortuitous benefits are associated with that character, although these may be of little or no use to the animal involved. Later, an environmental or ecological change occurs, and suddenly (or perhaps gradually) the fortuitous benefit becomes useful. If it is useful enough, it may become selected for, at which time it becomes functional itself. This latent capacity of fortuitous side-effects to become functional is called *preadaptation*. It is a common phenomenon and forms one of the most essential bases of evolutionary change. Without preadaptation, millions of extant species, including humans, would long since have vanished from the earth. Accordingly, to advocate that animals refrain from engaging in nonfunctional behaviors is to advocate wholesale extinction and, in effect, to deny the validity of human existence.

It seems quite clear, then, that there is absolutely no justification for the interdiction of nonreproductive sex or for the interdiction of any other be-

havior solely on the basis of its functional status. A behavior may or may not be beneficial, regardless of what purpose it originally served. The religionist advocacy of prohibition for nonfunctional behavior is grossly absurd. What's more, the religionist contention about the functional purpose of sex is erroneous. And finally, the religionist appeal to natural law is misguided. Fortunately, some people seem to know all this intuitively. Unfortunately, many don't.

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Occult Cults

BY BERNARD KATZ

What an uproar there is about the Hare Krishnas, the Divine Light Mission of Maharaj Ji, the Jews for Jesus, the Unification Church of the Reverend Moon, and a string of others. They are accused of many evils, among the most outstanding are "brain washing," false recruiting, and unorthodox religious beliefs. All of them have been tarred and feathered with the unsavory label of being Cults of the Occult.

In order to grasp the central concept involved in this anguished outcry by the "true" believers of the established religions of America, we must dissect the meaning of the idea of "occult." Since the "occult" is one of the products of our thinking processes, then we must examine briefly the kinds of "thinking" that we do.

"Thinking" has a double allegiance. One type may be called "thobbing"—*TH*inking out an Opinion that pleases us, and *Bel*ieving it. The other is "reality-tested" thinking and is called Science. This is objective whereas the first is subjective. Since they are like Caesar and God, the problem is to render unto each what belongs to each. Whenever we engage in "thobbing," when our wishes unduly effect our intellectual approach to the realities, we are in the realm of the "occult." Thus the "occult" is opposed to rationalism and science.

In pre-historic times the wishes of man so often distorted his intellectual efforts that he developed a large group of "pseudo-sciences" to help him cope with the great uncertainties surrounding him. Many are still with us: magic, fortune-telling, character-

reading, astrology, divination, and all that goes under E.S.P. (extra-sensory perception). It may be that some of this ancient baggage has been discarded, like hepatoscopy—prediction by inspection of the liver—and Oracles, like those at Delphi, but most are still carried along with our rational sciences.

The "occult" deals with hidden and mysterious powers; its practitioners claim that they have mastered the forces to control them. Satisfaction of desires, the amelioration of sin, forming worldly utopias, and providing for salvation are primary objectives. In what way do the Occult Cults differ from those orthodox—or true—faiths that so vehemently oppose them? In no way at all! For every so-called orthodox religion—whether of Judaism, Christianity, or Islamism—originated as an "occult" cult.

Orthodox Judaism was the result primarily of the returning Babylonian exiles enforcing their wills on the orthodox native population and driving out those who disagreed. It was a clear case of an unorthodox group forcing out the orthodox and becoming, in turn, the "true" or orthodox religion. It is of interest that the remaining remnant exists even today in Samaria. They accept only the first five books of the Bible—the Books of Moses—as authentic. The usurpers, the "orthodox" Jews of today will have nothing to do with those who were displaced so long ago.

Orthodox Catholicism began as a heretical offshoot of Judaism, and was called pagan by the Romans because of its refusal to adhere to the official state religion. The break in Catholicism itself between the Eastern and Western sectors led to the ludicrous situation in which each excommunicated the other in the eleventh century. The many sects of Protestantism were also heretical and unorthodox branches from Catholicism which are now accepted as orthodox. Even such occult new-comers as Mor-

monism and Christian Science are no longer derided but are practically members of the orthodoxy.

An examination of the new "occult cults" shows no difference from the recognized religions of orthodoxy. Take the theology of Reverend Moon's Unification Church. It is not "traditional" Christianity, but a blend of Christianity, Taoism, and Buddhism that has its foundation in Moon's exegesis (interpretation) of the Old and New Testaments. The overall goal is the worldwide unification of religions into a theocracy headed by the Reverend Moon. His church teaches that his birthplace, Korea, is hallowed ground—the New Israel, and that he is "the second coming of Jesus Christ." His theology—the "Divine Principle"—is based on the assumption that man needs to be restored to God's divine grace, a condition he lost because of original sin, and that grace can be restored by the payment of indemnity as penance and by the advent of the new Messiah, who is the Reverend Moon.

Why does the Reverend Moon say he is the new Messiah? According to him, the crucifixion of Christ prevented him from marrying and thus beginning a perfect family of man. Since Jesus Christ failed in his mission, it was necessary for God to send another anointed one, the Lord of the Second Advent, Mr. Moon. (needless to say, the Reverend is fulfilling his scriptural exegesis—he has nine "perfect and sinless" children).

The dogmas of the Unification Church are appealing because they exude hope and include no frightening apocalypse about the end of the world nor any hell-fire and eternal torture. The dogma of spiritual life after physical death is replaced by a time when there will be no death at all. The spiritual and physical worlds will become one, united with God in the Restoration.

One prophecy in the "Divine Principle" is that there will be an inevitable confrontation between the forces of good and the powers of evil. This battle will be a war between the forces of democracy and the evil powers of Communism and it will be fought in Korea.

In what way does the Unification Church differ from Christianity? The Reverend Moon has been accused of tampering with the traditional interpretation of Scripture. But every Christian sect has done this right from the very beginning when the first Christians dipped at will into the Old Testament for "proof" texts about Jesus and Christian dogmas, twisting and turning them in any way to suit their own purposes. The orthodox churches are still doing it, witness the relative late dogma about the Immaculate Conception pronounced by Pope Pius IX in 1854.

Mr. Moon's church has an ultimate goal to unify all religions into a worldwide theocracy. He's doing only what the Catholic Church attempted and almost succeeded in accomplishing in its early history and what is still working toward—as evidenced by the conferences between the English Anglicans and the Roman Catholics.

Proclaiming Korea as the New Israel is exactly what the primitive Christian apologists pulled on the Jews. Since the Jews had rejected Jesus as the

messiah, the Christians announced that it was now they who had inherited the mantle of God and thus were the New Israel.

Since Jesus has not yet returned and there are no "signs" such as he had prophesied that would announce his second coming, the Reverend Moon has simply filled the need, announcing himself as the new Messiah. But didn't the primitive Christians do the same when they declared to the Jews that it was Jesus for whom the Jews had been waiting to save them?

That man "needs to be restored to God's divine grace because of original sin" is accepted Christian orthodoxy—a dogma which when first advanced flew into the face of Jewish orthodox theology.

The failure of Jesus' mission to establish a "perfect and sinless" family—which Mr. Moon has now rectified—is more sensible than the Christian dogma that God had to kill his Son in order to atone for the sins of mankind, thereby negating the moral responsibility that each of us has for his own actions.

By eliminating the horrors of the apocalypse and the terrors of hell, the Unification Church has automatically eased the conscience of all sinners who believe in the Reverend Moon, thus making his religion more humane.

That death will be ultimately eliminated and the physical world transformed in the New Jerusalem, as well as the clash between the forces of good and evil, seems to have come right out of the pages of John's Revelation.

As far as the charge of brain washing is concerned, the followers of the Reverend Moon are only imitating the prosletizing techniques of the Christians who, in turn, are taught to do so from the message of Jesus in the New Testament . . .

Then Jesus came forward to them and said . . . "go and make disciples of all nations . . . and teach them to obey all the commands I have laid on you.

Matthew 28:18-20

In dealing with hidden and mysterious powers and declaring that the Christian Church has control over them places Christianity directly in the center of the "occult" eye. No better proof exists than these passages . . .

And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and they will drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; and they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Mark 16:16-18

. . . that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers . . .

Ephesians 3:10

The principalities and powers were reigned over by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2); in other words, the Devil is the governing prince.

As you can now appreciate, both the hated religious cults and the so-called orthodox Christian Churches are not much different from each other either as to their origins or to their aims, only as to who will control as many people as possible. All of them may be called the "occult Cults."

Scientific Creationism Exposed

BY DELOS B. McKOWN, Ph.D.

At various times in the past faith alone was sufficient to command assent to the biblical stories of creation. At other times, logic was called upon to aid faltering faith. The times in which we live are unique in that science not logic is now being called on for this task. The people who do this most assiduously like to call themselves "scientific creationists." The most successful of their organizations are The Creation Research Society of Ann Arbor, Michigan together with The Institute for Creation Research and the Creation-Science Research Society both of San Diego, California. Scientific creationists have been astonishingly successful in promoting their cause partly because they have been adept at taking advantage of two characteristics of the American mind, first, abysmal ignorance about science, its methods of inquiry and techniques of testing ideas for their truth, second, our sense of fair play. After all, if the merely human idea of evolution, for example, is going to be presented to boys and girls in public schools, shouldn't God's word on origins also be heard? In that way, children can choose whichever idea of origins they prefer. Furthermore, this exercise in democracy lessens the danger that mere human science will be successfully pitted against America's favorite religion. Should anyone get the uneasy feeling that science is not the sort of enterprise upon which children should cast votes, the scientific creationists assure us that "creation is as scientific as evolution and . . . evolution is as religious as creation."¹

Without infringing upon the right of any American citizen to enjoy the free exercise of his or her religion and without calling into question the existence of God, I will try to show you conclusively that scientific creationism is utterly unscientific.

First, consider the identical bills (H. 526 and S. 353) introduced into the 1981 session of the Alabama legislature. These bills, each called the "Balanced Treatment for Scientific Creationism and Evolution Act," contain the following definition (in sec. 3b):

"Theory of scientific creationism" shall mean the belief, based upon scientific principles, that there was a time in the past when all matter, energy, life, and their processes and relationships were created ex nihilo and fixed by created intelligent design.

Unfortunately, the bills do not cite the scientific principles upon which the notions of creation out of nothing, the intelligent design of the universe, and the fixity of the natural order are based. Why do the scientific creationists miss this golden opportunity; merely to spare the bills unnecessary verbiage? No, they fail to do so, because they cannot. There are no

scientific principles which necessitate, or even render probable, the beliefs in question. In short, these bills would have us believe that science had already done that which science cannot do, namely, prove to be true the contentions of a particular brand of religious metaphysics. Moreover, in terms of logic, the bills beg the question. To continue, the doctrine of creation from nothing is not essential to belief in God, nor is it a requirement of religions in general. If the scientific creationists were not scriptural literalists in the Judeo-Christian tradition, creation ex nihilo would have little charm for them religiously. But, it is of enormous concern to them. That this is so is their personal religious business. That they are trying to palm off their personal faith on the public schools by statute as science is public business and a very different matter.

Second, consider the *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, the major journal of the scientific creationists. It differs significantly from other scientific publications. Unlike the latter, each issue of the former bears on its front cover the words, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is and rested on the seventh.—Exodus 20:11." Inside each issue, one learns that the society's members are all "committed to full belief in the Biblical record of creation and early history," that they accept the Bible as "historically and scientifically true in all the original autographs," that all living things were made by "direct creative acts during the Creation Week described in Genesis" (in opposition to evolution), and that Noah's flood "was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect." Furthermore, the organization is composed of "Christian men of science who accept Jesus Christ as . . . Lord and Saviour. The account of the special creation of Adam and Eve as one man and woman and their subsequent fall into sin is the basis [according to the *Quarterly*] for [creationists'] belief in the necessity of a Savior for all mankind. Therefore, salvation can come only through accepting Jesus Christ as . . . Savior." This litany of familiar beliefs is clearly religious. Given these beliefs and the motivations implicit therein, it should be obvious that creationists can be depended on not to do any science which might intrude upon the preserve of their faith and to do such science as they do in such a way as to make the outcome conform to their faith. This whole outlook is inimical to science, the very antithesis of its objectivity and open-endedness.

Third, in the secular world of science ideas are taken to be clear or confused, well-supported or ill-supported, probable, improbable, or impossible, true

or false, but not Satanic. In that world, people who subscribe to ideas are taken to be right or wrong in their views. When mistaken, they may be seen as bull-headed or merely eccentric, but they are not judged to be deluded by the devil. How different it is in the sacred world where the supernatural forces of light battle the supernatural forces of darkness for the souls of men. In this world, true ideas are also holy and of God whereas false ideas are also evil and of Satan. As Dr. Henry Morris, viewed by some as the preeminent creation-scientist, has said:²

... how can we explain the well-nigh universal insistence that all things must have come about by evolution?

The answer is Satan! He has blinded the minds of men with respect to the gospel . . . the "great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the devil and Satan," who "deceiveth" the whole world" (Revelation 12:9)—must without any doubt be the one who has fathered this monstrous lie of evolution, for he is the father of lies.³

This must surely be the most singular statement in the annals of modern American science! But, of course, I jest. This is not science. This is religious partisanship of the first magnitude.

In addition to labeling as satanic any idea subversive of their faith, scientific creationists put on the full armor of Pauline anti-intellectualism. In First Corinthians 1:18-31 and 3:18-20, St. Paul announces that literacy, logic, and philosophy (including what we would now think of as science) are folly with God and futile. Accordingly, he bids the wise of this world to become fools that they may be truly wise and calls upon them to believe the moronic message of the cross which God has chosen specifically to shame those who rely on their own intelligence and learning. It is this attitude plus the conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of genuine wisdom (Ps. 111:10 and elsewhere) that enables biblical literalists, including scientific creationists, to be so gallingly impertinent in the presence of scientific erudition. So what if a hundred Nobel Prize winners in the life sciences believe in evolution? What do they know? If they know anything at all contrary to the faith of any fundamentalist, then theirs is futile knowledge, if not satanic, and their souls are in jeopardy. Let me reiterate: These ideas are utterly alien to the scientific mind; they are, however, quintessential to certain well-known forms of Western religion.

Fourth, scientific creationists in Alabama offered substitutions after house and senate committee hearings on their original "Balanced Treatment" bills. Curiously, the substitutes define the "Theory of Scientific Creationism" so as to contain the notion of a "relatively recent inception of the earth and living kinds." Why, you may wonder, should this be at issue? Creation versus non-creation, or emanation, or some other alternative is one issue; the date of creation, if such there was, is a very different issue. After all, any one of a number of very remote dates for the inception of the World and the commencement of life is consistent with faith in God and in divine creation. Fortunately, Dr. Henry Morris has solved the puzzle by pointing out that "the only proper method" for "determining the date of creation" is reliance on "biblical data alone," i.e., on

the ages and the times of begetting of the patriarchs in Genesis.⁴ This is not a scientific way to determine dates for cosmic events no matter how much one emphasizes the word "scientific" in scientific creationism. Moreover, it commits the not-so-scientific creationists to a date as recent as 10,000 years ago.

Having already committed themselves in a most unscientific manner to this very recent date of creation, scientific creationists must next find a way to call into question, if not to falsify, all scientific evidence for remote dating of the origins of life, the earth, and the universe. This is no easy task with life on earth now being viewed by many as up to four billion years old, with the planet being viewed as over four and a half billion years old, and with the Big Bang being taken to have occurred as much as fifteen billion years ago.⁵ Undaunted, the not-so-scientific creationists seize upon the notion of catastrophism, the notion that the planet has occasionally been altered radically by cataclysms, some of which may have devastated existing life forms, these having been replaced at later times by new life forms. This they set against uniformitarianism, not for scientific reasons but because it posits temporal spans disagreeably long for those whose religious faith includes the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

Whatever the resolution may be of problems posed by catastrophism versus uniformitarianism, modern geology knows nothing of a worldwide flood within the past 10,000 years involving depths of over 16,000 feet above sea level, the approximate height of Mt. Ararat. Thus, the scientific creationist does not arrive at the alleged catastrophe of the Noachian deluge via geological science but via religious faith in biblical inerrancy and that alone. In addition to believing in Noah's flood because the Bible describes it, scientific creationists have turned it into a most convenient catastrophe, for in their view it renders any attempt at dating anything prior to 10,000 years ago impossible. So great was the catastrophe, so great were the resulting discontinuities, creationists aver, that not even such radiometric methods as carbon-14, potassium-argon, etc. can be depended on. This ploy founders, if for no other reason, on a variety of independent radiometric procedures used in dating moon rocks. The dates in question approximate four billion years of age. This is very bad, if not well publicized, news for creationists, because not even the most fervent among them claims that Noah's flood had a catastrophic, dislocating effect on the moon, which is, by the way, one day younger than the earth according to Genesis 1:9-16.

Fifth, taking evolution to imply development from the simple to the complex and from the disordered to the ordered, the creationists strike their crowning blow when they invoke the second law of thermodynamics, i.e., the principle of entropy, to render evolution impossible. According to them, entropy decrees that all things move from the ordered to the disordered or run downhill so to speak, the very opposite, they contend, of what evolution would require. Put differently, there is not and has not been sufficient energy available for development from the simple to the complex, from the disordered

to the ordered. Alas, the creationists are all alone in this crochet. Scientific rejoinders come from all directions, two of which should suffice. The first comes from Prof. Manfred Eigen, Nobel Prize winner and Director of the Max Planck Institute of Biophysical Chemistry. He writes:

The fact of evolution can be based on exact physical laws and can be shown in test tube experiments under defined boundary conditions. The argument that evolution is in disagreement with the second law of thermodynamics is simply based on ignorance. The basic laws of thermodynamics hold only for closed systems or for systems with controlled fluxes. All biological systems are open and the increase of order is always overcompensated by an increase of entropy (that means by an increase of disorder) in the environment.⁸

The second comes from Isaac Asimov who needs no introduction. He writes:

... the second law of thermodynamics applies to a "closed system"—that is, to a system that does not gain energy from without, or lose energy to the outside. The only truly closed system we know of is the universe as a whole.

Within a closed system, there can be subsystems that can gain complexity spontaneously, provided there is a greater loss of complexity in another interlocking subsystem. The overall change then is a complexity loss in line with the dictates of the second law.

Evolution can proceed and build up the complex from the simple, thus moving uphill, without violating the second law, as long as another interlocking part of the system—the sun, which delivers energy to the earth continually—moves downhill (as it does) at a much faster rate than evolution moves uphill.⁹

Sixth, scientific creationists create a false dichotomy, the reason for which reveals the utterly unscientific nature of their position. On the one hand of the dichotomy is secular humanism about which Dr. Duane T. Gish, Associate Director of the Institute for Creation Research writes:

No doubt a large majority of the scientific community embraces the mechanistic materialistic philosophy of Simpson, Huxley, and Monod. Many of these men are highly intelligent, and they have woven the fabric of evolution theory in an ingenious fashion. They have then combined this evolution theory with humanistic philosophy and have clothed the whole with the term "science." The product, a non-theist religion, with evolutionary philosophy as its creed under the guise of "science," is being taught in most public schools, colleges and universities of the United States. It has become our unofficial state-sanctioned religion.⁸

On the other hand is scientific creationism which asks only that whenever evolutionist ideas of origins are taught in the public schools their own beliefs about origins also be taught, not as religion but as science. If a survey were taken, it would almost certainly show that the majority of evolutionists in the United States also believe in God. Why have these people—these many theistic evolutionists—been left out of consideration? Why do the scientific creationists make it seem that the real battle is between the allegedly conspiratorial humanists and themselves, the champions of God and country? Dr. Gish also gives the answer to this. He writes:

Not all evolutionists are materialistic atheists or agnostics. Many evolutionists believe in God, and some even believe the Bible to be the Word of God. They believe that evolution was God's method of creation, that God initiated the process at the molecular level and then allowed it to follow its natural course. The Biblical and scientific evidence, however, tells just as strongly against theistic evolution as it does against any other form of evolution.

The first two chapters of Genesis were not written in the form of parables or poetry but present the broad outlines of creation in the form of simple historical facts. These facts directly contradict evolution theory.⁹

In other words, unless one believes in the inerrancy of the Bible, one cannot be a true Christian. Anyone who takes the two creation stories in Genesis or the one in Proverbs to be symbolic, i.e., parabolic, hyperbolic, or allegorical, is a heretic or worse. The idea that the Bible is inerrant is an article of fundamentalist faith, nothing more nothing less, for that assertion is neither scientific nor logically demonstrable. The notion that all who believe in evolution have been deluded by the devil is equally an article of faith. Indeed, there is nothing in scientific creationism that is not an article of faith, including the idea that it is scientific in anything but name.

In conclusion, I have tried to draw the battle lines as sharply as possible by exposing scientific creationism. I have tried to be as accurate as possible. Perhaps it adds a thrill to the creationist's life to believe that godlessness has reached its present proportions because of a conspiracy—a conspiracy involving secular humanists on the one hand and the various state boards of education together with assorted federal funding agencies including the National Science Foundation on the other hand.¹⁰ And, of course, in such a vast conspiracy as this is purported to be, there are many innocent dupes such as science instructors, for example, who think they are merely teaching science but are really aiding and abetting the nefarious goals of a conspiracy—a conspiracy that turns out to be in the land of make-believe.

The conspiracy theory suffers a mortal blow when one recognizes that the situation would be just the same today even if there were no self-conscious, professing humanists, secular or religious. Evolution is taught in the public schools (in what the creationists see as an unneutral way), because it is good science, being currently the only scientific theory of organic origins and because large groups of scientists and science instructors have found little or no difficulty in harmonizing it with their Christian or Jewish faith. Creationists, of course, disagree, and they prefer at present to avoid a frontal assault on the mainline denominations or liberal wings thereof in the United States. It is better from their point of view to blame secular humanism and to tar it as left-leaning, perhaps even communistic, and un-American. This plus humanist agnosticism or atheism is more than enough to discredit it in the eyes of many Americans. Then the creationists point out that the members of this suspect group believe in evolution. The final step is to brand secular humanism a religion thus converting belief in evolution into a dogma of religion. In this magical way, humanism is supposed to have taken over the schools, making dupes of science instructors and brainwashing innocent boys and girls.

The scientific creationists seek one of two goals, first to neutralize instruction in origins by including scientific creationism in the curriculum, thus giving "balanced treatment" in their view, or second, to eliminate from the curriculum all instruction in ori-

gins. I am not prepared to pass judgment on how serious it would be to eliminate such instruction from public education but will opine that if scientific creationism is included, then a farce and a fraud will have been foisted on public education, seriously compromising science in the process and weakening the United States in competition with other advanced nations.

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What, Who Where & How

BY WALTER HOOPS

Fundamentalist and evangelist preachers know that it is important that their followers do something for the cause. Almost anything will do: doorbell ringing, giving out handbills, phone calls, carrying signs. When they are out of ideas, they invent causes. Thousands of messages have been received by the Federal Communications Commissions protesting against a proposed ban of religious broadcasts. There never was and there is now no such ban. But the letters are coming in, and the senders feel that they helped to stop an infidel campaign.

The Moon Unification Church owns a pharmaceutical firm in Korea which is sued by the government for tax evasion of \$20,700,000.00 The company is also accused of registering false shareholders.

Canon 1374 of the Roman Catholic Church orders all members to boycott public schools unless the bishop is willing to make an exception.

10 The American Rationalist

Have you seen the cartoon in which a father, viewing his sleeping children, said: God made them that way and the mother asking: What does God do in the daytime?

A fifth generation Mormon has been expelled because she is a militant lobbyist for ERA which the Mormons strongly oppose as "a threat to morality and family life." The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, a Missouri off-shoot of the Utah-based Mormons has reaffirmed its doctrinal belief in equality for women.

Another "disfellowship" occurred in a Baptist church for practicing fortune telling. The "disfellowed" member claims that her fortune-telling using crystal balls in psychic readings was God's choice for her and that she was doing nothing the Bible forbids.

A Baptist preacher of Jackson, Miss. in his efforts to boast Christian missionary efforts mentioned that the average conversion of a heathen costs \$654.00 a soul.

The percentage of young people who have serious doubts about religion rose from 48 to 72%. Past research had found that such doubts began at age 17 or 18 but now some adolescents at 13 and 14 report problems with religious teachings.

The Mexican government has tacitly encouraged the annual flight of 500,000 illegal immigrants to the U.S. The high birth rate wipes out any increases in the gross national product. Now there is some hope in reports that the increase has dropped from 3.2 to between 2.4 and 2.6%.

In Nepal Christian proselyting is forbidden. As one of the rulers put it years ago: First the Bible, then the trading stations, then the cannon.

The numbers game is on again. There are supposed to be 739 million Roman Catholics in the world based on the unverified figures provided by parish priests. The latest census also shows that 2506 priests quit the church in 1977; in 1976 the number was 2802.

A nation-wide poll revealed that 85% of American voters believe that interruptions of pregnancies should be legal under certain circumstances.

Politicians are always looking for issues to garner votes. One of the perennial issues is the school prayer. Now Senator Jesse Helms wants to strip the Supreme Court of the power to hear cases involving "voluntary" prayer. The fact is that truly voluntary prayer has never been forbidden. What is forbidden is that scene in which the teacher tells the students to "voluntary" bow their heads and pray.



A Life Unscrutinized is Unworthy of Man— The Essence of Socrates

BY WALTER HOOPS

Cicero called Socrates (469-399 B.C.) the father of philosophy because he brought it from heaven to earth. Socrates lived in Athens when Pericles was a young man, when Sophocles and Euripides were in their teens and when the plays of Aeschylus were the rage. Athens was engaged in the war with Sparta (431-404 B.C.) which it lost. Socrates served with distinction in several battles and saved the lives of Alcibiades and Xenophon. His father was a sculptor, his mother a midwife. Socrates followed his father's trade, and joined a stonecutters guild that—it is believed—became the forerunner of Freemasonry.

Socrates became familiar with past and contemporary Greek thinkers in his youth, especially with Anaxagoras whose teaching of some "infinite" intelligence made a lasting impression upon him. He was elected to various offices, and showed a strong sense of impartiality under difficult circumstances. Horace, the Roman poet, is said to have Socrates in mind when he wrote: The just man and firm of purpose cannot be shaken in his rocklike soul by the heat of fellow citizens clamoring for what is wrong nor by the presence of a threatening tyrant. But he was no ascetic; he drank, danced, went to see plays and had an eye for good-looking girls and boys. He paid little attention to his appearance; contemporaries described him as ragged, often barefoot. Others mention his ironic humor. He probably was not a good provider, but the difficulties with his wife Xanthippe have been exaggerated, according to most historians. When men in Athens were encouraged by the government to make second marriages after the huge losses in manpower in the Sicilian campaign, Socrates dutifully did so. All in all, he was a good citizen, rejected gifts of the rich when they wanted to influence him, fought for his country and was free from the acquisition-urge that controlled so many of his countrymen.

Plato who knew him best in his mature years called him the wisest and justest and best of all men whom he had known. Socrates did not connect himself with one of the popular philosophical schools nor did he found one of his own. In his own words: If I know something good, I teach it to my

friends and introduce them to others from whom they will profit in goodness. I join with my friends in unrolling the treasures of the wits of old times . . . and if we find a good thing there, we pick it out, and think we have won great gain if we become friends.

At age 40, after the Delphi oracle had called him the wisest man in Greece because he had admitted that he knew he knew little and was sure only of his own fallibilities while others—also consulting the oracle—had boasted of their wisdom, Socrates decided that it was his duty to become a teacher. He set out to get clear ideas on what concerned mankind, considering what was pious, what impious, what was just, what unjust; what was sanity, what insanity, what was courage, what cowardice, what was the nature of government over men and the qualities of one skilled in governing them. From then on he applied his subtle and profound talent for reasoning and cross-examination to expose the inadequacy of the supposed knowledge of anybody who came in contact with him and was willing to listen. He was saying: Let's examine the statements people make about certain things or problems of behavior or matters of government. Let's have a conversation (a dialectic) about the pros and cons because there are always several sides to consider. Let's take our opinions apart and see how they hold up. Let's also consider the consequences of our actions. Truthful solutions and precise definitions of what we really believe are never self-evident. They can be found only by digging deep into our thinking process, applying reason and good common sense. He encouraged the love and pursuit of reason that he felt as the dominant strain of Greek thought. This procedure became known as the Socratic Method, still used today in philosophy courses all over the world as the only way to learn how to philosophize.

Listening to many persons and their experiences led Socrates gradually to some general conception common to all experiences that could be applied to most similar cases. Aristotle considered Socrates the author of inductive reasoning and abstract definitions, the very manner and spirit with which, to him, the search for truth should be conducted. Soc-

rates was not interested in metaphysics (mental speculations); his emphasis was on the behavior of people, on ethics. Not believing that the gods had anything to do with man's destiny on this world, Socrates was in search of a natural morality without supernatural origin, support and approval. This age-old search has occupied Diderot, Kant, Bertrand Russell and many contemporary thinkers. Socrates said in Plato's *Euthyphro*: Good is not good because the gods approve it, but the gods approve it because it is good. And at another place he says: Do we know human affairs so well that we can meddle with those in heaven? He acknowledged the fact that we really know nothing about the other world of the gods, and he obeyed only certain ceremonial observances because they were the laws of the land.

There is more to Socrates' contribution to philosophy than a method of guiding discussions or a primitive beginning of inductive reasoning. He was convinced that the desire for good is deep in every human being. No wealth or power can ever be a substitute for this urge. However, it takes knowledge of how our thinking works to become aware of the difference between good and evil and to apprehend things as they really are. He often uses the word "soul" for this urge which is a sensibility towards a life where evil is avoided, and the good life achieved. He considered it his task to help awaken this urge for the good because it could not be taught like algebra or other scientific facts. He was an inspired teacher; people "felt their hearts leap" and were "moved to tears" or "disturbed with self-reproach" when listening to him.

How then did it happen that this 70 year old man could be accused of "Introducing New Gods and Corrupting Athens' Youth," offenses that demanded the death penalty? Part of the explanation lies in the condition of Athens after the defeat by Sparta. There was a general suspicion that the intelligentsia, often supported by the wealthier classes, had not done their share in the long struggle. The conflict between religion and philosophy had, of course, been going on underground all the time. Socrates had friends among the conservatives who not so long ago had instigated a coup and had ruled Athens by terror. The leaders of the democratic faction that was now in control looked with disapproval at a man who had criticized democratic government in these words: It is absurd to choose magistrates by lot where no one would dream of drawing lots for a pilot, a mason, a flute-player, or any craftsman at all though the shortcomings of such men are far less harmful than those that disorder our government. But tyranny or government by wealth did not appeal to Socrates either. Government officials should be trained for their jobs. Then there was the case of Alcibiades, an old friend and admirer who had turned traitor. Although this happened years ago and Alcibiades had been covered by an amnesty, the memory lingered. Socrates had never said an impious word in public. He had attended all required religious ceremonies. His remarks mentioned above had been made in the privacy of friends' homes or gardens. What the accusers referred to was Soc-

rates' frequent recourse to his daimonion—his inner voice—he liked to consult before making decisions. No new god was involved and Socrates could dispose of this accusation easily.

There was some semblance of truth to the second accusation. Anytus, one of the accusers, had a son whom he claimed was unsettled by Socrates' teachings. He was probably one of the young men around the philosopher who had made life miserable for his parents by pointing out how ignorant and prejudiced they really were. Anytus, a tanner, was worried about irreligion and lack of patriotism. The other accusers were Meletus, a minor poet and Lycon, an Athenian politician. (All three of them would have been members of the "Moral Majority" if such an organization had existed then.) The 500 citizens who acted as the jury were of the less educated strata of Athens' society. They suffered from the consequences of a lost war, and were looking for a scapegoat. In Socrates they tried to hit those whose leadership had brought about the defeat. Most of them did not know Socrates. They probably hoped that he would beg for mercy and plead humbly and abjectly for compassion. But Socrates had no intention to give in and presented a dignified and, at times, a haughty defense. Here are parts of his final speech:

If you think that by putting a man to death you will restrain any one from upbraiding you because you do not live well you are mistaken, for this escape is neither possible nor honorable . . . It is now time to depart—for me to die, for you to live. But which of us is going to a better state is unknown to every one but the gods.

Exile was open to him and was arranged. But to Socrates as to most Athenians exile was more bitter than death. There was a 30 day interval due to a religious ritual. Then Socrates drank a cup of hemlock poison and died serenely almost without pain among friends and members of his family. Diodorus (first century B.C.) says that the Athenians regretted their action and put the accusers to death. Plutarch tells the story that they were ostracized and that they hanged themselves in despair. The British historian George Grote doubts these reports, but most writers of the period accepted one or the other as true. When Aristotle ran into difficulties with Athens some years later because he was a Macedonian—and so was Alexander—he escaped saying that he would not give Athens a chance to sin a second time against philosophy.

Socrates did not commit a single word to paper. What we know of him stems from Plato, his student and friend and from Xenophon whose life Socrates had saved in a battle. Together they give a fairly consistent story of the life and the ideas of the great philosopher.

Books used in preparation of this essay: *A History of Greece* by George Grote, 4 vols, cloth-1881- \$15; *The Last Days of Socrates, Plato*, paper \$1.50; *Our Rationalist Heritage*, Walter Hoops, paper \$2.00 (it contains the full last speech); *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy*, Leonard Nelson, paper, \$2.50; *Socrates, the Man and His Thoughts*, A.E. Taylor, paper \$1.95; *The Dialogues of Plato*, ed. B. Jowett, 4 vols, cloth \$15.00. All available through Book Service-AR, 2001 St. Clair, St. Louis, MO. 63144 plus \$1.00 postage per volume.



AR

Book Reviews

MIRACLES: A PARASCIENTIFIC INQUIRY INTO WONDROUS PHENOMENA.

By D. Scott Rogo

If the field of parapsychology/occult is ever to become a respectable area of research, the investigators must disown many of the sloppy, fraudulent or erroneous writings of earlier workers in the field. There certainly is an area in what is now called the occult or paranormal which *could* be investigated scientifically. *Miracles*, true to the past work of D. Scott Rogo, is an example of exactly the kind of book which is *not* needed if this field is ever to become respectable.

The book examines an area which has been greatly in need of an examination. "Miracles" are basically events which *seem* to defy the laws of nature, as we have discovered them. The question to be answered, therefore, is whether these events, *when investigated carefully*, really *do* defy the laws of nature. The role of the investigator here, as in all of science, is to be skeptical *until* the facts of the event force one to be convinced that he has the true picture of what happened. In this book, Rogo, who doesn't seem to understand the proper role of the scientist, is gullible and credulous from the beginning. It is only later that he tries to explain the events in terms of psychic forces (such as mass psychokinesis), which he postulates but never bothers to show can exist in the first place. Individual psychokinesis (the ability to move objects using only the power of the mind) has never been satisfactorily demonstrated under laboratory conditions. Nevertheless, Rogo explains the "Great Cross Flap," in which glowing crosses were seen in many parts of the world in 1971, as due to mass psychokinesis by the people watching the event. The same explanation could be given for the apparitions of the Virgin Mary which have been seen at several different places and times. Unfortunately, Rogo's "explanation" merely explains one unknown by the use of another unknown. It, in short, "explains" nothing, and does no one a favor by enlightening them.

The Shroud of Turin, which is now known to those who have carefully and impartially examined the evidence, as a fraud, is taken as "... one of the greatest religious miracles of all times" by Rogo. He presents a very biased and one-sided case for the Shroud—a case for which there is absolutely no excuse, since the facts against the Shroud are available to all. There is no excuse for this except partisan and sloppy research. We can expect this from Rogo if we remember that he was the person who wrote about *and believed in* the idea of getting

phone calls from the dead. With advocates such as this writing for the paranormal, it will be a long time indeed before science takes the field as seriously as it should be taken.

—Gordon Stein

The Dial Press, 1982, 332 page hardback, \$17.95. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair, Ave., St. Louis, MO 63144 for price plus \$1. postage.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

By John Penter.

This is *not* a book about the law, despite its misleading title. Rather, it is an examination of the important concepts of the Judeo-Christian religion. The book is set up as a discussion among a number of well-known believers and unbelievers. It reminds me of the format of the Steve Allen show *Meeting of Minds*, in which famous people from the past come together to discuss their works. We are introduced in the present book to Thomas Paine, Josh McDowell, St. Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Gottfried Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Mortimer Adler, William Paley, Albert Einstein, Henry Morris, Alan Hayward, C.S. Lewis, Andrew Dickson White, William Nolen, Albert Schweitzer and Bertrand Russell. Surely this is the strangest group of people ever gathered together at nearly the same time and place.

The method which Penter uses to present his materials is quite good. The book is well-written and clever. There *are* a few faults, however. Most of the problem comes from the fact that Penter refuses to make real conclusions from his dialogues. He lets the reader do this on the basis of the evidence presented. While this may have some advantages, it also has the major disadvantage of allowing the reader to come to the incorrect conclusion. Although religious orthodoxy is not likely to be the conclusion to which the reader comes, he is quite likely to take an agnostic position. While, in some cases, this may be the justified stance, in others it is not. I wish the author had gone further in using his clever idea of the discussions. The book could well have been expanded. A few minor errors, such as mistakes in the information in the bibliography (the Freethought Publishing Company of Joseph Lewis was not in existence in 1879, as claimed) and in neglecting to call Adler, White and Hayward by their correct titles of "Doctor" would have helped.

All in all, this is quite a clever and useful piece of work, and would be well suited as an introduction to non-theistic thought. It reminds me of a useful book called *A Game of Chess*, by Richard Scott, now long out-of-print, which tried to do the same thing in a similar way. It's too bad that Penter does not seem familiar with either this book or George Smith's *Atheism: The Case Against God*, because both would have been useful to him.

Gordon Stein, Ph.D.

Faraday Press, 1981, 144 page hardback, \$11.95. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair Ave., St. Louis, MO 63144 for price plus \$1 postage.

THE ANGELS AND US.

By Mortimer J. Adler.

Mortimer J. Adler strikes again! Last time it was his faulty "proof" of the existence of God of which he was quite proud, but which we found (AR, July/Aug. 1980 for the review of *How To Think About God*) more a reflection of Adler's own ego-tism than a proof of any kind new under the sun. Needless to say, the world of philosophers was not startled by his "proof." Now Adler wants us to consider angels. Well, let's consider them.

According to the book, angeology is theology-fiction, analogous to science fiction. It is speculation about minds without bodies (angels), and is no longer in vogue. All this is fine, but Adler goes further. He insists that angels are especially fascinating because they are the only things in the whole universe that have minds but no bodies of any sort. If this is true (and it may well be), then we reject the entire concept of angels from the beginning as preposterous. We feel that *nothing* can have a mind with no physical correlates. It is the old idea of "spirit," again. Spirit is one of the theologian's favorite words, and also one of the most meaningless concepts that ever was created. There can not be *anything* accepted as spirit without physical components *until* the theologian can give us an actual example of the existence of such a thing. No theologian I have ever confronted with this challenge has been able to demonstrate the existence of spirit.

The point of all the above is simply that perhaps we should not spend our time writing a book on angels until we can demonstrate that the concept of a mind without a body is a valid and meaningful one. Otherwise, we are left with an exercise in futility. However, Adler pulls a surprise on us. He actually goes through a proof for the existence of angels, and convinces himself that the materialist position, holding that angels do not exist (not that they *can* not exist) is not correct. I found his rejection of the materialist position flawed by his too-ready acceptance of the ideas of Thomas Aquinas about science. These are ideas (as about the function of the brain) which are simply not true scientifically. They were admirable attempts by the medieval philosopher to reason, but I think few scientists of today would hold that "...intellection—understanding and thinking—is not correspondingly the act of the brain. It is the act of an incorporeal power that man possesses." Adler has let his faith in Aquinas lead him astray. In fact, Adler would do well to read the chapter in George H. Smith's *Atheism: The Case Against God* which deals with the value of faith. He places far too much faith in faith as a useful tool. When we start accepting Aquinas as an expert in modern science, we are in big trouble. In fact, it seems difficult to understand why some editor at Macmillan did not question the entire thrust of Adler's thinking in this section. Perhaps no one would dare to question the great Dr. Adler.

I will try to summarize Adler's complex Chapter 7, in which he makes his fatal errors in reasoning. The thrust of his argument is that there is a differ-

ence between saying that angel's *cannot* exist and that angels *do not* exist. The only way in which you can conclude that they *cannot* exist (i.e., that their existence is not possible) is if the idea of a mind without a body were logically self-contradictory. I agree so far. However, Adler misuses the idea of incorporeal and the word "body." "Incorporeal" means "without a body." The premise of the materialists is that nothing incorporeal *can* exist (*by definition*). The materialist's first premise is misstated by Adler to read "Nothing exists except corporeal things. . ." By stating it this way Adler is able to allow the truth of this proposition and still emerge with the *possibility* of the existence of angels intact. We argue that, just as a square circle is a logical self-contradiction which *cannot* therefore exist, so is the idea of a bodiless mind a self-contradiction that *cannot* exist. If Adler feels otherwise, then we challenge him to produce even one example of a bodiless mind or a bodiless *anything* that he claims has an actual discrete existence. This rules out as examples *concepts* such as "liberty" or "justice," which everyone agrees exist, but only as "non-spirits."

Adler's problem remains that he is too content to examine the thought of ancient and medieval philosophers without ever looking to see if the discoveries of modern science *might* not have rendered some of their conclusions incorrect on a theoretical or factual basis. If Adler were to do this examination of the conclusions of modern science about the brain, he would be able to clean his mental house of some of the errors which are plaguing him and leading him astray. This book is rather a disservice to the educational process, as it makes people re-affirm belief in the impossible. It sanctifies nonsense, making intellectual progress just that much harder.

Gordon Stein, Ph.D.

Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982, 205 page hardback, \$11.95. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair Avenue, St. Louis Mo. for price plus \$1. postage.

STRANGE GODS:

The Great American Cult Scare.

By David G. Bromley & Anson D. Shupe

Two university-based sociologists have produced this book, which is claimed to be the first scientific study of the cult phenomenon. There can be little doubt that this is an important book in the sociology of religion. One of the first startling points which the authors make is that there is no avalanche of rapidly-growing cults. The number of cults is about the same as it has been at any other time in the recent past. The fear of a rapid growth of cults is a hoax, the authors claim, which is a result of "media hype." Some of this has been fanned, they say, by the stories of the parents of children "lost" to cult membership.

My suspicions about the accuracy of the book were raised almost from the beginning, when I read the analysis of the story of Maria Monk on pages 16-17. The authors have gotten most of their "facts" wrong. As one who has spent years investigating the entire Maria Monk episode for a long article, still only partially written, I can say that the whole situation was much more complex than they

picture it, and that their conclusions are dubious. Even their citations are incorrect.

To return to the present book, there follows a useful summary of the origins, membership figures and beliefs of each of the major cults. Then there is a discussion of the forces that are in opposition to the cults (the traditional churches, the family, etc.). An interesting chapter about the process of conversion to the cults (Is it "brainwashing?") follows. The authors claim that it is not "brainwashing" and that little deception occurs in recruiting. The leaders of the various cults are examined, and their motivation explored. The fund raising activities of these groups also come under scrutiny. An interesting chapter on deprogramming and a conclusion end the book. It is a valuable first attempt to thoroughly examine cults scientifically, even if there are a few minor flaws.

Gordon Stein, Ph.D.

Beacon Press, 1982, 249 page hardback, \$13.50. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair Ave, St. Louis, MO 63144, for price plus \$1. postage.

JOHN TOLAND AND THE DEIST CONTROVERSY:

A Study in Adaptations.

By Robert E. Sullivan

Very little is being written about the deists or deism lately, and that is really a shame. The deists were very important in the development of religious intellectual freedom. I have tried to make this point in my two histories of freethought, in which I devote a long chapter to the deists in each book. Now, we have the first book devoted to a single deist in many years.

John Toland, author of the important deist book *Christianity Not Mysterious*, was a complex man with many important friends. His biographical sketch occupies the first 50 pages of this book. The rest of the volume is in the tradition of a scholarly book of the best sort. Every statement is documented in footnotes and the amount of work which Sullivan seems to have put into the book is staggering. Toland has been neglected as the subject of a full book-length study until now. It will be many years before anyone will be able to surpass the thoroughness of this volume.

Let me make no mistake, however, by recommending this book. It is not for the average reader, even one with a general interest in the deists. It is too heavy going for any but those with a real interest in the thought of the deist movement and how it related to other thought of the period. The book is recommended to anyone whose interest in the deists is this deep.

—Gordon Stein, Ph.D.

Harvard University Press 1982, 355 page hardback, \$27.50. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair Ave., St. Louis, MO 63144 for price plus \$1. postage.

THE MONKEY BUSINESS: A Scientist Looks at Creationism.

By Niles Eldredge

This seems to be the first recent book by a scientist which addresses itself entirely to the crea-

tionist arguments offered ad nauseum lately. The author is a paleontologist who is a curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. There are likely to be more books on the controversy, but let's hope that they are all as good as this one. Eldredge has done his homework. He understands the creationist position and he knows that "To the extent that creationism is science, of course, it is merely bad science. Mostly, it isn't science at all."

There are many memorable quotes, and things which I wish I had said that way myself. For example, "Creationism seeks to dilute the science curriculum with the equivalent of medical quackery. It seeks to delude our kids into believing that scientists are so dumb that they have been misled by the Creator's mischievous attempts to deceive us: if the earth is really only 10,000 years old, why did the Creator create an earth with so many hints that it is really vastly older?"

The author goes on to show in clear, readable style, why evolution is *indeed* scientific, while "scientific creationism" is blatantly *unscientific*. It is especially pleasing to see such *pseudoscientists* as Duane Gish finally get the putdown that they deserve. Gish seems to have forgotten whatever science he once knew when he became born again as a Christian. I guess he first went through a "senility" phase, then became born again. At any rate, little of what Gish now says has any relation to science fact, but much relation to creationist fancy.

The book is worth reading by all who are interested in the creationism/evolution controversy, and its paperback initial publication should make it well within the means of all readers. Eldredge deserves our thanks.

—Gordon Stein, Ph.D.

Washington Square Press 1982, 157 page paperback, \$2.95. Available from Book Service AR, 2001 St. Clair Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63144 for price plus \$1. postage.

FROM OUR READERS

I regret not having encountered the American Rationalist sooner so I might have been profiting from the thoughts and writings of Walter Hoops. Gordon Stein and others for many years.

S.McA

As a non-hyphenated, little "h" humanist living in the last botch of the bible belt, I and my few like minded friends find going pretty rough, and sources like yours are not generally visible.

D.C.

I have read through most of your Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism. It and several others suggested by FFRF have helped me to new ideas concerning the possibility that God does not exist, that organized religion is in fact some sort of demon in its attempts to control people. It also confirmed my suspicions that there's a helluvalotta people who think the same way I do, which is comforting.

R.K.

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