

# The Freethinker

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IT WAS, I seem to remember, in a book by the late Joseph McCabe that I first came across the story which relates how ex-Bishop Talleyrand was watching the fighting in the streets of Paris during the French Revolution. Suddenly, Talleyrand turned to his companions and exclaimed, "We are winning!" When someone present asked who "we" were, he replied briefly, "I don't know—yet."

## Political Infallibility

It has always seemed to me, as it also presumably did to McCabe, that this observation of Talleyrand—former Bishop of Autun under the old regime and later to be received back into the Church on his deathbed after serving as Napoleon's chief political adviser—represented not so much the personal opinion of Talleyrand himself as a terse generalisation of the traditional political practice of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the ages. I also think that, however dubious the famous Dogma of Papal Infallibility may be from the theological angle, one could make out a much more plausible case for the *political* Infallibility of the Church and of its Papacy throughout the ages. For Rome has, not once but repeatedly, indicated an ability to adapt itself to the changing times and to leap on and off successive bandwagons with a positively acrobatic agility. One has only to look at its social, as distinct from its religious, evolution during its 19 centuries of continuous existence. Successively the Catholic Church has defended social systems based on chattel slavery, feudalism and capitalism. In which last connection the Church, which as late as the Revolution of 1848, was the principal ally of feudalism and absolute monarchy against liberalism, democracy and the rising bourgeoisie, is now equally—and barely a century later—the cosmopolitan champion of capitalism, liberalism and democracy against the "spectre of Communism," which in 1848 first made its bow to history with the famous Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels. And what guarantee have we nowadays that this long and chequered evolution has now definitely concluded, or that the ancient leopard on the Vatican hill will not give the lie once more to the sacred Scriptures and yet again change his spots? In Poland, the Catholic Church has now done a deal with Godless Communism. In Eire, it effectively practises co-existence with a Radical middle-class democracy complete with "proportional representation" and all the very latest political devices for giving effect to the voice of the people; whereas in Spain it still supports a fully-blown Fascist regime. Nor does it neglect even the extreme Left. We recently drew attention to the current existence of Catholic Anarchists in America—though we must admit that we have never yet heard of any in Spain, that classic stronghold of the modern Anarchist movement. Altogether, we think that a primarily *political* history of the Roman Catholic Church, which would trace these successive ramifications in detail, would be a most important contribution to the study of human history and of its motivating forces.

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

"I Don't Know—  
Yet"

By F. A. RIDLEY

## Rome and the Recent French Crisis

The remarkable political flexibility of Catholicism is evident in the recent French political crisis which has just concluded with the advent to power of General de Gaulle. It is true that the gallant General, who has now undertaken the ambitious task of "liberating" France for the second time—from *what* remains to be seen!—does not appear to have had any direct backing from the Vatican. At least, there does not appear to be any tangible proof of an overt movement from that quarter. De Gaulle, it is true, ultimately owed his surprising elevation to celestial assistance, but it was that of paratroopers, and not angels, threatening to drop from the sky!

However, the complex political manœuvres were those of a traditionally Catholic land, steeped in Jesuitical subtlety. And all the principal participants in the recent political drama appear to have been practising Catholics. De Gaulle himself, the Algerian Generals, Salan and Massu, and the "Grey Eminence" behind de Gaulle, Jacques Soustelle. So also were the two leaders of the French Fifth Column to whom de Gaulle owed his bloodless triumph, President Coty and the General's immediate predecessor in office, M. Pflimlin, the leader of the M.R.P., the chief present representative of political Catholicism in post-war France. The midnight comings and goings of these last two Catholic politicians with the nocturnal General have a distinctly Jesuitical flavour. More seriously, it would be interesting to know—though probably we never shall—whether *direct* advice from the Vatican played any part in inducing the M.R.P. leader to produce his "Trojan Horse" act and to betray the parliamentary citadel to de Gaulle immediately after Parliament had indicated by a substantial majority that it wished, in the name of the French people, to keep Pflimlin in and de Gaulle out; whereas within a few hours, the exact opposite occurred. Ever since the French Revolution the Vatican has been engaged in a "Hundred Years War" to retain France, the traditional "eldest son of the Church," within her fold. To judge from the apparent facts, the accession of de Gaulle—as formerly of that other Catholic politician, Dr. Adenauer in Germany—appears to mark a substantial political victory for the Vatican.

## Irish or Spanish Political Model

The ambitions of the Roman theocracy remain constant; its ultimate aim never varies: to achieve again a total despotism over the Western world—and over as much more as may be possible. But its methods are, now as always, flexible, and vary widely from country to country. Catholicism is aristocratic in Spain, bourgeois in Germany, and—despite the worker priests—in France also. But it is proletarian in the Anglo-Saxon countries, partly spread by Irish immigrants. In America, Australia and here, the main political strength of Catholicism is in the Left—but not too Left—parties such as the British and Australian Labour Parties and the American Democratic Party. The

only Catholic candidate to run (unsuccessfully) for the American Presidency, Governor Al Smith, ran as a Democrat (1928). Whereas on the Continent political Catholicism operates through the agency of bourgeois or aristocratic politicians such as Adenauer, von Papen, Salazar, etc.; as Mr. Paul Blanshard has indicated in his book, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, most Catholic countries and movements today follow either the present Spanish or Irish model: Spanish Fascism or Irish Democracy, which correspond respectively to what may be termed the direct and indirect phases of clerical control. In Spain, the *Concordat* of 1953 effectively subordinates the State to the Church in theory equally with fact; whereas in Eire the present relationship is indirect. In the overwhelmingly Catholic Republic of Eire the Church is not even officially established. Nevertheless, as Blanshard demonstrates, it is actually a moot point whether the Irish version of political Catholicism does not really give the Church more power,

besides providing it with alibis and safety-valves totally lacking in the present medieval Spanish set-up. It would seem probable that the Irish type is likely to prevail in the future, since this preserves at least the fiction that Catholicism can co-exist with both religious toleration and political democracy. In form, at least, Irish Catholicism is modern and not frankly medieval as in Franco Spain. At present Rome appears to regard Spain and, perhaps still more, Portugal, as model Catholic States, but Rome has been known to change its mind in such matters.

### **I Don't Know—Yet!**

However, unquestionably the real political problem for the Vatican is Communism. That is the crucial problem which really worries the Vatican. What are they going to do about it? Probably the present Pope—who has nearly as much diplomatic experience as had ex-Bishop and Foreign Minister Talleyrand—would, if pressed, reply in the same way, "I don't know—yet!"

## Review

[*American Freedom and Catholic Power, 1958*, by Paul Blanshard. \$3.95. Beacon Press Inc., 25 Beacon Street, Boston, 8, Mass., U.S.A.]

THIS IS A REVISED EDITION of the book originally published in 1949. Mr. Blanshard reviews events since then in the R.C. struggle for power in the U.S.A., adds a "Calendar of Significant Events," gives analyses of Supreme Court decisions and quotes many new documentary sources.

As many Americans are greatly concerned about the continued successes of R.C.s in gaining positions of power, it is interesting to find the author defining what should be the correct attitude of non-Catholics towards R.C. candidates for public office. It is asserted that "any general blanket boycott of Catholic candidates for public office seems unwise and unfair." An American should not automatically be penalised because of being born into a certain Church and because "like most human beings he has continued to be true to the faith of his fathers."

Mr. Blanshard points out that the 19th century anti-Catholic political movements, the Ku-Klux-Klan, the Know Nothings, and the American Protective Association, "degenerated into disgraceful bigotry and fanaticism." Therefore, he opposes the idea of an anti-Catholic party or a general boycott of R.C. candidates.

However, he underlines the fact that an R.C. candidate's attitude toward certain aspects of Church policy is "clearly relevant to his fitness to hold public office." Furthermore, "this is particularly true when the office which he seeks has great social significance, as, for example, the Presidency of the United States." Obviously, "his Catholicism cannot give him immunity from a searching inquiry as to his own personal attitude toward education, medicine, birth control, and censorship—the areas over which his Church claims a special type of sovereignty." He has "no right to use religion as a shield to conceal his views on these subjects, or to prevent reasonable questioning."

Mr. Blanshard lists three questions which, in his opinion, might reasonably be put to an R.C. Presidential candidate. They are:

1. The Canon Law of your Church (Canon 1,374) directs all American Catholic parents to boycott our public schools unless they receive special permission from their bishops. Do you personally approve or disapprove of this boycott rule?

2. The bishops of your Church, in an official statement in 1948, have denounced the Supreme Court's interpretation of the religion clause of the First Amendment and have argued that the Constitution actually permits the dis-

tribution of public money on an equitable basis to sectarian schools. At present the Catholic press is promoting a plan for securing grants of federal funds to parents to cover the costs of parochial schools. What is your personal conviction concerning: (a) your bishops' attack on the Supreme Court; (b) the payment of Government funds to parents for major parochial school costs; and (c) the payment of tax money for such "fringe" benefits as bus transportation?

3. Your Church denies the right of both non-Catholics and Catholics to receive birth-control information, and in such states as Massachusetts and Connecticut its power has been sufficient to make prohibition of birth control legally binding. Do you personally approve or disapprove of your Church's policy on this subject?

The reaction of a Catholic candidate to these questions would, indeed, be interesting, particularly as we may see an R.C. Presidential or Vice-Presidential (also a position with great potentialities—remember Truman?) candidate ere long. Mr. Blanshard believes that such questions, due to the spread of public knowledge about R.C. hierarchical plans, could now be pressed in a manner impossible at the time of the Al Smith campaign. We sincerely hope that the spread of knowledge is able to keep pace with the swift growth of the Catholic population.

D. SHIPPER.

## How Many Believe ?

A BANNER PAGEWIDE HEADLINE on the front page of the *Los Angeles Sunday Examiner* of February 9th, 1958, asks this question and says that 95% of Americans say they believe in God. A column-long article then follows and expresses grave doubts about the reports of Churches that their attendance is at an all-time high, or that it means anything much. A poll showed that four-fifths of Americans believed the Bible was the word of God, but only 35% of them could name the four gospels and 53% could not even name one. Even the Catholics showed up very poorly in a survey of a typical parish. Out of 10,946 members, 4,219 did not bother to go to church; only 3,564 attended Mass with any degree of regularity and 1,117 had not even made their Easter duties. The fact is that people are becoming indifferent to religion and all the ballyhoo about "In God We Trust" on stamps and money is nonsense.—*The Liberal* (U.S.A.), May 1958.

# Disarmament Disunity

By RICHARD NORTH

THE TWO PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament typify the fundamental weakness from which all such conglomerate bodies inevitably suffer. The President is a declared Atheist and the Chairman of the Executive Committee is a Christian priest. In this single difference there is sufficient fissile material to explode the cause, and when the equally antagonistic political ingredients of Capitalism and Communism are added, disintegration seems certain.

Even at this early stage, when the flush of young enthusiasm is strong within the cause, the two sets of differences have brought dissensions. In the long and important discussion in *The Times* a short time ago, the letters from Canon Collins were avowedly religious, one of them recommending the Christian gospel "with the Cross as its symbol and the resurrection its hope." I wrote to Canon Collins, protesting against the possible alienation of sympathisers by the intrusion of such instruments of division. I told him I was burning with zeal against the particular lunacy the Campaign attacked, but that I did not believe in either the Cross or the resurrection, and that I refused to wear the label of his particular creed or any other in such a cause. To this Canon Collins replied that it was a pity I should be bigoted against Christianity and that "it is the inability of people to respect other people's views which is perhaps more than anything else responsible for what ultimately becomes world tension." Whereupon I pointed out that he had turned the argument away from my point, and that until he answered it I refused to discuss any other with him. To that letter I have had no reply, and I think it is likely that Canon Collins will remain insensitive to the impropriety of insinuating his creed into the cause, and so incite those who differ from him to insinuate theirs.

Political differences are expressed with equal disregard for internal unity. A recent number of the Campaign's *Bulletin* declared, without qualification of any kind, that "support from hotheads or from known Communists is the kiss of death." In reply to a protest against such abusive language, I received the following:

"The Campaign has always made it clear that while there is, of course, no ban or witch hunt so far as supporters who are members of the Communist Party are concerned, we do not associate with Communist organisations and advise committees not to have known Communists as officers. The reasons for this are obvious and are accepted not only by the great majority of our committees but by members of the Communist Party who are supporting the Campaign."

This contradicts the "kiss of death" policy, but let that pass. The flat rejection of Communist support, even if regrettable, would be both courageous and logical, but it is neither the one nor the other to accept it reluctantly, to describe it as the "kiss of death," and to recommend the kissers' exclusion from office. The reasons for this attitude are by no means so obvious as the reply supposes. What is more obvious is that the Campaign should welcome not only without reserve but with enthusiasm those who consistently pleaded, before it was even born, the very measures which it advocates, and whose fellow-thinkers in Russia have already achieved one of its objects, the suspension of tests.

All this I said in a further letter to the Secretary, to which I have received no reply.

Whether Communists do, in fact, give their support to the Campaign in the full knowledge of such terms of supe-

riority and condescension is to be doubted. The Executive Committee of the Communist Party, whom I consulted, have no knowledge that their members accept such conditions. If I were a Communist, which I am not, I should not be so accommodating as to give my support on any other terms than indiscriminating equality.

An amusing encounter suggests itself. I do not know whether the Dean of Canterbury is a Campaigner. If he is, a meeting between him and the Canon of St. Paul's should be worth seeing. The souls of both these gentlemen are "lighted with wisdom from on high"—they have assured us of it many a time in one of their proselytising hymns—and they are no doubt equally certain that they will spend an eternity of bliss together in the same heaven. Yet, on the authority of the Campaign's official *Bulletin*, in a cause with such a noble purpose as the Campaign one will administer the "kiss of death" to the other.

Enough has been said to show that serious elements of disruption threaten the Campaign. Such stupid and suicidal strife should be halted at once. Discrimination against individuals or organisations on the one hand, and the use of the opportunities offered to advocate religious or political doctrines on the other, alike spell disaster to the movement. Undisturbed unity is essential to success—hard enough with it but impossible without it—and any temptations whatsoever that would weaken cohesion or perpetuate division must be resolutely resisted. I am myself in religion an Atheist and in politics completely free and independent, but I will do battle against this insane abomination of nuclear war preparation side by side with Christians, Capitalists, Communists, or what have you. And I shall give a promise, and keep it, to repress my Atheism, with the demand that my colleagues will also leave their special pets securely chained up in their individual kennels.

## The Celibate Priest

[Translated from the Portuguese by Nan Flanagan.]

HERE I AM NOT INTERESTED in discussing the question as to whether the priest has need of a woman, but the question as to whether he has need of a hearth. Can the priest in his presbytery, in the church, in the cemetery, while in the full plenitude of his power as a man, remain permanently indifferent to the human necessity of loving and being loved? Is it possible for him to hold himself egoistically apart from the powerful natural fecundity around him? Does he never feel the necessity of sacrificing himself for a beloved being, of perpetuating himself through his children? Is he never stirred by the scenes passing before his eyes: a mother nursing her baby; a pair of lovers exchanging kisses in the shadows of the trees; labourers with their wives beside them eating their humble meals, spread out on the ground under the shade of the hedges; an old man dancing his grandchild on his knee? Will not the longing for these human joys one day turn itself into envy—a terrible, implacable, devouring envy of all who possess these compensations for living from which his Church orders him to abstain? We ask ourselves if this envy, coming from a sad, torn heart, will not, especially in the Latin priest, so passionate, so imaginative and mystical, in the end lead him to the deep tragedy of perversities, to the dark hallucinations in which monsters are created; and if the bestial flagellations which stain the history of the Catholic Church in Spain and Portugal were not the natural outcome of these remote causes?

RAMALHO ORTIGAO.

## This Believing World

The most interesting point to note with regard to the riots in Ceylon, which have resulted in many deaths, is that the Singalese are Buddhists—the Tamils, with whom they are quarrelling, are Hindus. Now the one great boast of all Buddhists is that they never fight, and they never kill. Bugs, fleas, beetles, rats, mice, and many other "living things" are absolutely sacred to all Buddhists, and under no circumstances must be destroyed. Yet in these communal riots in Ceylon many people have been killed by—Buddhists! Perhaps one day many other legends about Buddhism will be similarly debunked.

★

In the biography of the late Harry Price by Dr. Paul Tabori will be found particulars of a "seance" in which the spirit of a little girl called Rosalie appeared—a seance which "shook" Price's scepticism to the utmost. Dr. Tabori himself thought it was a genuine "seance." Alas, just as the Borley Rectory "hauntings" are now admitted to have been *invented* by Price, so it is now seen that the "Rosalie" incident is just as big a fraud as the Borley rubbish. In *Four Modern Ghosts* by Eric J. Dingwall and Trevor Hall, the beautiful story of the spirit child is completely and thoroughly shattered. But not, of course, to convinced Spiritualists.

★

That controversial journalist, Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, like so many other journalists, has suddenly found out that "institutional Christianity" is visibly languishing, if not dying. And why? He thinks it is due to the Church's "hypocrisy about Sunday." He wants the clergy, according to the *Sunday Pictorial*, to "make the dead bones of Christian dogma live again and they will not need old laws, or new ones either, to induce people to remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy." In other words, Mr. Muggeridge wants to do away with "institutional" Christianity—whatever that is—and bring back "true" Christianity, with a "holy" Sunday based of course on the outdated Jewish Sabbath.

★

It appears also from this article that Mr. Muggeridge does not like the Pharisees "who crucified the Founder of the Christian religion" and who were "strong Sabbatarians." There is not a scrap of proof that the Pharisees crucified Jesus—the Gospels say it was the Romans under Roman Law. But it always makes good reading to blame the Pharisees, and to blame them also for the ridiculous Sunday laws upheld so strenuously these days not only by the Churches, but by most of our Members of Parliament. Though Mr. Muggeridge is an ardent defender of true Christianity, does he really want back the *Jewish* "Sabbath Day and keep it Holy"?

★

ITV'S account of William Blake as a Christian poet and artist in its religious programme the other Sunday was exactly what one would have expected. That for Blake, a "mystic" and a poet, religion was mostly merely "symbolism," was carefully suppressed. He was put forward as, what must have been thought by viewers, a genuine Fundamentalist. But what did Blake really think of Jesus? His plain, unequivocal opinion will be found in his poem, "The Everlasting Gospel"—the last two lines. They are:

I'm sure this Jesus will not do  
Either for Englishman or Jew.

Needless to add, these lines—nor indeed the poem—was referred to by the very pious lecturer.

★

Portugal has always been boosted up as England's oldest ally, and therefore it is most intriguing to see that Dr. Salazar, its Premier, has once again asserted his Dictatorship in no uncertain terms. His nominee for the Presidentship, Admiral Tomas, has won the recent election against his opponent, General Delgado, and therefore the ruthless suppression of all opposition to the Salazar regime will be rigorously maintained—particularly the imprisonment without trial of all opponents. Salazar is both a political and religious Dictator. He is a Roman Catholic, as is President Tomas—and for that matter so is Delgado. Portugal gives us a wonderful picture of Catholic dictatorship.

## The Rising Generation

XXXII—"THE LIGHT TO RULE THE NIGHT"

EVERY CHILD AT SCHOOL is required by law to attend the religious classes at school—unless exempted for one reason or other; so that all who have been taught religion will recognise the famous verse from Genesis—"And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night."

We all know that the "lesser" light is the Moon, and it would be interesting to learn how many of you have ever pondered upon this verse? For instance, does the Moon *really* rule the night? That is, do we always get light from it to "rule" the night? The truth is—as you will no doubt find out in your astronomy class—that no light comes from the Moon except some pale *reflected* light from the Sun, for the Moon is an utterly dead world.

The Moon shines at night only at certain periods called "phases"—the full Moon only lasts a few days, and very often bad weather or heavy clouds prevent it "ruling" by night, for we do not get any light when it is hidden from us; while the "phases," if small, give us only a glimmer of light, and even then clouds and bad weather can hide them. The idea therefore that the Moon rules at night is quite farcical. The term, "as black as night," must have come into use from somebody who found that night meant *pitch* blackness more often than anything else.

Our professors of Astronomy are quite conversant with many aspects of the Moon, for it is nearer to us than any other heavenly body, and what they know must have made more than one ask, why was it "created" at all?

As already pointed out, the Moon is *dead*. It has no life whatever upon it—it has no atmosphere and no water. It is covered with mountains and ridges and craters, and there is very little doubt that its surface is also covered with fine dust many feet deep. Its temperature is very low, for no life—as we understand it—could live on it, and it is possibly similar on that side of the moon we can never see. The Moon, of course, is responsible for our tides, but very often these are so terrible that they cause fearful destruction of life and property.

Of what use is the Moon? It can be said with every assurance that not a single parson or theologian can tell us. It is a lump of perfectly useless "matter." As an example of the "Design Argument as taught in all schools it is "a washout." H.C.

—NEXT WEEK—

A HUMANIST CHARTER  
By THE REV. J. L. BROOM, M.A.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Room 4, 83 Suffolk Street).—Sunday, June 22nd, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Christian Ethics and Modern Problems."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 22nd, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, PH.D., "The Decline of the Countryside."

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre, Cardiff).—Tuesday, June 24th, 7 p.m.: EMRYS ROBERTS, "The Necessity for Welsh Nationalism."

### OUTDOOR

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. F. HAMILTON, E. MILLS and J. W. BARKER.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and 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.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

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. Sunday, 11.30 a.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

Orpington Humanist Group.—Sunday, June 22nd: Pilgrim's Way and Wealden Ramble. Assemble at Kemsing Station, 11 a.m. Bring packed lunch. Set tea at Wrotham, 3 p.m.

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (The Downs, Bristol).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m. D. SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.

## Notes and News

ONE of our readers tells us that he has been receiving regular visits from his local parson and that they are, in fact, very good friends now. The parson has been in the parish for three years. But, says our reader, "what a changed man! I don't know whether it is the result of my discussions with him (which usually last well into the early hours of the morning) but he is certainly expressing very different views now. One might almost call him a Materialist. Another few months of discussion may see him applying for membership of the National Secular Society."

★  
OUR occasional—and always welcome—contributor, Mr. Oswald Blakeston, is a man of many talents. During this week and next (to Friday, June 27th) he is exhibiting his drawings at the Coffee Pot, 40 Berwick Street, Soho, London, W.1.

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £325 12s. 11d.; J. Hart, 5s.; Mrs. A. Calderwood, £1; N. Cluett, 2s. 6d.; S. Rosenthal (U.S.A.), 5s.; J. Scarlett, 15s.; A. W. Harris, £1 0s. 6d.; A. Ineson, 2s.; A. Allman, 2s. 6d.; C. Coates (Australia), 15s.; A. Hancock, 5s.; H.C., 10s.; In memory of William Ingram, £2.—Total to date, June 13th, 1958, £331 16s. 5d.

FROM North and South comes news of religions interference in council affairs. In a memorandum circulated to members of the Blackburn (Lancashire) Town Council, the Provost of Blackburn, the Very Rev. William Kay, insists that the Civic Service should always be in the Cathedral. If a Roman Catholic is invited to accept the Mayoralty, says the Provost, then "the invitation should be conditional on an operative dispensation to accept the Civic Church of our Municipality for the year of his office; without this dispensation the Mayoralty should not be entrusted to him." Why, if Roman Catholics make personal choices, should not "an Atheistic or Agnostic Mayor dispense with a Civic Service altogether?" Why not, indeed?

★

THE Southern case occurred in Ashford, Kent, where the Vicar of Ashford, Canon N. M. G. Sharp, has made application for prayers to be said before monthly meetings of the Urban Council. We haven't heard the result of the General Purposes Committee's request that Canon Sharp's application be accepted, but knowing the timidity of the average council in such matters, we think the Canon will get his way.

★

AMERICAN religious organisations are planning a mass distribution of the Bible in remote parts of the world. *The Observer* (25/5/58) gives some details of measures already taken in this direction. For example, the Pocket Testament League makes up £1 parcels of Scriptures and offers 5s. commission to anyone who sells the lot in Africa. Then again, 20 million copies of the Scriptures have been distributed in Japan since the war—"enough to put a copy in every Japanese home"—and although "some of the methods of distribution have been criticised," the Bible is now "the most universally read book in Japan." This has not resulted in any marked growth of the Christian Church but "a widespread development of secular Bible study groups." The prize must surely go, though, to the deviser of the "Air Mail from God" plan, whereby copies of the Gospel of St. John are dropped over Mexico by low-flying planes. Evangelists follow three months later, by which time the villagers will probably have given up trying to elucidate "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

★

The eagle eye of *The New Yorker* (3/5/58) found the following passage in *This Week*: "Sterility, long advertised as a major H-bomb alarm, is not so serious a worry—since radiation strong enough to sterilise is strong enough to kill." We share *The New Yorker's* sigh of relief: "And here we were, worrying ourselves sick over nothing!"

★

At the Annual Conference, the National Secular Society re-affirmed its support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Members in the Metropolitan area may like to join the "March on London" on Sunday, June 22nd, culminating in Trafalgar Square at 7 p.m. Further details may be obtained from the March Office, 348 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Phone TER. 7147-8.

## Dr. Rhine and E.S.P.

By COLIN McCALL

THERE IS STILL MUCH MERIT in scepticism. Indeed, I regard it as an essential component of human progress. And when a contributor to THE FREETHINKER expresses (in other columns, of course) support for Dr. J. B. Rhine's "parapsychology," it is time to urge the value of scepticism in the strongest possible terms. There is assuredly a fascination in the mysterious, which newspaper and book publishers are ever ready to exploit. And when it is claimed that a "scientist" has "demonstrated" Extra-Sensory Perception, I can agree that it *sounds* impressive. But scientist or no, we ought not to surrender our critical faculties. The sceptic does not. And I am literally astounded at the number of quite intelligent people who accept E.S.P. on the authority of Rhine. It shows how rare a quality scepticism is.

If I have always been sceptical of Dr. Rhine's claims, it is not just out of awkwardness. It is, basically, because they conflict with my experience and common sense. The more I have investigated them, the more I consider my scepticism to have been justified. And I have found that it is shared by the majority of American psychologists. Although Rhine's supporters emphasise the scientific nature of his investigations, I learned that he had refused an invitation to demonstrate—under genuinely scientific conditions—at Johns Hopkins University with all expenses paid. I learned that he had refused to take the expert advice of the late Joseph F. Rinn (friend of Houdini) on how to eliminate fraud from his experiments. I found that many important details of the experiments were not conveyed to the reader. But perhaps above all, I felt that the whole principle of investigation was unscientific.

I discovered much later that that grand old sceptic, H. L. Mencken, had summed up this last objection in an article in the Baltimore *Evening Sun* of December 6th, 1937. "In plain language"—wrote Mencken—"Professor Rhine segregates all those persons who, in guessing the cards, enjoy noteworthy runs of luck, and then adduces those noteworthy runs of luck as proof that they must possess mysterious power. . . ." An example will show that this is so. If an experimenter tests a number of persons, some will score above "chance expectation" and some below. The ones who interest him are the above-average, so he tests them again, ignoring the others. As the process is repeated, so he will get a smaller and smaller number of people with more and more higher-than-average scores. This is quite unscientific, yet it is, in fact, what operates. Further, when one person has achieved "significant" results by this inevitable process, but then suffers a change of luck, once again the experiments cease. The subject's powers have waned!

Another factor often overlooked, has been noted by Mr. Martin Gardner in a valuable study of *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (Dover Publications, U.S.A.; English distributors, Constable), namely, that the same process operates nationally, as it were. Supposing a hundred experimenters decide to try Rhine's experiments and start preliminary testing of subjects. Some will have successes and will continue; others will be discouraged and stop. As the process continues, so fewer and fewer experimenters will get more and more "significant" results. Eventually, says Mr. Gardner, "one experimenter remains whose subject has made high scores for six or seven successive sessions. *Neither experimenter nor subject is aware of the other ninety-nine projects, and so both have a strong delusion that E.S.P. is operating.* The odds are, in fact, much against the run. But in the total (and unknown) context,

the run is quite probable. (The odds against winning the Irish Sweepstakes are even higher. But someone does win it.) So the experimenter writes an enthusiastic paper, sends it to Rhine, who publishes it in his magazine, and the readers are greatly impressed." (Italics in original.)

Given the wish to believe, there is no limit to human credulity. Joseph F. Rinn reported (*Searchlight on Psychological Research*, page 385) that "At the convention of the American Psychological Association held in New York City in April 1938, Dr. Steuart Henderson Britt, of George Washington University, stated that the Rhine E.S.P. cards sold to the public could be read from the back, either by sight or touch, owing to the too heavy printing or some other defects. Dr. Britt then proceeded to 'read' correctly twenty-four cards out of a pack of twenty-five, with faces unseen." But Mr. Rinn's occult-loving English publishers, Messrs. Rider and Co., added a footnote that "At this time Dr. Rhine was preparing a better type of card for *later* experiments." (My italics.) Another publisher, Pelican Books, showed less consideration for Dr. Rhine. In his book, *New Frontiers of the Mind*, was printed an illustration (plate 3) with the caption: "A portion of the men's campus at Duke University, showing the buildings in which distance tests in E.S.P. were made. One series of tests was made from B to C, 100 yards distance. A second was between A and C, 250 yards." Alas, in my copy at any rate (1950), there is no indication whatever where A, B and C are. The plate thus provides an inadvertent problem in E.S.P., which has so far proved insoluble to my "parapsychological" friends.

I expect most readers now know that Dr. Rhine believes in extra-sensory dice control. I think they will agree with Mr. Rinn that these claims to control the throw of a die by will power are "so preposterous as to be unworthy of any level-headed person's serious consideration." For me, though, Rhine wins the prize for gullibility for his experiments with Lady Wonder, a three-year-old filly. These were originally described in an article, "An Investigation of a 'Mind-Reading' Horse," in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 23, 1929, page 449, but they have been summarised by Mr. Gardner. Rhine observed that the horse could read his mind only when her owner, Mrs. Claudia Fonda, was nearby, yet he never suspected that Mrs. Fonda was signalling. No, he thought that Lady Wonder was getting her cues telepathically, because she was successful on many tests in which Mrs. Fonda was kept "ignorant of the number." The one and obvious thing that he never did was to send Mrs. Fonda out of the room. Perhaps he was afraid that might ruin his results?

As Mr. Gardner says, Rhine is very vague in describing his experiments, and it was not until his "Second Report on Lady, the 'Mind-Reading' Horse" appeared in the same journal, Vol. 24, 1929, page 287, that his keeping Mrs. Fonda "ignorant of the number" is revealed in all its ludicrousness. In Rhine's own words: "When he [Rhine] stood behind F. [Mrs. Fonda] and wrote the number on a pad as he had once done with excellent results, there was now complete failure." The numbers, then, had always been written down but, because Mrs. Fonda didn't actually see them, Rhine thought telepathy had previously been at work. "Now it so happens"—says Mr. Gardner—"that there are some fifty different ways a clever medium or mentalist can secretly obtain information that has been written down. Unless Rhine was aware of these methods, and there is no indication he knew any of them, his testing

of the horse was valueless." When we think that Mr. Fonda was also present "part of the time" but, because he played an inconspicuous role, "we leave him out of account for the sake of brevity (Rhine's own words), we have to agree with Mr. Gardner that Rhine's "controls" were "laughably inadequate."

In 1956, Mr. Gardner's friend, Milbourne Christopher, a professional magician, discovered that Mrs. Fonda was "pencil reading." At one of her performances, Mr. Christopher moved the pencil as though he were writing a figure eight, but only touched the paper at the points where it wrote the figure three. Lady Wonder guessed the number to be eight. Dr. Rhine could have used such tricks as these to determine what part Mrs. Fonda played in his experiments with the horse. He did not do so. He no doubt dismissed them along with the suggestions of Mr. Rinn for eliminating fraud in his other E.S.P. experiments. It is a sad indication of Dr. Rhine's credulity that he now believes that Lady Wonder formerly possessed genuine telepathic powers, but that she lost them and Mrs. Fonda had then to start signalling to her. If horses could laugh, I know one that would laugh at Dr. Rhine.

## A criticism of Dr. Duhig's article

### "Lourdes As I Know It"

By DR. GUY VALOT

I AM ENTIRELY OF THE SAME OPINION as Dr. J. V. Duhig with regard to miraculous impostures, but I don't agree with him on two of his main points.

#### (1) APPARITIONS

It was the Catholics themselves who, in order to forestall possible criticisms, related the story about the young lady and her lover in the Grotto.

(a) Actually it would not be very easy to make love in the Grotto itself, for it is bare and exposed to outside view. Neighbouring officers so engaged would prefer the shelter of the woods. I myself subscribe to the supposition of hallucinations in the case of this young girl aged only 14, with a mental age of 8, and a mind befogged by Catholic superstitions. I can speak from experience on this point, since, in 1915, when still not quite 8 years old, whilst praying in my village chapel dedicated to the Virgin, I saw the Virgin smiling down upon me. I at once hurried to my father with news of the miracle. I recall quite clearly that he was having a drink with a neighbour, to whom he remarked: "My son is working too hard and is suffering from hallucinations." I went back to the church, but I was not again favoured with the Virgin's smile.

Bernadette's hallucinations were at first only visual, but later included sounds as well as sight, an expansion due to her confessor, the Abbé Pomian. If the Rev. Peyramale, curé of Lourdes, and the Bishop of Tarbes, Mgr. Laurence, only gradually came to believe in Bernadette's visions, the Rev. Pomian believed them from the start, and persistently encouraged Bernadette to go to the Grotto, whilst continuing to avoid any suspicion by refusing to take any money whilst making her statements.

#### (2) THE MIRACULOUS SPRING OF LOURDES

This spring has always existed, but it flowed underground, and it was only after a good deal of labour that its flow became visible. The religious apologists insist that, on February 25th, 1858, Bernadette scratched dry soil and uncovered a spring which has emitted 120,000 litres of water a day since its disclosure. This is untrue. The rate of flow varied according to the rains and, during dry summers, it sometimes reached the point that there was no

water in the tap. A large reservoir has now been constructed which will preserve the water during the winter, when it is more abundant and when there is less demand for it. Despite which, it is hard to procure enough water to fill the tanks every day. In August 1948 there occurred an obstruction to the normal flow, and the volume of water shrank to almost nil. In my book, *Lourdes et l'illusion*, I have described how, during the night of August 12th/13th, 1948, whilst everyone was asleep, Mgr. Theas ordered a motor pump to come to Lourdes, which, thanks to its powerful suction, succeeded in freeing the choked-up conduit pipes. Three books—all written by priests—have been written for the purpose of refuting my contention, otherwise no one has dared to criticise the introduction of the motor pump on that night.

Obviously the critics of Lourdes state that the water comes from the river. This is also a manoeuvre of the priests. Thus, in a book violently hostile to Lourdes, *Lourdes et ses Tenanciers*, by Jean de Bonnefon, published some 50 years ago, one also reads this fiction that the water comes from the river. The fact is that Jean de Bonnefon was in the pay of the Bishop of Lourdes. Convincing proof of this is to be found in the splendid religious funeral given him by the Church. The Bishop had even suggested to him that he should produce a forgery demonstrating that Lourdes had been warned in advance and that the whole business had been carefully prepared. This forgery, when published by Bonnefon, is quite enough to discredit him.

The history of Lourdes is so rich in impostures that one can destroy the fabulous account of Lourdes and its miraculous cures without resorting to over-simplified explanations like that of a young lady wearing only underwear, who passed herself off as the Virgin, or that the water from the spring is ultimately derived from the river.

(Translated by F. A. Ridley)

## Quotations

"The business of myth is not to satisfy curiosity about the past but to confirm the established sacred and social orders and their fundamental beliefs and sanctions in the present. Like that of religion in general, its function is to restore confidence in crises and to maintain the stability of the existing regime."—(Prof. E. O. James, D.D., *History of Religions*, page 206. London, 1956.)

In other words, religion is used as a tranquiliser to lull people into accepting the *status quo*.

★

"Faith seems something dubious not intellectually, but morally. There was a time when an atheist's word was unacceptable in court. Would it not be more reasonable to refuse the testimony or promises of a believer? A man who, for the solace of his soul, is prepared to prejudice or prejudice the nature of the universe and the fate of mankind, on inadequate grounds, is not likely to shrink before a little deceit or dishonesty. *A priori*, I am inclined to distrust those who sell their souls to God."—(E. Gellner, M.A., Lecturer in Sociology, London School of Economics: *Hibbert Journal*, October, 1957, page 41.)

That is to say, having swallowed the big untruth (God), the believer is not likely to jib at smaller ones.

★

"He (Galileo) was told to tell the truth or he would be tortured."—Official Report of Roman Inquisition of June 21st, 1633 (quoted by J. McCabe, *The Testament of Christian Civilization*, page 225. London, 1946).

And how the Catholics wish they could talk their way out of this one!

Deuteronomy XXXII, 41-43: Rejoice, O ye heavens, with him and *all ye gods* worship him (Dead Sea Scrolls).—Rejoice, O ye heavens, with him and let all the *angels of God* worship him (Septuagint Version).—Rejoice, O ye *nations*, with his people (Revised Version of Massoretic Text).—From the above the reader will be able to notice some of the principles upon which the Septuagint translators worked, here a conflation, there a slight alteration to *avoid giving offence*, as in its rendering of "all ye gods," as "all ye angels of God." Massoretic Text avoids all reference to these heavenly creatures with "all ye nations."—(J. M. Allegro, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, pages 66-67. Penguin Books, 1956.)

Under the impact of civilisation the priests gradually dropped the polytheism of the Bible.

★

Once men are caught by the salvation-through-verbal-formula outlook, the situation they find themselves in is this. Imagine a highly disagreeable prison. A new inmate arrives, and after a time informs his fellow-prisoners that he has a foolproof plan for a revolt that will liberate the prisoners. The prisoners, who have been had before and know something of the Governor's methods, suspect him of being an *agent provocateur*. . . . But in the nature of the case, there is no way of checking up. He wins over some of them with threats; when his rebellion succeeds, he will punish all those who did not believe in him. But not until the day of rebellion is attempted will the prisoners know the truth, and the decision must be taken *now*. The belief-systems facing mankind are like the new prisoner's claims—only the crucial day of confirmation is in general postponed *sine die*. A painful situation this. The need to believe may be a neurosis—but it is also a good source of it. The comic pathos of this situation is most visible in those prayers to God asking for faith.—(E. Gellner, page 38, *op cit.*)

A case of tragi-comic blackmail!

[Compiled by GREGORY S. SMELTERS.]

## CORRESPONDENCE

### HINDU ECLECTICISM

It is always very pleasant to read Mr. F. A. Ridley's articles in THE FREETHINKER. This writer and paper perform the true function of journalism: to inform, to instruct, and to entertain. Mr. Ridley's article on Islam may be said to be a thorough study of the subject. Everybody should congratulate him for his free-thought, except when he refers to Hinduism as "exclusively nationalistic; it is very difficult to become a Hindu."

I don't understand what is meant by exclusively nationalistic. If it means that Hindus believe more in nationalism than in internationalism, to this I may state here that those who wanted to have a clear harmony in the world would order their national life first. Not alone that, foundation of national life is man. The man who believes that he is an end in himself, he is a Hindu. In other words, it is a necessity to revive Hindu nationalism, whose foundation is man and ultimate aim is "World Harmony," not the world harmony of Christians or Muslims.

I may further state that Buddhism is not different from Hinduism but a part of it. Hinduism is a system of philosophy wherein all conflicting religions and economic systems can co-exist peacefully. A Hindu can be a Buddhist, Jains, Nihilist, Atheist or Anarchist.

OM PRAKASH SHARMA.

### HOW I BECAME A FREETHINKER

I note Mr. G. S. Brown's letter, THE FREETHINKER (28/5/58), "How I became a Freethinker." I often think back to my early days as a star Sunday school scholar at a town in Yorkshire (Dewsbury). I won certificates and other prizes, including, of course, the Bible, for my essays on the Testaments. I had always as a youth a somewhat critical mind and the exams, instead of improving my faith, led to my asking awkward questions of my teacher in the senior Sunday school class. I left my native town in Yorkshire at the age of 27 for a position in Hawick, Scotland, with a firm of dyers and cleaners. Coming home with a friend from a political meeting, I was given a pamphlet by Col. Inger-

soll—the first anti-religious literature I had ever been introduced to. That was the real beginning of things. Later I read Blatchford's "God and my Neighbour," Paine, etc. That was 53 years ago. I am now an octogenarian and since my conversion to atheism I think I have been one of the happiest of men. And I still think of the wonderful comradeship of the citizens of Hawick.

A. INESON.

## OBITUARY

HENRY JOHN BARRAND

ONE of those remarkable, uncompromising characters—atheist, socialist and pacifist, and "I don't care a damn who knows"—has disappeared from the Lincolnshire scene with the death of National Secular Society member Henry John Barrand, aged 77, of Wain Fleet Bank, near Skegness, Lincs. He had been ill for about 18 weeks, and early in his illness he actually visited Grimsby Crematorium to make special arrangements with the Registrar that, in the event of any hitch in his funeral arrangements, the Registrar himself should read a few words rather than have a clergyman slip in at the last moment. Happily, by arrangement with the N.S.S., Mr. F. J. Corina, of Bradford, was able to take the service, and paid the parting tribute to Mr. Barrand, at Grimsby Crematorium, on June 9th, in the presence of the widow, two sons, and a gathering of about 35 relatives and friends. Mr. Barrand began his working life as a carpenter (!) but more than 40 years ago changed to farming, and the farm at Wain Fleet Bank will still be carried on by the two sons.

F.J.C.

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.; *BBC, ITA and Atheism* by Colin McCall, price 3d.; *Problems of Church and State* by F. A. Ridley, price 4d.; *France and the Vatican* by F. A. Ridley, price 4d. The six pamphlets 1/-, including postage, from The Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

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