

The Freethinker

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AT A RECENT MEETING of the International Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers, the Italian delegate, Professor Angelo Crippa of Genoa—representative of the Giordano Bruno Society—was asked what was the present status of the Pope in Italian politics. He replied that His Holiness was undoubtedly the effective ruler of Italy; that the successive Prime Ministers of the Christian Democratic Party (the best known of whom, the late Signor Gasperi, was a former Papal librarian) were little more than office boys of the Vatican. It was a case of Pacelli first; the rest "also ran"! One can add that the above state of things is not today confined to Italy. The Roman Catholic Church has now stepped into the shoes of Fascism as the major defender of reaction and privilege over most of the so-called free world. Spain, Portugal, Germany and even formerly anti-clerical and still officially secularist France, all tell a similar story.

A Breach in Clerical Monopoly

Particular importance must, accordingly, be attached to the recent slap in the face of the Vatican administered by an Italian court of law—acting for once as a Court of Justice also—in the now famous case of the Bishop of Prato. One hopes that this bold assertion of the independence of the secular judiciary from clerical supervision will mark the resurgence of modern Italy, the Italy of Garibaldi, Mazzini and the Giordano Bruno Society in defiant protest against the medieval Italy of clericalism which has strangled the forward-looking spirits amongst Galileo's countrymen ever since the Fascist Dictator, Mussolini, made his unholy pact with the Pope in the Lateran Treaty of 1929.

Christian Marriage

The facts of the case of Signor and Signora Mauro Bellandi versus the Bishop of Prato are now well known. In a Pastoral Letter, the Bishop furiously denounced a local grocer and his wife as "public sinners living in concubinage" because as baptised Catholics they had contented themselves with a civil marriage—a legal marriage even in Italy—without proceeding to a religious service at which by a decision of the Council of Trent, a priest must participate as a legal witness. The grocer and his wife sued the Bishop for libel in the civil courts and were awarded costs against the Bishop, who was also sentenced to a suspended fine of £23. Though the Bishop will not actually have to pay the fine, the court decision counts as a legal conviction: more generally it constitutes a dramatic assertion of the independence of the secular courts. In particular, the decision represents a landmark in the contemporary relationship between Church and State in Italy. Present-day Italy is, after all, not yet another Spain where, under the Concordat of 1953, the Spanish civil courts can take no action against any member of the Catholic hierarchy without his consent.

Church and State in Contemporary Italy

The wider significance of this comparatively trivial legal action has immediately been recognised as a test case by

the Vatican. The Pope has cancelled his 19th anniversary celebrations as a protest. Churches have been draped in black and church bells tolled throughout Italy. Meanwhile, the Vatican is astir with visiting cardinals, whilst the back-room boys of the Papal "brains trust" (in which German Jesuits are said to be conspicuous—the Pope is an ex-papal legate in Munich and Berlin) have gone into agitated secret session. Signor Bellandi has done something probably never yet achieved by a grocer before: he has shaken the world-wide power of the Vatican; the valiant grocer may not be exactly another Martin Luther, but the memory of the startling results of a similar act of defiance by a similarly unknown German

friar appears at least, to have taught the "infallible" Papacy that a spark can easily ignite an immense fire.

The Vatican and Italian Politics

The Roman Catholic Church, as a totalitarian organisation, can be regarded as a political body; its definition of faith and morals to which its Infallibility is supposed to be limited is, in practice, a very elastic one. Many problems usually classed under the heading of politics and economics are claimed as legitimate objectives of ecclesiastical decisions. This is so generally, but in the case of Italy, this traditional attitude to politics is complicated by the fact that the Vatican itself, and Rome, "the Holy City," are both geographically within the confines of Italy, whilst every Pope since the Reformation has been an Italian. The Pope was, prior to 1870, when the Kingdom of Italy was formed, also a secular Italian ruler; indeed, he still is so in theory, since, whilst the old States of the Church went in 1870, since the Lateran Treaty of 1929, the Vatican State is again juridically represented as an independent sovereign state. Accordingly, the Papacy has always been particularly sensitive to political anti-clerical movements in Italy itself. Between 1870 and the first world war, anti-clerical liberalism was the dominant force in Italian politics but, as Manhattan has convincingly shown, the post-war Church used Mussolini's Fascism as a political instrument to break the anti-clerical movements. By the Lateran Treaty of 1929 the Vatican acquired much of its former power, and the post-war Christian Democrats have rather strengthened the clerical control. Until the other day that shrewd politician, Pius XII, could safely regard Italy as a secure bulwark of clericalism. The Prato court decision, the first of its kind since the Lateran Treaty, dispelled Vatican complacency like a thunderclap. Secular Italy had reasserted itself.

Church versus State

Whatever the ultimate outcome of the case (the Bishop is appealing against the sentence), it is now clear that a crisis between Church and State has come to a head. The traditional claim of the Roman Catholic Church to impose its own religious dogmas on social life in matters of marriage, divorce, birth-control and the like, has been sharply challenged and, up to now, the challenge has been supported

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Church in the Dock

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

by the Italian Prime Minister. This, in a Catholic country, and the traditional headquarters of the Church of Rome. Such a challenge, coming as it does, in the midst of a world-wide Vatican offensive, must have repercussions far beyond the boundaries of Italy. The prompt alarm displayed by the Pope, Cardinals, Archbishops, etc., indicates that the Church recognises this.

We congratulate the Italian judges on what may prove to be an epoch-making decision. The case of the Italian grocer, Mauro Bellandi, may mean the breaking of the clerical stranglehold on social life. For our Italian fellow Freethinkers the Prato decision may serve to remind them that the Italy of Garibaldi and Mazzini still lives on.

Demography and Nationalism

By E. G. MACFARLANE

THE IMPORTANT SERIES of articles by Mr. G. H. Taylor, which have been appearing recently in THE FREETHINKER under the title "Problems of Demography," do not contain any direct reference to the bearing of the widespread ideology of local nationalism on population problems. I should like to give some pointers in this direction.

I have argued in earlier articles in THE FREETHINKER that the prevalence of local nationalism (*i.e.* ideologies which effectively determine political movements to put the interests of a local group above the interests of the human race as a whole) is *the crucial cause* of the danger of international struggles which can all too easily culminate in the atomic war which will destroy us all. The activity of these ideologies in the matter of encouraging the increase of population figures when population increase has become so much against the general interest should also be noted.

I would draw attention to the instance given of the Government of East Germany "offering financial incentives to women, whether married or unmarried, to have children, presumably with the intention of replacing the two million men lost in the war." There are many other similar examples which stem from a care for local interests which work to the detriment of the general interests. Hitler is well known for his arguments that the Germans were justified in their aggressions against neighbouring states because they needed "living-room." But he also provided all sorts of incentives and impetuses towards increasing local population pressure. It is perhaps noteworthy, too, that he was practically concerned with improving the quality as well as the quantity of the people (according to his own lights) in the steps he took to encourage "stud farms" of his best soldiering types. His disregard for the necessity of marriage ties was also typically logically derived from his racist ideology. Germans aren't the only people who have been interested in encouraging popular reproduction, of course. The Italians under Mussolini were also encouraged to provide the bearers of national arms—wasn't it "twenty million bayonets"? The Communists, too—I was pleased to see Mr. Taylor point out—have allowed their concern for the raw material of international wars to blind them to the fact that world population increase as a whole is a menacing danger to the continuation of human existence. May I also say that these examples are by no means offset by recent examples of radio propaganda for birth control sponsored by certain national governments. In particular I gravely suspect the motives of "The Chinese Service of the BBC" when they give talks to *Chinese* on "Population Pressure and Family Planning." What about giving the same talks or similar programmes on TV to *British*? There is more than a suspicion of using guile to weaken a possible adversary in international war in programmes of that kind! Actually we can bring the same sort of charges that I have indicated as regards Hitler and Mussolini also against the British Governments of recent years. Present incentives to popular reproduction within Britain at the present moment are by

no means trifling, particularly when they are considered from a eugenic standpoint. Children's allowances are a considerable source of income to ne'er-do-well types. These measures may appear reasonable from any local nationalist point of view such as we might expect to exist in the minds of Labour and Conservative and Liberal politicians, but they do not stand examination in the light of a realistic world view. The truth is that these measures are actively encouraging the production of inferior persons on far too great a scale. As I see it this is only a small part of the heavy price we have to pay for the mass support which is now being given to the ideology of local national independence. From the traditional military point of view—which assumes that international competition is an unalterable fact of human existence—any sort of human material *in quantity* is better than a small number of superior people. But the conditions of world affairs are rapidly leaving these traditional ideas outmoded. In the current week we have seen two schemes put into action for merging Arab states which were formerly independent nations. That it is the so-called "backward people" who are leading the way in the practical abrogation of national sovereignty is not surprising to me. Political thinking is in abeyance in Britain. In the Middle-East it is actively pursued and naturally the political education of the people in the Middle East is much farther advanced than is the case in Britain. I myself blame the BBC and the Press and, in and through these agencies, the religious organisations and persons for the condition of apathy which has the people of Britain in its grip.

What is needed is a return to radical thinking which upsets all religious doctrines as well as replacing local patriotism with a sense of world patriotism. It is only when the absolute priority of this world patriotism creates a fresh political orientation in every country and thus gives rise to a world under a central government that we will see an end to the menace of international wars and the necessary approach to a proper eugenic control of world population.

Mixed Marriages

CONCERN has been expressed by the German Roman Catholic hierarchy about the increase in mixed marriages following the influx of Protestants from the East. The number has turned into a "flood," they say, and the "heart of the Church bleeds for the hundreds of thousands it has lost." Mixed marriages were bad for both religions, they thought, but we cannot imagine them worrying very much if the Protestant Churches lose devotees. No! It is their own flock that understandably worries them. Over half the children, they say, are lost to the Church, and even those brought up as Roman Catholics tend to fall away. Grandchildren were almost invariably lost. Mixed marriage, then, would only be permitted on "deeply painful sufferance" and to avoid the greater evil of civil marriage.

Joseph Lewis on American T.V. Again

(Address delivered January 20th, 1958, over Radio Station WMIE, Miami, Florida)

GOOD EVENING, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is Joseph Lewis speaking. The title of my talk this evening is "Oral Wickedness." It is a public challenge to Oral Roberts, the so-called Faith Healer. I am addressing myself directly to him, but I want you, of the radio audience, to hear what I have to say. You state that through your "ministry"

"...a little girl doomed to the life of a cripple is whole and her body restored! a man received his sight! a boy throws away his crutches! hearing is restored to the deaf!"

This is what you publicly claim, and what you announce to the world, over your own signature, that you have accomplished.

Now, I do not believe a single word quoted in your letter. I not only do not believe that you have effected such cures, but in addition, I brand you as a deliberate and unconscionable liar! And the best way I know how to characterise your preaching, is to condemn it as *Oral wickedness!*

I am sure you are acquainted with my encounter with the late Jack Coe. He repeatedly mentioned the fact, both in his correspondence and on his radio programme, that he was in direct communication with you while my fight with him was going on. He made the statement that since trouble had started, all faith (fake) healers, such as you and he, should *stand together*, in the crisis that he was facing, or both would *fall together*.

It is a matter of public record that it was I who secured the evidence that resulted in the arrest of Jack Coe. The Dade County Solicitor of Miami, Florida, acting upon the evidence that I had submitted, had Coe arrested, and he was held on a \$5,000 bond. The local authorities in Miami wanted the Court to determine whether such mountebanks as Jack Coe and other (fake) healers were exempt from the Medical Practices Act of the State of Florida. However, despite the fact that the charges against Coe were dismissed by Justice of the Peace Hugh F. Duval, this important question has not, as yet, been adjudicated.

I am determined to have the Courts decide so-called faith healers can continue to hoodwink and rob the people in the name of religion. The Courts have already decided that fraud cannot be practised under the cloak of religion, and that the perpetrators of such frauds must pay the same penalty, as others, guilty of the same kind of deception. I am also determined to include in this category the question of your "ministry."

But back to your letter, in which you state that "God needs you," meaning, of course, the recipient of your appeal for contributions.

How do you know that God needs me—or anyone else for that matter? What does God need me for? What help can I render Him? Isn't He supposed to be Omnipotent and All Powerful? How can I render help to an Infinite Being?

If "God's power is limitless," as you say, what can we poor mortals do for Him? God is supposed to help us, not we Him.

Your statement and appeal is not only incongruous, but ludicrous and ridiculous.

And then, why must I send money to *you* for God to help me? What do you mean by giving money to God? Are you God's representative? Have you a licence from God? Do you pay him a licence?

By what authority do you speak for him? By what authority do you claim to be God's intermediary? What and where are your credentials?

I demand to know what you do with this money. I demand an accounting. I dare you to open your books to the public. I will not accept your own representation.

There have been too many liars like you in the past. I want corroborating evidence. I want a full statement under oath. If you fail to meet this challenge, I shall consider your silence, your failure to produce evidence of your claims as a healer, as a confession of guilt, a confession that you are a hypocrite and a fraud, and that you cannot do what you claim, that you cannot produce the results that you so brazenly boast that you have accomplished.

What you can do, I can do. I have as much power as you have, and you have no more power than I. But for all the money in the world I would not deceive a single human being. That's the difference. I would not take five cents from a person unless I gave full value received in return for the money.

To raise the hopes of the sick and suffering under the false promise of help is the most dastardly of all forms of deception. There is, there can be, no more loathsome scoundrel than one who preys upon the suffering of a distressed human being, whose suffering, misery and afflictions cause him to seek help from any and every source which promises relief.

Isn't there enough misery in the world without your adding to it?

If God's power is limitless, and Jesus heals as you claim he does, why doesn't he cure everybody of disease and suffering? Why does he permit disease to exist in the first place? What kind of a God is it, what kind of a Saviour is Jesus Christ, who will torment helpless creatures with diseases that cause excruciating pain only to be relieved of their suffering on payment of money to you?

No language has yet been invented that can properly characterise the kind of God and the kind of Saviour that you represent. Could there be a more diabolical method of dishonesty than your hypocritical campaigns carried on under the cloak of evangelism? Talk about selling Indulgences during the Middle Ages! Why, man, they were pikers compared to you, and no less dishonest! When the book, *The Power of the Charlatan* is rewritten, you deserve a special chapter entitled: "The Prince of Humbugs."

Now, what do you mean by your campaign of "saving souls for Christ"? Do you mean to say that if a person "accepts" Jesus as his "Saviour," all of the "sins" he has committed will be forgiven and he will, when he dies, "go to Heaven and sit on the Right Hand of God"? Is that all one must do to wipe out his sins? Is that all you must do to escape hell and have "eternal" life? In other words, the basic creed of your religion is: Commit any crime, any wrong, any injustice, any despicable act, any monstrous deed, and these sins will be forgiven, if only you "accept Jesus" and send *you* a contribution?

Let me repeat in no uncertain terms and with added emphasis that *there is no such thing as sin*. Sin was invented by the perverted minds of the ministers of religion, to frighten and rob the ignorant and the superstitious.

I want to reiterate again and again that there are wrongs and injustices, *but no sin!*

(To be continued)

This Believing World

A French journal, "Regards," devotes many pages to discussing the power of the Vatican both religiously and politically. It points out that the Pope wields more power than ever did Louis XIV—more power in "domains the most diverse." With his encyclicals, his bulls, his letters, his public interventions, he gives the lead to the Roman Catholic Church in all religious matters as well as in social and political questions. In his person alone he has the sole power but, of course, he is assisted by eleven Congregations who are the true Ministers of the Church—not the consistory of Cardinals who only listen to the Pope, and approve in silence nominations of bishops and cardinals. It is interesting to note all this, for it comes from France, now considered by the Vatican, and with reason, no longer anti-clerical, but the "oldest Daughter of the Church."

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But here in Protestant England even a Christian can criticise his bishops, or even the two archbishops. For example, the Rev. C. Rhodes in his *The New Church in the New Age* attacks the Church of England because of its failure "to meet the challenge of the times." His attack is on the attitude of the Church on such matters as marriage and divorce, and on "union" with other Churches, especially those like our Nonconformists, who have no use for bishops. Of course, there is not a word about the failure of the Church to meet the Freethought attack. Unbelief as such is boycotted—for we are constantly told that the "old" Materialism of the nineteenth century has gone for ever, Science recognising the Great Mystery of the Universe, a Mystery which has put God back in his place.

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To put it another way. Science is "rediscovering" God Almighty, the Churches are coming into their own, and the Bible is once more recognised as the veritable Word of God. These Gospel truths are blared out on some at least of the religious services given by the BBC TV and ITV. Yet nearly all parsons and priests are moaning at the smallness of their congregations, and at the fact that nobody these days reads the Bible. Apathy is the key word to it all—plain, solid indifference. And the Churches have no remedy.

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One of the "Sayings of the Week" in *The Observer* for 2/3/58 is, "I believe that Russia will one day lead the world back to God"—from Mr. Percy Belcher, general secretary of the Tobacco Workers' Union. We wonder whether this means that the Russian brand of Communism is particularly Theistic and that Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and its other leaders, all believed in God Almighty? Or does it mean Theism when the world has accepted Russian Communism, either because it has been forced to, or because it embraces, or will embrace, the Russian brand of Christianity? Some of these "sayings" are often very intriguing—but it is a pity that so few of us ever see the speeches they come from. What *did* Mr. Belcher mean?

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Although there is nothing clearer in the Gospels than the way Jesus consigns all who do not agree with him to Hell, his ministers on earth concentrate on his great "love" for humanity. It is a theme upon which they can enlarge for hours. On ITV, for example, recently, the Rev. D. Griffiths talked as long as he was allowed to about it—with the usual stooges drawn from the "working classes." Two young men and two young women—though rather bewildered, perhaps purposely so, naturally found how this "love" helped them in their daily life.

In none of the four stooges was there the slightest recognition that "God," his "Son" and their "love" were all just talk, religious talk, of course. They had been brought up to believe the Bible, and believe it they did. They swallowed without any protest whatever what Mr. Griffiths told them. Probably they had to, otherwise they would not have been allowed to appear in the programme. But can it be true that such an exhibition of astonishing ignorance could really influence people?

Vivisection

EXPERIMENTS on animals are performed in this country under licence, and these are only granted to qualified people, and all application forms must be signed by the president of one of the learned medical societies.

Persons holding a licence must submit to the Home Office details of proposed experiments to be carried out. If the Home Office consider the experiment is not justified or needlessly cruel, permission is withheld. Cases of cats with earth sewn up in their insides, or burns inflicted on animals, would not be permitted in this country, and I should think that these reports which so disturbed readers of THE FREETHINKER the other week came either from America, where there is no "Cruelty to Animals Act," or from the U.S.S.R.

Mr. R. S. H. Finney, M.Sc., who is senior lecturer in Pharmacology at the Leicester College of Technology, gave a lecture on the value of vivisection to members of the Leicester Secular Society. He was asked, "Isn't there another way? Can't we obtain the same result by any other method?"

He gave an example: the strength of two batches of insulin may vary as much as a thousand to one. The only known test is a biological one. "There is no chemical test; if there were, I should be happy to use it. Insulin is, as you know, used widely in the treatment of diabetes. If we ban vivisection we must give up insulin."

The same thing applies to digitalis, which is used for heart treatment.

It is not true that all experimenters on animals are monsters in human form. Mr. Finney certainly didn't look like one. "It is impossible," he said, "to operate on an animal before the anaesthetic has taken effect, in fact it was necessary to wait until the reflexes had also gone to sleep, otherwise the animal would be jumping about, making it impossible to work. Another thing, an animal in pain would produce chemicals which would alter the normal condition of the body. For these reasons alone vivisectioners *hate* to inflict pain."

Cruelty to animals has long been a stick with which to beat the Christians, and we can still go on beating them in the field of "blood sports," and I think that other countries would do well to press for a "Cruelty to Animals Act" as we have here, and thus to stamp out all but the necessary experiments which we are unfortunately compelled to allow in the interests of Humanity.

C. H. HAMMERSLEY.

[An article by Dr. M. Beddow Bayly will close this now rather protracted discussion.—ED.]

—NEXT WEEK—

L O U R D E S

By DR. GUY VALOT

Author of *Lourdes et L'illusion*

THE FREETHINKER

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, March 16th, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, 5 minutes Edgware Road Tube).—Sunday, March 16th, 7.15 p.m.: J. EBER (Movement for Colonial Freedom), A Lecture.

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 18th, 7.15 p.m.: F. H. A. MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., "Religion in Schools."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 16th, 6.30 p.m.: D. SHIPPER, "The International Free-thought Scene."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 16th, 2.30 p.m.: Mrs. B. AMBATIELOS, "Greece."

Nottingham (Ruddington Parish Hall, near Nottingham).—Friday, March 14th, 8 p.m.: Debate: What I believe about God. The Rev. J. H. L. PHILLIPS (Archdeacon of Nottingham) and T. M. MOSLEY (Vice-President, N.S.S.).

Portsmouth Branch N.S.S. (Forrester's Hall, Fratton Road).—Thursday, March 20th, 7.30 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "The Lure of the Mysterious."

Slough Forum (Labour Hall, Chandos Street).—Friday, March 14th, 7 p.m.: Debate: "Does Man Survive Death?" Aff.: HORACE LEAF. Neg.: J. RADFORD.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 16th, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D., "Saints and Serpents."

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS and WOOD.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

Notes and News

READERS may like to note that Mr. Nigel Dennis's plays, *The Making of Moo* and *Cards of Identity*, which are to appear in June, and from which we were privileged to print an extract from the preface last week, will be published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

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THE establishment in Poland of a Society for Secular Schools was reported in THE FREETHINKER (March 29th, 1957). The paper, *Zycie Warszawy* (23/1/58) now reports a change in emphasis in the Society, the establishment of schools without religious training being no longer its first aim. With 60 or so schools where, by the wish of the majority of parents, religious instruction is not given, the

Society is now turning to information work and studies on educational methods in the light of a rationalist outlook. It feels that its own reputation has been adversely affected by its drive for secular schools. Nevertheless, its membership stands at about 18,000, and it is organised in 600 groups throughout the country. The majority of members seem to have joined on account of their own children; it is only recently that teachers have begun to join in any numbers.

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RELIGIOUS education in England was the subject of a controversy in the *Bristol Evening Post* recently, following a plea for more religious periods by Dr. K. Laybourn, the city's chief inspector of schools. Mr. P. E. J. Jordan, of the National Secular Society (and father of two children, one at school, the other starting soon) led the criticism. Dr. Laybourn is right in saying that religion should begin in the home, said Mr. Jordan. But, "more important, that is where it should stay." Replying later to Christians who rallied to Dr. Laybourn's defence, Mr. Jordan said that "More religion would be a retrograde educational step and should be opposed by all parents whose concern is for their child's useful instruction."

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ANOTHER N.S.S. member, Mr. T. Murphy, of Londonderry, has had two letters published on the Northern Irish football team's withdrawal from the World Cup if matches are to be played on Sundays. "If the I.F.A. stick to their decision not to sponsor Sunday football," said one of Mr. Murphy's critics with touching sincerity, "they may forfeit the world championship, but they will win a glorious victory in the world eternal." Others resorted to vilification, but Mr. Murphy took them all in his stride and, like Mr. Jordan, dispelled the religion and morality identification once again.

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So TV now has its special saint. The story goes that St. Clare while sick in bed prayed that she might see a Christmas Eve service being conducted miles away. Lo and behold! She did see it! thus anticipating Baird by six or seven hundred years. Commenting on the new saint, Roman Catholic Eamonn Andrews said, "It's a wonderful idea. I hope she prays for me." (*Daily Mirror*, 18/2/58.) With all due respect to Mr. Andrews, we can think of more important work that the canonised lady could do. Incidentally, Mr. Andrews might help, too.

The Chronology

PERHAPS readers of *A Chronology of British Secularism* would note the following errata in their copies:—

(1) The 5th footnote to the Appendix showing contributors to THE FREETHINKER is omitted: the name is J. C. Thomas. He came from the Bristol district and was, I believe, a schoolmaster.

(2) In the last line of this Appendix "Edward" should be Ernest.

The date of publication, incidentally, should be 1958, since the chronology is complete to 1957 inclusive.

These are not printing errors and our thanks are due to G. T. Wray Ltd. for the high standard of presentation we have learnt to expect from them.

In listing contributions to THE FREETHINKER it will be understood that poems, obituaries, letters, and E.C. reports are not included, but the only major effect would be in the case of Mr. Bayard Simmons with nearly 250 short poems in addition to articles.

My thanks are due to Mr. Cutner for going through the proofs, checking some dates, and making suggestions.

G.H.T.

Roman Scandals

By COLIN MCCALL

IF *The Keys of St. Peter** is not the finest satire on Catholicism since *Clochemerle* I'll eat a cardinal's hat! It goes without saying that Roger Peyrefitte is a Frenchman; only a countryman of Voltaire and Gabriel Chevallier could have written such a book. It is a sheer delight from start to finish. Ostensibly a novel, it is really a vehicle for the author's pungent commentary on Rome, and, if it ends a little disappointingly, well, we can forgive that. It is not surprising that the book is already a best seller in Europe. In Edward Hyams's translation I hope it will be widely read here, too.

The story, such as it is, concerns a young French seminarian, Victor Mas, who enters the household of curia Cardinal Belloro, where he is told "We shall make a good Roman priest of you"—"vaingloriously" by the chaplain; "with an air of disillusionment" by the secretary; and "with what looked like cynicism" by the *valet de chambre*. Victor learns a great deal—about the Vatican and about life—and so do we. He learns from the cardinal and his entourage, from other priests he meets; not least from Paola, the chaplain's niece, whom fate—aided by Paola herself—decrees shall be his temptress.

"When it's a question of religion, she'll stop at nothing to give pleasure," says Paolo's uncle. The abbé learns that her magnanimity extends to other fields. This lovely seducer who reads books on the Index without knowing they are on it, wins him completely. "The moment you look on everything as natural, there's no such thing as sin," she says. Victor doesn't quite agree, and he knows her uncle wouldn't. "Let's not disturb him!"—says Paola—"I feel so easy lying with you under that picture of Our Lady [of Divine Love]." "You might have turned it face to the wall," says Victor. "What harm are we doing?" she asks. "I doubt whether we were paying homage to Divine Love," he replies; and "still warm from Paola's caresses," he goes to make his confession. But, Divine Love or no, he likes it. Indeed, his life becomes "harmoniously divided between love-making, piety and study. . . . The Mass and love followed each other easily." Until Paola suggests marriage, and Victor is faced with her ultimatum: "Either you must renounce becoming a deacon and a priest, or we must part for ever." It would be unfair to reveal his choice, with which the book ends.

Perhaps any ending would inevitably be a little weak. One doesn't want it to end and, in a sense, it doesn't really end at all. A change is decided upon; but can it be effected? I doubt it. No matter, it is the book that counts, not the ending, and we have 320 delicious pages of it. Into these come, not only fictional characters, but veritable princes of the Church, warts and all. The worldly cardinal, his secretary, the chaplain and others initiate Victor, allowing free play to M. Peyrefitte's devastating wit.

"Repeat after me, 'Jesus!'"

"Jesus!" said the abbé.

"No doubt you imagine that you've gained another twenty-five days' indulgences?"

"Perhaps only twelve and a half, since it's only one word instead of two."

"Not at all, you have just gained three hundred days," said the secretary, who seemed to have made a special study of the tariff.

Attending lectures at the Gregorian, the abbé is taught

to distinguish parts of the body that are "decent, less decent, and indecent." He studies—in Latin, of course—"complete lust, in accordance with nature, in its varieties, to wit, simple fornication and double fornication"; "what a woman may allow her husband and what she is bound to refuse." Blackboard drawings and plaster models illustrate the lessons. Some latitude is allowed in secondary matters, "for instance, it was permissible to look at the indecent parts of another person's body, or those of an animal—but from a distance and in passing. Still from a distance and in passing, it was even permissible to look at copulating animals, provided they were *small* animals."

Viewing the precautions taken with women before admitting them to audience with the Pope, the abbé thinks the Holy Father must be "uncommonly susceptible" to feminine charm. Cardinal Granito di Belmonte was made of sterner stuff, and to a hostess who apologised for a plunging neckline he answered with the *mot*, "Those lovely mountains leave me stony." (Belmonte put the last three Popes on the throne, we are told by M. Peyrefitte's cardinal.)

M. Peyrefitte throws a revealing light on many aspects of the Roman Church. The special session of the Supreme Sacred Congregation on the restoration of devotion of the Holy Prepuce is masterly. With the abbé we discover that the Grand Harbinger's chief function is to cry "Lift!" and "Lower!" to the porters of the papal sedan chair. Cardinal Tisserant dislikes the Pope. During Mass cardinals are constantly prompted by the Master of Ceremonies, who beckons them forward, waves them back, turns a page of a missal, whispers a word forgotten, and generally hops about "like a devil in a font." No Jesuit enters the Church of the Holy Apostle because it contains the tomb of Clement XIV, who banned the Society of Jesus. Two carved cupids, "whose pretty posteriors shine like mirrors," are polished, not by kisses, "but by the frocks of the Conventual Friars Minor whose chairs are placed there and who lean back on the two cupids of Sixtus IV as if they were misereres." Not surprisingly, the abbé finds "too many miraculous medals, miraculous waters, indulgences, prayers, relics and miracles." But the chaplain points out that "In our holy religion, nothing must be rejected. . . . The moment you begin doubting what is subsidiary, you put in doubt what is principal."

I do not know whether M. Peyrefitte is a Roman Catholic. Possibly, like his cardinal, he knows what the Church is and yet loves her all the more? Yet it is the cardinal who says to the abbé, "My dear son, you have seen the outside only, and it is all that is really fit to be seen." How can one know the inside and remain faithful? "The Keys of St. Peter are the keys of the strong box," says the manservant. "The Church has her head in the skies but her feet on the earth"—says the cardinal—"Her altar rests on the bones of martyrs—and a cashbox"; she "always publishes her expenses but never her income."

It is the cardinal's job to "consider candidates for the halo," and he does this in a purely realistic manner. He knows what is required; what orders and what countries have to be pleased; what customs have to be respected. He makes his selections accordingly and submits them to the Holy Father. When the canonization ceremony arrives, Victor finds he cannot "altogether care for this dramatization of a decision that had long been taken."

And what remains of the Holy Father himself, after

**The Keys of St. Peter* by Roger Peyrefitte, translated from the French by Edward Hyams. Secker and Warburg. 1957. 18s. Obtainable from The Pioneer Press.

Charter for Scientific Humanism

By J. WILSON JONES, PH.D.

MAN, today, throughout the world is awakening from his long Rip Van Winkle sleep to find himself shackled by outworn myths, holy books and priests. Many of the contemporary ills and world wide troubles are no more than the outward symptoms of a birth of a new age in which Man begins to realise that his salvation lies within himself, not in some heavenly Mount Olympus. The guardians of the ancient myths, the fraternity of priests, the profiteers of ignorance, are not going to relinquish their ancient privileges without a struggle. Into this age it is necessary to introduce a Charter of Scientific Humanism as a guide to the thinking and reading man. We need to take our freethought and turn it towards the positive social improvement of mankind, for we need no longer spend our energy tilting at the windmills of religion and myth. Truth will live, falsehood will die.

Our first principle must state that we, as rationalists, accept the unknown and not the unknowable. We realise that there are natural laws yet unknown, many responsible for strange events beyond our 1958 minds, but we believe that everything discovered will eventually fit into a natural law.

Our second declaration follows. We cannot accept that these natural laws are designed to benefit man but since they have evolved and moulded the Universes then we know that to keep in harmony with them, both in care of body and mind, leads to longer life, more perfect health and contentment.

In our broadminded outlook we accept the wise teachings stated to have been made by great teachers, from Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Jesus, the Buddha, Shakespeare or Emerson. We are not interested in the arguments as to the authenticity of the actual speaker or writer; we do not accept the magic, mystery and myth surrounding them; but, as long as the teachings are humane, moral and for the good of Man we accept and use them.

If set free from the dogma of ancient myth, from exploitation of religion and priestcraft and from the misleadership of politics, Man can be noble, self-sacrificing and limitless in his power of thought. His creed need be only that of love and tolerance for his fellow man and a common humane heritage embracing every colour.

Let us next state in unmistakable terms our relationship towards animals. Our love and kindness must embrace the animal kingdom to the extent that we cause them no unnecessary pain. We cannot accept, for instance, the tradition of Christmas love at Christmas with the ritual murder of thousands of animals for a Christmas feast. Cruelty in all its forms finds no place in our charter and, if this leads to a vegetarian outlook, then the conscience of the coming Man may make this essential.

As humanists we must realise that for the protection of society some punishments are essential but knowing that the majority of crime has its roots in lack of financial security, loneliness, inferiority complexes and abnormalities of the mind, we declare that all penalties should be designed to have a curative effect.

As rationalists we cannot believe in the value of arms, the race for destructive supremacy. We must call for men of sanity to abolish arms and to devote the wealth now expended upon them for the abolition of hunger, the care of the sick and aged, the education of the backward and for the advance of man.

The final point of our charter should state our humanist outlook on education. Education must be free of religious

M. Peyrefitte's characters have removed his trappings? He takes care "to leave all the great offices about him vacant so that all attention is focused on himself." He makes a point "whenever he's well enough, of receiving celebrities." "His pallor was accentuated by a layer of white cosmetic—Sister Pasqualina was no make-up artist." He is, in truth, "the world's greatest curiosity," but little more. Who can restrain a titter at the "apparition of that slight, white figure at a high window?" "First the white cap appeared, at the level of the balustrade; then the shoulders; finally the torso as low as the waist. It was not that he was being drawn up by a string like a puppet; the Holy Father had simply stepped up on a stool."

What respect can one have for the man who, when "the war was hardly over," stigmatized the Nazis for the deaths, not of ten million men, but a few thousand priests? The man who condemned the atom bomb, "none too soon now that the Americans are not the only ones who have it"? "Did not the Church favour Hitler's rise to power because he had promised to sign a Concordat?" asks the cardinal. "Like Janus"—he says later—"the Vatican has two faces, which enables it to blow hot and cold. At the Secretariat of State, in other words, two famous currents flow—the Left current and the Right current, which run side by side, or together, or cross over each other."

There is, then, a seriousness to *The Keys of St. Peter*, as there is to all good satire. It is the work of a shrewd and knowing diplomat. But above all it is the product of Gallic wit at its best.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY 77th ANNIVERSARY

This was held at the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday, March 2nd.

At the members' meeting in the afternoon, President Mr. G. A. Kirk announced that since the last anniversary, the society had gained 14 new members.

Afterwards some 50 members and friends sat down to an excellent tea, provided by Mrs. Cartwright, Mrs. Waterson and others.

The evening meeting was further swelled by N.S.S. members and friends from Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester and London.

The Guest Speaker this year was Mr. F. J. Corina, of Bradford, who was presented by Mr. Kirk with honorary life membership of the L.S.S.

The *Leicester Mercury*, reporting the event, referred to the "substantial increase" in membership. C.H.H.

OBITUARY

I REGRET to announce the death of Dr. Paul Marcus, of Sweden, who passed away peacefully in his sleep on 20/1/58. Dr. Marcus left Hamburg, Germany, during the Hitler regime and had lived in Lidingö, Sweden, ever since. An extremely active Freethinker, he was a member of the Swedish Förbundet för Religionsfrihet (Society for Freedom from Religion) and a regular writer in their journal *Fri Tanke* (*Free Thought*) and other continental journals, including the Swiss *Freidenker* and the German *Der Funke*. Our heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Hilda Maria Marcus. D.S.

WILLIAM JARVIS PRINGLE, who died on February 26th at the age of 82, was a founder-member of the Kingston Branch of the National Secular Society, and he remained an active member until shortly before his death. Always full of enthusiasm, William Pringle will be missed at the open air meetings which he attended regularly. He liked nothing more than a discussion with sympathisers or opponents.

Mr. J. W. Barker, President of Kingston Branch, and a good friend of the deceased, conducted a secular service at South-West Middlesex Crematorium, Hanworth, on Thursday, March 6th. The Branch Secretary, Mr. E. Mills, also attended, and two elderly friends of Mr. Pringle travelled from Scotland to pay their last respects.

bias and extend over all subjects and give due regard for implanting a knowledge of psychology and social relationship within every child. To encourage the reading of all good types of literature, the understanding of myths from an anthropological viewpoint, and, eventually to develop a common language for mankind. Education must teach that expression of thought must at all times be free.

CORRESPONDENCE

WOMEN WRITERS

In your recently published review of my book, *Go Spin, You Jade!* Mr. Bayard Simmons comments that "By far the larger portion of this book is, however, devoted to English women writers for the last three hundred years."

May I point out that, while writing was almost the only mode of expression for women, Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft only wrote in order to promote the interests of their sex. Mrs. Macaulay was a historian and Mary Somerville a scientist. The following women, to whom I have devoted a whole chapter or part of one, were not writers: Charlotte Clarke, Elizabeth Fry, Josephine Butler, Sophia Jex-Blake, Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Pankhurst and Eleanor Rathbone. Working-class women did not originally have much share in the Movement, but there are some references to them, especially to the Women's Trade Union under Mary Macarthur and Margaret Bondfield. D. L. HOBMAN.

THE LATE DR. GOMPERTZ

Following the report made by "H.C." of the passing of Dr. M. Gompertz, and noting with appreciation the fine references made to the deceased, it may be of interest to your readers to know that our Societies co-operate on occasion in quietly personal ways. Dr. Gompertz had requested in his will that Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner of the R.P.A. should be invited to give the memorial address. Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner was unable to attend at Brighton, and on his suggestion, I conducted the funeral service and gave the memorial address at Downes Crematorium—as Secretary of the South Place Ethical Society. It is well to keep in mind that our non-supernaturalistic societies have dignified and meaningful if simple forms and ceremonies to offer in personal ministrations to our members and friends. Mrs. Gompertz and the family circle were deeply grateful for the services rendered to them in their sad bereavement. J. HUTTON HYND

(Secretary, South Place Ethical Society).

MILITANT ATHEISM

Mr. Du Cann's article "The God of Atheism" reminds me of the many so-called agnostics (in evidence in some circles of the N.S.S.), who, although claiming to be rationalists, still cling to a romantic idea of after-life with all the implications involved.

Among the accusations in the article against Mr. Cutner were his ill-mannered style of the common scold. This, translated, means using words which offend reverent rationalist opinions.

Was it not Mr. Du Cann who implored atheists in an earlier article not to disillusion old ladies who believed in the "saviour"? He obviously prefers to waive truth aside in favour of sentimentalism. The issue here is enthusiastic militant atheism versus (again to use Mr. D.C.'s own words) "true" biblical Christianity.

These irrational, compromising arguments will, if not checked, produce a public opinion which relates the N.S.S. with the so-called modern school of Churches. D.I.G.A.

MONARCHY

I consider Mr. G. H. Taylor's answer, under the title "Chosen Question," to my question whether the Freethought movement is officially Republican—therefore a political organisation—very irrelevant. It may be that the Monarchy is associated with godism and superstition. If I remember rightly, Chapman Cohen simply attacked the "religious ceremonies" attached to the Coronation of King George V and VI, but to declare, because of that, one must become a "republican" is most irrelevant, ignoring also important factors and facts about the Commonwealth. Besides, one has only

to look at the various "republics." Are they more democratic than the English Monarchy? The various Presidents: Eisenhower, Salazar, Franco, Nasser, Celalbayer (Turkey), Kelly, etc., are even more religious than Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, who even plays polo on Sundays! I haven't met yet an Irishman who doesn't criticise the Republic or doesn't poke fun at its President!

MAURICE BYRN.

[There is always the *chance* to elect a decent President, but monarchs are not open to election at all. Unsatisfactory Presidents are no argument for keeping monarchs. Because many newspapers are rubbish, must I advocate the abolition of the press?—G.H.T.]

HUMANITARIANISM

May I express my appreciation of the recent articles by Mr. G. I. Bennett on humanitarianism. It is very important in face of the increasing flood of irrational and anti-humanist propaganda, that the humanitarian point of view should be clearly and fairly stated. To quote Darwin: "Sympathy beyond the bounds of man—that is humanity to other animals, seems to be one of the latest (of man's) acquisitions. It is apparently unfelt by savages, except toward their pets. . . . This virtue, one of the noblest with which man is endowed, seems to arise from our sympathies becoming more tender and more widely diffused, until they are extended to all sentient beings." To which I would only add that it is the first to be thrown overboard with any lowering of the standards of civilisation. I find it impossible myself, to separate freethinking and humanitarianism, for the same desire to find out for myself that led me to reject Christianity also led me to question other hallowed institutions. Down the centuries cruelty in all its forms has been condoned by calling it "God's will." If you banish God from the universe you also banish "God's will," which means a re-thinking and re-shaping of many conventional ideas. I expect many readers of THE FREETHINKER have thought along similar lines. K. TAPERELL.

NOTABLE PAMPHLETS

- St. George and the Dragon* by F. A. Ridley. Price 1d.
Social Catholicism by F. A. Ridley Price 1d.
The Religious Revival by G. H. Taylor Price 1d.
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