

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI — No. 32

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

RECENTLY it was announced that the Vatican proposes to raise two of the Pope's predecessors to the Honours of the Altar, which means that two more canonised saints may be expected in the near future. It usually takes time to become a saint. Though there have been one or two recent exceptions, there is little prospect of becoming a saint while one's contemporaries are still alive. In any case the elevation is in two parts, often separated by a long interval. First, one is merely "beatified"; that is, given the honorary prefix of Blessed, before going on to the final stage replete with halo, Feast Day and the rest of the paraphernalia of sainthood. The process of canonisation is elaborate, but not without light relief. One item consists in the appearance of a Devil's Advocate, who recounts, apparently quite freely, all the crimes and shortcomings of the deceased candidate for saintly honours, which, in quite a few cases, would, one imagines, take quite a long time.

Canonised Popes

The most recent Pope to be canonised was Pius X (1903-14), one of the exceptions to the rule that a lengthy interval must elapse between death and canonisation. Whatever his saintly merits, this Pope was undoubtedly one of the stupidest and most bigoted of modern times, a fact the more obvious since he actually succeeded one of the greatest of the Popes, Leo XIII (1878-1903), who, incidentally, has *not* been canonised! Prior to Pius X the most recent papal saint is Pius V, a Dominican and a monster of cruelty who, as Grand Inquisitor, boasted that he never missed a single "sitting" of the (Roman) Inquisition — or presumably a single execution. Under him, multitudes of "heretics" died at the stake. To students of English history the peculiar act of saintliness by which this Pope is remembered is his Bull of Excommunication of Queen Elizabeth I, accompanied by an exhortation to her Catholic subjects to murder the heretical monarch! He also appears to have given the initial Papal approval to the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve in Paris (1572), though he went, as all saints do, to Heaven just before it took place.

Innocent and Pius

Nothing quite so sensational can be charged against the two present candidates, Innocent XI (1676-89) and Pius X (1846-78). Both are, of course, long forgotten by the general public, but Pius IX is still a family figure to students of ecclesiastical history, not only because he enjoyed the longest reign of any Pope, but still more because he was the Pope under whose personal auspices, and as a result of whose intrigues, the famous dogma of infallibility was issued on July 18th, 1870, at the Vatican Council. Pius was also the last Pope to be simultaneously a temporal prince as ruler of the Papal States prior to their annexation by the Kingdom of Italy in 1870, the year the Pope became spiritually infallible and lost his temporal

power! "Pio Nono", as our Victorian grandfathers termed this Pope, is a famous figure in theological history; he first proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, who then repaid him by appearing in person at Lourdes during his reign; he also issued the famous Syllabus of Proscribed Errors, containing the notable declaration that "The Roman Pope cannot, and ought not, to recognise the modern ideas of toleration, Liberalism and Progress." He was a man of mediocre ability but his reign was full of dramatic incidents.

His colleague in the current quest for celestial honours is much less known, by contrast a shadowy figure little known even to specialists in ecclesiastical history. It appears that he, too, impinged on contemporary English History by aiding and abetting James II in the plot to restore Roman Catholicism, the failure of which led directly to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and to the final triumph of Protestantism in these islands. Innocent was evidently not infallible in political matters! Actually this Pope is chiefly remembered in connection with French and Polish history; he had a famous quarrel with Louis XIV, who was claiming virtual independence from Roman interference with the Gallican Church of France, and it was this Pope who promoted the Crusade of John Sobieski, King of Poland, who delivered Vienna from a menacing Turkish invasion.

Why These Two?

The Vatican is a very shrewd and experienced *political* institution. Whatever it may or may not know about the next world, it knows a great deal about this one! The R.C. Church is also a totalitarian organisation which employs religion and politics impartially to further its ends. As in more mundane affairs, it does not make saints without some reason, and to judge from some of those it *has* made, holiness is not always the primary motive. Why, of all so far not canonised, choose these two Popes? A glance at their respective careers may perhaps shed some light. Pius IX was an ultra-reactionary who fought Liberalism — the 19th century equivalent of Communism in the eyes of the Vatican, to the finish and formally proscribed its errors. He also made the Papacy the "infallible" dictator of the Church. Similarly, the long forgotten Innocent XI was a stickler for the rights of Rome over and against those of national Churches, even defying the "most Christian King" Louis XIV on this point. More significant, and more sinister, Innocent promoted the Polish crusade against Turkish aggression. Today Poland is dominated by "godless Communism", an even worse enemy than Islam. Is the celestial elevation of Innocent the effective prelude to another crusade?

The Alternative Before the Vatican

The mid-20th century is a political, not a theological, age!

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Two Prospective Saints

By F. A. RIDLEY

The *essential* problem for the Vatican is nowadays a political one; co-existence or crusade? — to compromise with the Church's enemies or to mobilise its forces and those of "Christian civilisation" for a final show-down. At present the Crusaders appear to be on top, with pro-Fascist Pope Pius at their head. Their current selections to the celestial

peage appear to be in conformity with this belligerent policy. Had Innocent or Pius been at the Vatican today both would probably have been in favour of a crusade against the present foes of the Church. Does the celestial landscape conform with the present terrestrial Vatican scene? *Verb sap.*

Report from South Africa

By LEONARD MARTIN

YOU READ MUCH ABOUT *apartheid* in South Africa these days. What it means succinctly, in theory, at any rate, is total separation, sexually, socially, politically, residentially and also in Church affairs, between white and non-white.

THE FREETHINKER is not a party political journal, and so there is no intention to go into the pros and cons of this very vexed and difficult topic. But there is one unusual aspect of it which *does* concern it, and that is the powerful influence, often hidden, of one Church behind the whole political movement; that is the Dutch Reformed Church, which enjoys, with its two smaller sister Churches, the Gerformeerde and the Hervormde, the largest white membership by far of any church in South Africa. As almost every, if not every, member of the ruling National Party belongs either to it or to the other Dutch Churches, what it says goes. And it does not concern itself only with religious belief and practices; very far from it.

This exceedingly influential religious and social community is historically a daughter of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. But whereas the mother has, to a certain extent, gone with the times, and perhaps may even have a definite liberalistic section, the daughter has remained strictly orthodox and fundamentalist. Even the word "liberal" today has an effect on many of its members that "liberty" once had on the Nazis, and much as holy water was said to unnerve His Satanic Majesty of one's younger days.

The daughter, moreover, has been independent and self-governing for well over a century, having its own Synods, for it is not yet *one* united Church in South Africa, but federated. An attempt to unite the different Churches about 45 years ago failed, as the Bill to do so was not passed by the Union Parliament, partly on colour grounds and difficulties. Today such an attempt might be more successful, the old liberal policy of the Cape having even fewer supporters than before, owing to the greater growth of the uncompromising population of the interior provinces, largely descendants of the old Boers.

The Church prides itself on being Calvinistic, and this, as I hope to show, has much to do with *apartheid* as such.

Calvinism, or one aspect of it, as one understands it, divides humanity into two sections. One section is saved; by "grace"; whatever that word means. The other is not, and is without the pale, for ever and ever, amen. However ethical a member of the latter may act or live, true salvation is not for him. It is a damnable doctrine; in more than one sense, indeed. It is religious determinism to the last degree. Does such a Calvinist believe in free will? I wonder.

Fortunately the bark is much worse than the bite. The typical sermon in a D.R. Church is generally as evangelical as you may hear in the evangelical section of the Anglican Church, or in any of the so-called free Churches, whether Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist or Congregational. (The order is that of the totals of their white membership.)

In the past century there have, it is true, been a few, but only a few sporadic attempts by foolhardy ministers to

import a little liberalistic doctrine into the otherwise drearily rigid 17th century creed, based on the resolutions of the famous Synod of Dort, in Holland, as long ago as 1618.

These divagations, comparatively mild as they were, were rigorously, ruthlessly and mercilessly suppressed by the Cape Synod. This, like its Presbyterian counterpart, is composed of a minister (or ministers where the membership is very large) from each congregation, as well as an elder, or elders, as the case may be. It has long become huge and unwieldy.

One famous heresy case was that one of these "liberal" ministers, who was deposed, went to law, won his case, returned to his congregation, worked there for many more years, died — and then the next elected incumbent was orthodox; so were his successors, and nothing has since then been heard of liberalism there.

Services are conducted very much in the same way as those of the dour brethren north of the Tweed and elsewhere. Geneva gowns and bands are worn by the preacher. Psalms, with a hymn now and then, comprise the musical part of the service, and generally there is a good choir for the anthem. Sermons are mostly read, and tell you nothing new, as a rule. Pulpit orators there may be, but they are scarce.

If one travels by car — the quickest surface way — over the long and often arid stretches between these thinly-populated villages and small townships of the Union, on approaching one of these comparative oases, the first thing to be seen generally is a church spire. One will be quite safe in concluding it is that of the local Dutch church, the other churches generally being spireless, drab chapel buildings. Probably, too, it is the only really decent edifice in the place from the architectural standpoint.

However dead and unprogressive the doctrines may be, one will often find such a typical small-town church quite recently built, ultra-modern in its appearance, and with all the latest gadgets and improvements it is possible to obtain.

The well-paid pastor may possess the newest and shiniest model American car, as likely as not a gift from a grateful congregation.

At the annual bazaar an amount of cash may be raised which will probably astound you if you are a newcomer to South Africa, seeing how small and desolate the village, or "dorp", may appear to be; but the surrounding farmers may be rich men, who do not forget to be generous to the church and its pastor. Well, it is South Africa, that land of many paradoxes!

(To be concluded)

The highest pleasures are those which satisfy the mind. The eye and the ear are avenues which lead to the purest realms. They are streets of the soul. The eye should see only what is beautiful; the ear should hear only what is pure and true. It was once thought that the five senses were five ways for the Devil to reach the heart. . . . But now the senses are looked upon as channels of communication between the world within and the world without.—INGEROLL.

Freethought Signs Among Children

By G. H. TAYLOR

AN EMINENT EDUCATIONALIST once proclaimed as the first principle of education, "Doubt everything." It is also the first principle of critical thinking and therefore of civilised development in general.

Just as the principle of conformity makes for the stabilisation of early societies, so does that of nonconformity conduce to their improvement. But in primitive groups the rebel is a rarity. He proposes something new, and what is new is feared. His behaviour is at variance with, or opposed to, the accepted standards; he is therefore regarded with suspicion and his personal existence becomes precarious. The tendency is to eliminate him, either directly by killing him off, or by ostracism. And so, during the long infancy of humanity, the innovator, the free thinker, is a biological rarity.

To some extent the mental development of the child recapitulates that of the species. The empirical findings of the 19th century anthropologists have in this respect been borne out by the more systematic researches of 20th century psychology.

Even with the modern development towards "free expression", signs of real independent thinking and the moral courage to put it into action, are still extremely rare among children. This means, in plain terms, that children are "easy meat" for the propagandist.

Not that propaganda is *always* bad with children. In two directions it is an eminently good thing, especially when set to a background of common sense; I refer to Hygiene and to Road Safety. In the matter of religious propaganda, however, there is no such background: it is sheer inoculation.

In the behaviour of children (under current conditions) there are four main signs of a possible Freethinker in later life. These comprise resistance to (1) the parrot-chorus, (2) artificial ornamentation, (3) majority opinion, and (4) crowd psychology.

To deal with the first, this is worked by mass suggestion. A children's entertainer, for example, will shout "Are you all happy?" If the response is not brisk he will pursue the point till he gets his proposal passed unanimously. A small minority of children (quite as happy as the rest) will persistently refuse to join in the chorus because they scorn to become human parrots. An audacious spirit here and there might even shout "No!" He is a precious rarity and always, I believe, male.

In the matter of artificial ornamentation, there are today a gorgeous variety of children's badges, cheaply attained and spectacular. The psychology of excessive personal decoration has been studied in some detail by the late Prof. J. C. Flugel and others.

The child who plasters his breast with badges, medals, ribbons, etc., is a child who is dissatisfied with his existing personal accomplishments. Realising his personal deficiency he attempts to make good that deficiency in an intrinsically pointless display, a self-boosting. Such may even extend to complete uniforms.

While the *desire* for self-display by such means is not admirable, nevertheless to *prohibit* the display would only make matters worse. Like measles, the disease is not desirable but the spots must come out. An unsightly display is better than a dangerous inhibition. But the child who *does* not need such ostentatious self-advertisement on his person, who places no value on such vulgar outworks, is a mentally healthier and self-dependent character.

is a tendency to befriend the outcast and thus flout majority opinion. Children, like primitives, love to have a convicted wrongdoer, or, failing that, a scapegoat. (Some girl infants will have a regular "whipping boy" among their dolls.)

The psychology of the scapegoat is that he makes us feel morally bigger by being himself morally smaller. It is therefore not unusual for children to "gang up" against one of their number. Whether the victim has in fact done something reprehensible or not, becomes a minor issue. The motivating principle is gregarity. To side with the mob is to side with numerical strength. To take the side of the isolated one is to set oneself against numerical strength and its mass suggestion. To oppose the crowd is to suffer a diminution of *social* prestige. A very small minority of children are prepared to forfeit social prestige for individual self-respect. This is a sure sign of healthy independence of mind, the historic source of freethinking.

Lastly, it is a well-observed phenomenon that children will rush to join a crowd which has suddenly gathered round a particular spot, the scene of some supposedly sensational occurrence. No matter how trivial the incident, the sight of a gathering crowd is the real impetus, and once this has got under way it will continue long after the original cause has subsided. Other causes may then be imagined and reported, so that finally the original reason for crowding is either lost or has become vague. Again, the odd child will disdain to join the mob.

The above four signs are all from overt behaviour. Equally significant clues come, of course, from the child's conversation. But the vast majority of children generally give little or no sign of genuine freethinking. Freethought is an attitude of mind associated with maturity. Moreover, not all budding Freethinkers are allowed to develop into mature Freethinkers. Education, etymologically, means "drawing out". Too often in practice it becomes mere "pumping in".

Philosophy Quiz

1. Who made the following the bases of their philosophies: (a) *Cogito ergo sum*, (b) *esse = percipi*. What do they mean?
2. For what purpose is the celebrated Dr. Johnson reputed to have kicked a stone?
3. What is "Occam's razor"?
4. Who was the last distinguished defender of animism, the belief that matter is a colony of spirits?
5. From which philosopher did Chapman Cohen take his concept of Emergence? Who was the first to popularise Emergence?
6. Who were the first philosophers in the modern sense of the term?
7. Which distinguished philosophers were associated with (a) Pantheism, (b) Pre-established Harmony, (c) Pessimism, (d) Positivism, (e) Monism, (f) Pragmatism, (g) Vitalism, (h) Neutral Monism, (i) Publicism?
8. Which eminent 20th century philosophers were idealists but also atheists?

(Answers on page 260)

—NEXT WEEK—

KRISHNAMURTI

By The REV. JOHN L. BROOM, M.A.

This Believing World

The "Daily Mail" disc expert, Mr. Jack Payne, calls the religious songs by crooners "nauseating nonsense" and piously hopes that they will "flop". We are not surprised. Nauseating it certainly is to listen to records with titles like "Somebody Up There Likes Me", "Try a Little Prayer", or "Faith Unlocks the Door". But after all, are they any worse, or even worse sung, than our own famous hymns, Ancient and Modern, many of which Mr. Payne himself must have sung in his younger and more religious days? What about "Washed in the Blood of Jesus", and similar "nauseating" melodies?

★

Mr. Payne's article is headed "The exploitation men decide religion pays a handsome dividend". We seem to have heard this before — though not exactly in connection with records. Religion, once established, always pays handsome dividends to its priests, for there is nothing a religious person likes better than to pay a priest or a parson well to get in touch with a god for him. But Mr. Payne expects the record "flop" to come "when God stops paying a dividend". God paying dividends or not is a sentiment which might have come even from the ineffable Billy Graham!

★

In the House of Lords the other day was discussed what is called in a *Times* report "a matter of the greatest urgency". It was whether a member of the respected and infallible religious body called Jehovah's Witnesses should do his National Service like other members of the community. The pious appellant had been appointed a "pastor" for Jehovah, and claimed exemption like other ministers. The hard-hearted Lords who judged the case did not dissolve in tears as they should have done when they were told of the appellant's undying faith in Jehovah and Jesus, and brutally dismissed the appeal. And the poor young man will have to do "time" in the Army just as if he was an ordinary Christian — a terrible fate. What a farce it all is!

★

The Editor of the "Church of England Newspaper", the Rev. C. O. Rhodes, does not like the way in which so many parsons "cadge for dollars". In an *Evening Standard* article, he gives many examples of the way the Church of England and the Nonconformist Churches both here and in America pitifully plead for dollars to restore this or that as if he was not aware that "cadging" for money has always been a feature of religion. It was woe betide any worshipper in the past and it still is if he does not contribute his "mite" to the service of Jesus. Remember what happened to Ananias and his wife?

★

Under the notice of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children are some 99,000 poor children who have been physically ill-treated by their parents or guardians. It is a pitiful commentary on the Christian education which these people had — for of course they are all Christians. You will not find Jews or Freethinkers in their ranks. Even if some of these Christian parents have "no religion", that is, if they are quite indifferent to its beautiful consolations, they will still proudly call themselves "C. of E.". And yet the cry is more and more and still more religion!

★

It is interesting to note that the *Economist*, commenting on the debate in the House of Commons on Premium Bonds, said that "the church and chapel spokesmen who had a case made a hash of it. They are a sad shadow of their predecessors who so brilliantly debated the Prayer Book 30 years ago." Of course. The "sad shadow" has

invaded nearly all modern theology and its defenders — and, of course, modern sermons. It was possible at one time to thrill a congregation with lurid pictures of Hell — as Spurgeon did; but what can one do with the milk-and-water substitute we get these days? People simply cannot be thrilled in the atmosphere of a Mothers' Meeting.

Facts for Freethinkers - 13

PARTY AIMS IN ISRAEL

THE FOLLOWING are extracts from the stated programmes of Israelite political parties:

MIZRAHI — "The party demands that legislation be based on Jewish jurisprudence and that the cultural climate of the country be determined by the tradition of the Torah."
HAPOEL RAMIZRAHI (Mizrahi Workers) — "Both the laws and the planned development of the state should be based on the Torah."

AGUDAT ISRAEL — "The Party stands for the strictest observance of the Torah in the administration of the state, with jurisdiction entrusted to rabbinical authorities."

POALEI AGUDAT ISRAEL (Agudat Israel Workers) — "No legal code other than that of the Torah is acceptable for the state of Israel. . . . The Party opposes the formal equality of men and women."

Last year Hapoel Hamizrahi had two Cabinet ministers, one for Religious Affairs and Social Welfare and one for Posts. These parties control four morning newspapers, all printed in Hebrew. They are: *Hatzofe* (Mizrahi, founded 1938), *Hakol* (Agudat Israel, 1949), *Hamodia* (World Agudat Israel, 1950), *Shaarim* (Poalei Agudat Israel, 1951).

The Israeli judicial system is composed of both civil and religious courts. The latter exercise jurisdiction over certain aspects of personal status (marriage, divorce, etc.) and represent the Jewish, Christian, Moslem and Druze communities. These religious courts are autonomous and enjoy the active help of the Ministry for Religious Affairs, with special departments for Jewish, Christian, Moslem, Druze and Ba'Hai communities. Freedom of religion and conscience was guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence of May 14th, 1948, and the right of the sects to observe their own Sabbath was given by the Days of Rest Ordinance (1948) and the Hours of Work and Rest Law (1951).

Owing to the great increase in the Jewish population, religious activities have expanded enormously. In 1948 there were 130 rabbis and Dayanim (Rabbinical court judges), but this number had by 1955 increased to 400. Between 1948-53 the number of synagogues grew from about 600 to 2,553. During 1954 the Ministry for Religious Affairs assisted in building, enlarging and repairing 377 synagogues.

Religious Councils appoint and pay rabbis and supervise maintenance, etc. These Councils grew from 10 in 1948 to about 200 in 1954, and most of their expenditure is covered by the Treasury. Incidentally, non-Kosher food is not permitted in military and other government establishments. The Government provides for state religious education, and "teachers, inspectors, curriculum and way of life" are religious.

In a recent letter to me Rabbi Zev Gotthold, Director of the Department for Contact in the Diaspora (Ministry for Religious Affairs) affirmed confidence for the future and "with Divine Help a flourishing renaissance. . . ." This was because "The Bible and the Jewish tradition represent the inspiration for our country."

My own opinion is that if the cosmopolitan and industrious Israelis continue working at their present rate, neither the Bible nor "Divine Help" will be needed.

D. SHIPPER

THE FREETHINKER

41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 10s. (in U.S.A., \$4.25); half-year, 15s.; three months, 7s. 6d.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

L. Ebury.—You are right. The answer to Question 5 of Quiz on page 247 on the last date of the Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers in London should be 1938 not 1946.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON and SHEPPARD.
- Bristol (The Downs).—Sunday, August 12th, 7.30 p.m.: L. Ebury.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street, Kingston-on-Thames).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.
- Platt Fields, 3 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and others.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, August 12th, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Various speakers.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park).—Sunday, August 12th, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, August 12th, 7 p.m.: C. H. SMITH, "Reconnoiterings in Science".

Notes and News

THE single exclamation, "OUTRAGEOUS!" in inch-high lettering spanned almost a whole page in the *Daily Sketch* (25/7/56). And, even in these times of sensational journalism, it forced itself upon the casual reader. Surely something terrible had occurred! The full-length photograph below proved this to be so, representing a fashion model in an outfit based upon a Cardinal's hat and cassock. The dress is red, the hat black and red, the *Sketch* informs its readers. "There might be no harm in that," it continues. "But observe the accessory. It is a rosary." Apparently the Vatican gave permission for the use of rosaries, but it is still too much for the purists of the Press. Vatican permission or no, the *Sketch* thinks this fashion is "in outrageous taste", "will give offence to many people", and "ought to be consigned to the rubbish bin". "Fashion tricks and religion do not mix" is the final pronouncement.

A FEW days earlier, the Apostolic Delegate to Britain, Archbishop O'Hara, had issued a warning that too many "eminent medical men" were teaching students nothing but scientific materialism. He referred to world-famous professors of medicine and surgery who were "wolves in sheep's clothing", teaching ideas that were at complete variance with the Divine law. "Blasphemy in the law of medicine, in the law of healing, is now being taught in many schools," he added; and "a doctor's vocation is to save life, never to indulge in what is popularly known as

mercy killing, for the Commandment remains — 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

★

IMMEDIATELY beside this report (in the *Irish Standard*, 20/7/56) it was stated that the Spanish Bullfighters' Association had paid special tribute to His Holiness Pope Pius XII. The Association, it seems, has arranged to have "a ceremonial bullfighter's cape especially made for presentation to the Pope". Thou shalt not kill for mercy, but it is all right for sport!

★

ANOTHER headline which caught the eye recently was "Vicar Refuses Baptism". This, at first, conjured up an enchanting vision of an elderly, screaming, kicking parson refusing to be totally submerged by a perplexed, gaitered Bishop. However, a closer inspection proved that what, in fact, had happened was that the Vicar of Reighton (the Rev. G. Alcock) had refused to baptise an eight-month-old baby. A fine display of truly Christian tolerance! In fairness to the Vicar, we must state that he was perfectly willing to baptise the child if only its parents went to church on eight Sundays. Presumably, whether or not they would be sincere matters little; only lip-service and obedience are required.

Theology in the Bush

IN THEIR BOOK, *African Bush Adventures* (Hamish Hamilton, 1954), the authors (Hunter and Mannix) report a conversation with the eminent archæologist Dr. Leakey. The latter said that one important issue was religion. Under the old tribal system, the witch doctor was a very important man. The witch doctor often misused his powers — as in the case of the hereditary clan of witch doctors among the Kisii. But he was also the source of law and order in the tribe. The natives had no police force. They didn't need one. If a crime was committed, the witch doctor was called in to find the culprit. The natives believed implicitly that the witch doctor had at his command spirits who could hunt down a malefactor no matter where he was. As the offender also believed this, crime was very rare. No one wanted to run the risk of having evil spirits put on his trail.

By destroying the authority of the witch doctors, the Europeans left the natives without any restraining force. In fact, today the witch doctors are being subsidised by the Government in hopes that their influence will counteract the power of the Mau Mau. It was supposed that Christianity would take the place of the old tribal religion and act as a purifying influence. Many of the natives have become sincere Christians but even more found the teachings of the missionaries difficult to understand. Dr. Leakey recorded a conversation between a Kikuyu and a missionary.

The Kikuyu: "You say a man should only have one wife. Why? Didn't Abraham and David have many wives and didn't God love them?"

The Missionary: "That was a long time ago. Christ changed all that."

The Kikuyu: "But God and Christ are one. Did God then change his mind?"

The Missionary: "Conditions were different in the time of Abraham and David. There are many laws in the Old Testament that we no longer observe."

The Kikuyu: "Aren't the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament?"

The Missionary: "Yes, we have preserved some of the laws."

The Kikuyu: "But by what authority did you select the ones you intended to observe?"

Open Letter to the B.B.C.

By H. DAY

Programme: PRIEST'S PARTY (TV, July 5th)

THIS PROGRAMME continued the policy of mind-conditioning which has become so characteristic and which goes far to show the basic intentions of those whose identity is so discreetly and effectively hidden behind the magic letters BBC. In this programme the Rev. Fr. A. Andrew was allowed to toy before the cameras with a group of so-called "challengers" in a farce called "Give and Take", in which the challengers did all the giving and the priest all the taking. The former, supposedly intelligent journalists, showed themselves to be merely a body of reverent indifferentists who had no knowledge of the general subject of religious doctrine, or of Comparative Religion or of so-called supernaturalism.

Why, oh why, had they not taken some instruction from real unbelievers? Why, oh why, had they not mastered some really effective and searching questions? Why, oh why, did they play into the priest's hands by asking the old futile, stereotyped, hackneyed and perfectly innocuous questions which all the religious stooges ask and which the apologist so loves to answer? Why did they have to yield *all* the priest's primary assumptions? Why did they not demand definition and explanation, justification and substantiation? Why did not the organiser of the programme find some real challengers, a few genuine unbelievers who could have confronted the Rev. Father with pertinent questions? One is forced to regard this programme as yet another astute and subtle mind-conditioning effort to give a boost to the Roman Catholic minority in this predominantly Protestant land.

By tacitly accepting *all* the R.C. assumptions and dogmas, the priest's very polite and reverent guests became his tools and his fools. Any one genuine opponent knowing his subject could have turned the Rev. Father's claims back upon him. It should have been known that if a Catholic is allowed to get away unchallenged with even a few of his many primary assumptions and dogmas, then argument is futile. Among such primary assumptions are the following, and if these are yielded he wins, as did the Rev. Father on this occasion.

(1) That because the physical universe exists it *must* have been brought into being by something outside itself.

(2) That this Something is Author, Purposer, Architect, Planner, Designer, Creator and Sustainer of the universe—which means *all* things.

(3) That there does exist in some form or other, a something or other which does something or other, somehow or other, sometime or other, which is to be identified with the proper noun God.

(4) That this something, undefined and undefinable, unknown and unknowable, is the primary uncaused cause of *all* things, ubiquitous, universal, all-knowing, all-wise, all-virtuous, all-powerful, etc., and of a supernatural order.

(5) That the New Testament writings are authoritative and historically accurate, with their central character, Jesus, a historical character who actually said and did the things therein attributed to him.

(6) That he was somehow at one and the same time God and man, divine and human, God and the son of God.

(7) That there is some sort of life after death in which the dead are resurrected and live again in some other form on some other plane.

Not one of these, or any other such, propositions has ever been, or can be, proven. For the very same reason that they are nebulous and imprecise they cannot be *dis-*

proven. Misdirected popular opinion subscribes to the totally false view that onus of disproof devolves upon those who reject such altogether unwarrantable assumptions. They can and *should* be challenged. It is not at all necessary that they should be accepted and the onus of proof should be placed where it belongs — upon those who shape the dogmas.

It is known that *all* religions, *all* systems of cosmology, *all* ideas of God, have been built upon such ignorant assumptions and superstitions. All the theories and imaginings and misinterpretations of all the supernatural religions and all their gods have been invented by man and exploited by *men*. If the guests at the Priest's Party had been really concerned to put the priest at the receiving end of the line instead of playing up to his solo act, they might have required his answers to a few direct and unequivocal questions. For example:

(1) What is meant by the term God as a proper noun?
 (2) What is the precise difference between God and god?
 (3) Where does God exist and in what form is it cognised?

(4) If God is said to be spirit, what *is* spirit in this sense?
 (5) What does God do? And if it is spirit how does it do it? How does it manipulate physical things?

(6) What evidence can be produced for "supernatural" phenomena?

(7) If there is such a thing as Divine Plan, what is it, to whom is it disclosed, and how divulged?

(8) As planning and purpose cannot be dissociated from conscious mind and will, from thought and action, and if God is the planner, what does he think with, feel with, love with, etc.? Is there any shred of evidence of mind apart from body, any evidence of thought processes apart from living matter, sentient and conscious?

(9) What documentary evidence is there to support the N.T. story of a virgin-born, miracle-working, crucified and resurrected saviour? "Testimony" of non-contemporary writers as to the existence of *Christians*, or followers of Jesus, is *not* evidence for the existence of Jesus any more than the testimony for the existence of Mithraists is evidence for the existence of Mithra — or of Mormons for that of Mormon, etc.

(10) When, by whom, and in what language, were the various books and epistles of the N.T. written, published and circulated? Where are the original writings and by whom and by how many were they seen and read? How frequently have they been edited and re-edited, translated and re-translated? Who is now in a position to state what any original writer actually wrote?

(11) Since the Gospel accounts of the alleged doings and sayings of Jesus are sketchy, lacking in circumstantial detail, inconsistent and contradictory, how can any of them be corroborated?

(12) If Jesus did live, how could he be the son of a mother and at the same time the son of God? How could a spirit, God, procreate material human progeny?

(13) How could Jesus as the human son of God be his own spirit-father, God?

(14) Is it any more reasonable to believe any one of the Christian denominations than one of the pagan or heretical religions?

If the BBC programmes dealt with fact rather than faith, instead of being primarily concerned with boosting reli-

gious superstitions and privileges, these matters would be freely canvassed and frankly discussed, and professional clerics would not be permitted such hollow victories as that scored at the Priest's Party.

Dollars for Conversion

By COLIN MCCALL

THERE IS NO DOUBTING the zealotry of Catholic proselytisers, particularly the feminine ones. They must surely earn extra reward in Heaven for every convert! And if that is not incentive enough, *The Catholic Digest* adds its own — and rather more tangible — prize, provided the circumstances have sufficient news-value. It invites "statements of true incidents by which persons were brought into the Church", and it pays \$25 for every one it publishes.

The latest (July) issue contains three instances, and a lady was instrumental in each, though one attributes part of the credit to God. (The other two, somewhat surprisingly, make no mention of the Almighty.) The prize-winners are two ladies and one gentleman. Let us reverse the usual order (and the order of printing) and take the man first. He was a Jew who, at the age of ten, was jeered at by, and defended himself against, a boy of 13. Through "tears and blood, I saw a nun approaching", he tells us. She stopped the fight and dressed his cuts; and she said: "If anyone tries to insult you again, tell him that his God is a Jew and that He loves Jews." Finally, she blessed him. So, too, did God — we are told — "for I was baptised this year and received my Jewish God in Holy Communion for the first time at midnight Mass on Christmas. And now I shall study for the priesthood." Fittingly enough, the letter ends with repayment of the debt: "God bless you, Sister!"

If any Freethinker should note the tacit assumption that anti-semitism is the product of Christian homes and education — and remark that morality (like charity) should begin at home (or school), Sister! — it only proves what bad minds Freethinkers have. Mine is irreparable, as will soon become obvious.

The second narrative gives grateful (I was going to write "gratuitous", when I remembered the 25 dollars) recognition to the *Digest*. It was this feature in the magazine that brought the correspondent's neighbour into the Church. "Why don't you start going to Mass with me, so that I can write to the *Digest* about my convert?" was the crucial question — asked "jokingly", of course. (Confound that evil mind of mine — "25 silver dollars are no joke," it says!) Now — the zealot informs us — her neighbour, "thanks to me and *The Catholic Digest*" [to get things in their proper order] "is happier than she had ever been." And you are 25 dollars wealthier, madam!

The third letter relates how Mass interfered with hiking and — one suspects — with love. The writer could not join the club hike until after the 10 o'clock Mass, and the thought of going to an earlier Mass never seems to have occurred to her — possibly she was habitually a late riser — fortunately not, too, or the Church might have missed a convert and she her just reward. With "friendly grumbling", however, the club would wait. But John was "rather serious-minded" and wondered "what the Catholic Church had [just the right colloquial touch here!] that it could hold up a whole group while one girl went to Mass." Well, he found out: he became a Catholic and he married the girl. Then "After six years, he died a very happy death." What more could anyone ask? Plenty, you say? Well, here it is: "Our daughter is now a nun, and we have hopes that John's mother may become a Catholic." Splendid! Another 25 dollars on the horizon?

Cornish Column

MENTION WAS MADE in THE FREETHINKER (June 29th) of the prolonged press controversy in *The Cornishman*, which has been running since March and would now fill a book. A number of both Christians and Freethinkers have participated. It started with a call for organised Christian action against Easter sport. This appeal was opposed by several freethinking correspondents, and finally the appeal was defeated, with the result that the entire Christian position was on the defensive. The following from the discussion may interest readers:

"The Christian assertion that their religion is the one and only revelation of truth reflects spirited arrogance, rather than humility."

"We cannot easily dismiss the remarkable similarity in the stories of Christian and pagan origins."

"Personally I do not feel it necessary to delve into the remote past to find a basis for living in the present."

"In his latest effort Mr. Burt has provided 17 more virgin-born saviours. I consider it fair to ask if he is sure he has got the right one of the 18."

"The foundations of these religious codes are bribery and fear — fear of offending the Big Brother of the skies, and bribery of eternal happiness hereafter. History has proved that morality so based soon disintegrates."

"Thank God for my Big Brother of the skies, and for his son who is my loving saviour."

"Every fresh discovery pushes all gods further and further out of the picture."

"A period of darkness would descend on the world if the Bible was withheld by atheist communism. By their fruits ye shall know them."

"Yes, presumptuous blimp that I am, it is still more strange that I personally spoke this very day to my Big Brother in the skies — the Lord Jesus Christ, God, Son of God, and the Redeemer."

"I am on intimate terms with one who said, 'Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.'"

"The twilight of the gods is welcomed by some readers. To me it seems that the satisfied conceits, the arrogance, aggressiveness, double dealing, and treachery of the Christians, so long a part of our way of life, are now being challenged by men and women armed with a new learning in which the loving slogan 'Death to the Infidel' has no place."

"Whenever mankind ceases to worship a particular god it dies, therefore gods cannot exist by themselves."

"The son who is the father, Spirit, Javweh, and Holy Ghost combined makes a nonsensical merry-go-round; it's still better to live on your feet in freedom, than live on your knees in servility."

"Every single bit of progress and improvement has been consistently opposed by the Churches of the world."

"If an earthly father treats his children as the spiritual father of SOS treats them, he would be imprisoned for life or lynched. In 1781, a mother of four children was publicly whipped in Helston for stealing some mutton. Her husband approved of the punishment. Christian laws and a Christian Father?"

D.J.C.

We have progressed beyond the control of that rigid sentiment that regarded human enjoyment as a sin. Healthful pleasure is found to be a demand of our nature, and this age is concerned in promoting those conditions of life which are calculated to make living a joy, and existence a blessing.—INGERSOLL.

Man and the Sea

(From CHARLES BAUDELAIRE)

O freedom-loving man, always the sea
That mirrors thee thou'lt love; thine own soul
Thou seest where her mighty waters roll,
And gulf as bitter may thy spirit be!
How lover-like thou leapest to her breast
With eyes and arms embracing! so thy heart
Forgetful is of its own native smart
Hearkening her savage, tameless, wild unrest.
Tempestuous and jealous are ye both;
None has, O man, sounded thy heart's abyss,
And none, O sea, has plumbed thy mysteries,
So are ye both to bare your secrets loath!
For lo! through centuries innumerable
Ye wage eternal war, no moment's breath,
So much ye carnage love and bitter death,
O fighters twain, O twins implacable!

R.C.

Delinquency and Religion

NO ONE can deny the seriousness of our current crime and delinquency problems. It is not necessary to cite statistics of murders, assaults, robberies, automobile thefts, etc., to realise that our present efforts to solve these problems are inadequate. In this connection, however, it is the opinion of Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, the Fraternal Order of Police, and others, that an increase in church and Sunday school attendance and/or membership would result in an automatic decrease in crime and delinquency. That such is not the case, however, is clearly evidenced by the following findings gleaned from the best sociological and criminological sources.

Edwin H. Sutherland, Indiana University's famous criminologist and sociologist, found that church membership or attendance had little or no effect upon criminality or delinquency. George Rex Mursell, of the Ohio Department of Welfare, found that reform school inmates had received fully as much religious training as had the children outside. Sociologists Middleton and Fay found that delinquent girls exhibited more favourable attitudes toward Sunday observance and the Bible than did non-delinquent girls. C. V. Dunn found that the proportion of members of religious sects in prisons is higher than that of the general population. Dr. John R. Miner found that "there is little evidence that the churches play any major role in the prevention of crime". Professors Barnes and Teeters report that: "Franklin Steiner found that out of 85,000 convicts, 68,000 or 80%, decisively expressed their preference as Christians. There were 5,389 of the Jewish faith. There were only 8,000 who were not affiliated with some faith. The avowed infidels or atheists were microscopic, just 150." Professors Hartshorne and May found Sunday school children less honest than non-attenders. Teeters and Reinemann, after years of research and experience, are convinced that "the oft-repeated exhortations claiming that the rate of delinquency would be lowered if parents would send their children to Sunday school and Church are over-simplified attempts to answer this serious question".

Since religions — the orthodox religions — do not have the answers, we can only do what we should have been doing from the start, that is, consulting the scientists whose areas of study are human, social and individual behaviour.

[*The Liberal*, U.S.A., March 1956.]

CORRESPONDENCE

"GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS"

All readers of this journal will feel sorry for the little boy in New York who lost the sight of his one remaining eye. It was necessary to remove a tumour behind his eye by surgical means, an operation which resulted in total loss of sight. His father, who is a Baptist minister, according to Press reports, prayed for help to find the best way to break the terrible news to his boy. There cannot be one decent human being who would not have saved this boy's sight were it humanly possible. On the other hand, He who could did not! It is difficult to know which is the more deserving of man's contempt — the God who engineers the loss of this boy's precious sight in so calculatedly cruel a fashion, or the type of Christian who will soon rush to assure the poor boy's father that God's ways are for the best, and that he must not lose faith.

JACK GORDON.

ANSWERS TO PHILOSOPHY QUIZ

- (a) Descartes (1596-1650): "I think; therefore I am."
(b) Bishop Berkeley (1684-1753): "To be is to be perceived."
- To disprove Berkeley's thesis that matter is not an independent existent apart from mind.
- Now known as the law of parsimony; where a simpler explanation is adequate without remainder, it renders redundant the introduction of any new supposed causal factor. (William of Occam died in 1349.)
- The psychologist Wm. McDougall (1871-38), who was therefore hailed (erroneously as usual) as a champion of orthodoxy.
- George Henry Lewes (*Problems of Life and Mind*, 1874). Prof. C. Lloyd Morgan (1852-1936) in *Emergent Evolution* and other works.
- The Ionian school of ancient Greece, sixth century B.C.
- (a) Spinoza (1632-77), (b) Leibnitz (1646-1715), (c) Schopenhauer (1788-1860), (d) Comte (1798-57), (e) Haeckel (1833-1919), (f) Wm. James (1842-1910), (g) Bergson (1859-24), (h) Bertrand Russell, (i) Lancelot Hogben.
- Bosanquet (1848-1923); MacTaggart (1866-1925).

G.H.T.

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