

The Freethinker

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THE UNFORTUNATELY FEW CRITICAL ARTICLES which appeared after the death of his Holiness Pius XII mostly drew attention to the pro-fascist tendencies of that astute political Vicar of Christ. It is true that with a political sleight of hand, which almost suggested political, if not theological infallibility, Pius managed in post-war years to compromise with the victorious democracies at least sufficiently to keep the Barque of Peter afloat in the troubled decade after the downfall of the Fascist Empires. However, though with Popes as with other less exalted mortals, necessity makes strange bedfellows, it is, no doubt, substantially correct to refer to Pacelli as also to his predecessor and master, Pius XI, as by both temperament and policy pro-Fascist Popes. But the Vatican, with its vast experience, is nothing if not a worldly-wise institution, and it displays this permanent trait by never putting all its eggs in one basket. Rome never committed itself so completely to Fascism as is sometimes suggested. For example, even during the marriage of convenience between Catholicism and Fascism, during the 1920s, 1930s and early '40s of this century, the Vatican still kept its democratic card in reserve, and in largely Catholic lands such as Eire and Australia (not to mention Britain and the U.S.A.) its main strength always was, and still is, on the non-Communist Left, not on the extreme Right. Here, for example, there does not appear to be much doubt that Rome has more influence in the Labour Party than amongst true blue Tories. The new Pope, unlike his two immediate predecessors, undoubtedly represents the democratic, and not the Fascist Party in the Church; and one has every reason to expect that the Vatican will take a marked turn under his pontificate, which to judge from the robust physique and stentorian utterance of the 77-year-old Venetian peasant, may be longer than normally expected.

A Democratic Pope

In which respect, a glance at the political records of the present Pope and of his immediate predecessor, may prove quite instructive. Pacelli was Papal Nuncio in Germany under the Kaiser, and held a similar position in Munich, where he was present during the unsuccessful rising of November 1923 which, as *The Times* stated, was "led by a certain Herr Hittler (*sic*)". Pacelli became Secretary of State to the Papacy immediately after the Lateran Treaty between the Vatican and Mussolini, which was actually signed on behalf of the Pope by Professor Pacelli, Cardinal Pacelli's brother. His subsequent policy as Pope was in line with this political background. But Monsignor Roncalli, as he then was, was sent to Paris as Papal Nuncio to General de Gaulle's government after the Liberation of France in 1944. He succeeded Cardinal Valeri, the pro-fascist Papal Nuncio to Vichy France, whom Pius had to recall in view of the protests of the Fourth Republic. Roncalli, himself of plebeian origin—unlike his predecessor, who belonged to the highest Papal aristocracy—later received his Cardinal's

Hat from President Auriol, France's Socialist (and Atheist) President. It appears certain that the present Pope owed his election to the support of the Democratic bloc in the College of Cardinals, and one may expect that this former champion of the worker-priests will pursue a more liberal policy than his two predecessors, who must surely stand out as two of the most reactionary Popes on record. Students of the political evolution of the Vatican—an extremely interesting, but much neglected subject—will

remember that Pope Leo XIII similarly reversed the ultra-reactionary policy of his predecessor, Pius IX, the Pope of the *Syllabus*, Lourdes, and the Vatican Council.

Spanish and Irish Techniques

In his important study of Irish political Catholicism, the Protestant author, Paul Blanshard, demonstrated that the Vatican employs two rival political techniques, which he describes as the "Irish" and the "Spanish," from the names of the two countries wherein they can most obviously be seen at work; [cf. Paul Blanshard, *The Irish and Catholic Power*]. These rival political techniques may be described more generally as Fascist and Democratic. In Spain, Church and State are indissolubly united and all criticism of either comes within the jurisdiction of the criminal law. The Franco-Pacelli Concordat of 1953 virtually bans all religions in Spain except Roman Catholicism, and it similarly outlaws all political opposition in the State. This is Blanshard's "Spanish" technique. Contrarily, in Eire, the Catholic Church is not even officially established; full religious toleration is provided for by and in the Constitution, whilst political democracy (with all the latest gadgets, such as universal suffrage, proportional representation, etc.) permits a multiplicity of parties. Yet it is a moot point, which I am sure Irish Freethinkers will appreciate, whether Rome Rule in the Democratic (with a capital "D") Irish Republic is not actually more effective and ubiquitous than it is even in Franco's Fascist and medieval Spain? This question is not a purely academic one, since, whilst Pacelli obviously preferred the Spanish method of direct rule, the new Pope's political antecedents indicate that he is likely to favour the superficially democratic Irish one.

A Catholic at the White House

Indisputably, Pope John's outlook corresponds much more accurately with the current post-Fascist set-up than did that of his late Fascist Holiness, who was a relic of the now vanished era of Catholic-Fascist collaboration. For Fascism nowadays only lingers on in backward lands. Today, the Western (non-Communist) world is predominantly democratic. Here, too, the Vatican has scored notable successes and may, perhaps, expect even more notable ones in the future. The victory of Roncalli's old friend, de Gaulle, in the recent French referendum was one, whilst at the other end of the world, it was the Catholic-controlled Democratic Labour Party in Australia which kept the Labour Party out in the recent Aus-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Vatican Goes Democratic

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

tralian Federal election. Does the Vatican now hold the balance of power in Australian politics? Perhaps an even more glittering prize may adorn the Pontificate of Pope John. His Pontificate may witness the accession of a Catholic President to the White House. For the Democratic Senator, John Kennedy, appears to be the current favourite for the Democratic nomination as President in 1960, and Kennedy is a Catholic. What rejoicing his election would cause in Rome! And what an accession of prestige for the Vatican. Popes have been canonised for less. For ever since Pope Leo, that most sagacious of modern Popes, first recognised the growing importance of the U.S.A. to the Catholic Church by creating the first American Cardinal (Archbishop McCloskey, Archbishop of New

York) the U.S.A. has been the "blue riband" of the Vatican's present persistent march to world power. As Cardinal Antonelli once stated, whilst the principles of Rome are fixed, its methods must always be flexible and variable. When the Vatican parades before the world in democratic sheepskins, it remains, and from its totalitarian nature, always will remain, as Fascist at heart as when it wore the black shirt of Italian Fascism and drowned Spanish Democracy in its own blood.

[FOOTNOTE.—When the present Pope adopted his present numeration, he caused some confusion in Papal chronology, since there was in the 15th century a notorious "anti-Pope" who called himself John XXIII and figures as such in records of some Papal annals. But evidently this will not be the case in future textbooks.]

Aspects of Overpopulation

II—JUVENILE CRIME

By R. READER

REFERENCE was made in THE FREETHINKER of March 11th, 1955 in *Reductio ad absurdum* to the logical fate of a society directed by unrestrained religious neurosis. Since then, the indications have multiplied that we are, in fact, heading for just that end, one of the clearest being the incidence of juvenile crime. This problem, in its present form, is disquieting to say the least, but ten years hence the users of flick-knife and iron bar will be in the dominant age group of the population, and many of the present middle-aged, or ageing, forces of harsh deterrence will have disappeared. What is going to happen then?

This question, like so many others, has been side-tracked into irrelevancies by religious neurosis. The nation has been divided into two camps: those who consider violent punishment the only deterrent to violent crime, and those who see the criminal as a hopeless victim of circumstances. The fact that neither of these views, in practice, is producing any effect on future crime, is quite disregarded; at best, society only revenges itself on the criminal, or wet-nurses him, which neither consoles the victims of his crime, nor appeases the apprehensions of those who fear that they may themselves become future targets.

Detailed research is being done on case histories and statistics. But an all-embracing definition of the conditions for crime is proving quite impossible to establish. The young criminals more often come from large families: their parents are frequently poor: they frequently quarrel: there is often an older bad influence. But not always. Every generalisation made is later completely upset by numerous exceptions.

The root cause of juvenile crime is lack of employment. John, aged 17, comes from a respectable family, and wants a "good job" although he has naturally no concrete aspirations of home and family at that age. He is a medium-average student, and his parents achieved their modest success 20 years ago by their own unaided efforts. They have no influential friends or relatives. John looks round and "uses his intelligence" as he has been trained to do by the schoolmasters. Quite soon he realises that "good jobs" now go only to the brilliant, or those given a powerful shove from behind. The rest have to scramble for second-class jobs — and there are not enough of these, either. His father tells him to put his back into it. But he is doing just that — and he remembers that vacancy in a technical library for a science graduate with French and German: salary 457 pounds per annum. He will get some job, of course. Or will he? The young are extremely well-paid. But what are the prospects? John soon sees that society is not the ordered rational affair the schoolmasters led him to suppose; that, on the contrary, it is a bear

garden in which far too many are struggling for the same things, and where, whatever one's upbringing, one may be called upon to prostitute honour, decency, or humanity in the struggle for existence.

Whilst grappling with his studies, John meets a former chum who is earning easy money, albeit in a rather dubious way. They go places, and taste the delights of liberal spending. They meet girls with extravagant tastes, and for a year they live abundantly. Then, suddenly, something happens. The friend loses his job, and both young men are thrown back on their former prospects. All sorts of influences now pull John in different directions: his education, his ordered sheltered family life, his recent round of pleasure, his fiancée, the urge to mate, his leeway in his studies, the economic possibilities and impossibilities. . . . The stage is now set for a crime — particularly if other circumstances arrange themselves opportunely. But, even knowing all this, and knowing John from infancy, a whole army of psychologists would be utterly unable to predict, with certainty, whether he will give way to the temptation. All that can be said (which the statistics confirm, and which is really common sense) is that he is less likely to do so than a boy who had had an unhappy home life.

The whole thing is analogous to progressively stressing a wire. At first it will stretch and return to its original length when the stress is removed. Then it stretches permanently — it is now very near breaking point. A little more stress — and it breaks. But here the analogy ends. Copper here behaves like copper there, mild steel has other characteristics, the breaking strains of materials are known. But the elastic limit and breaking strain for human beings is not known — and never will be known — because the figure varies with each individual.

The remedy for juvenile crime is not to bring back the sadistic punishments of earlier centuries, nor to treat young criminals as helpless victims of circumstances, *but to reduce the stress to which the young, as a class, are being subjected.* And this can only be done by reducing their numbers through intensive birth limitation. At present we are training our children to "be intelligent" and to live more fully and abundantly, to plan ahead — and at the same time we are bringing ever more of them into the world. Is it any wonder that, when they *do* look ahead, they see in the greater stability and resources of the middle-aged a smug complacency and a heartless, callous indifference to their tragic irremediable personal plight — that of being in too great numbers? And that, seeing this, they find an outlet in violence?

We ourselves have the strongest personal interest in this matter. As mentioned above, when the much vaunted 1946-47 birthrate "bulge" reaches late teen-age, it could constitute, not an abundance of young arms to defend the country, but a sinister and growing menace to all who are no longer capable of defending themselves by force.

Liberal Minister

By COLIN McCALL

Mackerel Plaza (Gollancz, 1958, 15s.) is one of the funniest books I have ever read. Grant that it is the type of novel I particularly like; that the wit of the author, Peter de Vries, is definitely my type of wit: the type that may broadly—and with some justification—be called “New Yorker,” after the incomparable magazine of that name. Grant all this, and I still think it is one of the funniest books you will ever read.

To begin with, the main character, and for the most part narrator, is a clergyman, the Reverend Andrew Mackerel of the People’s Liberal Church in Connecticut. And a very liberal clergyman he is, too. But when the story starts he is losing his temper as he phones to complain about a poster visible from the window of his vicarage: a large poster, in that “awful new phosphorescent stuff,” proclaiming “Jesus Saves.” It is, he tells the lady at the other end, vulgar, and a blight on the landscape. People who erect such posters, he adds, are “content to let this life go hang for the sake of another, which you and I know doesn’t exist.”

Well, that is surely a beginning to please any Free-thinker. And it is indicative of much more to come. The Rev. Mackerel is, in fact, liberal to the point of Free-thought. He became a minister because his mother wanted him to. She made him promise on her deathbed that he would, and “there was nothing else to do under the circumstances.” And, of course, he says, “the cleric I became is rather a far cry from the one my mother had in mind, but that’s something else again.” When asked if he accepts Jesus Christ as his personal saviour, he shakes his head with a friendly laugh and says he has no use for such “godforsaken theology.” Nine-tenths of what Jesus said was “repartee,” and “Of course, he was an obvious neurotic” who was forever losing his temper. “It took very little to rile him—Scribes and Pharisees, his family, even a fig tree.”

Not surprisingly, Mackerel’s sermons are social, not religious. The text, Matthew 26.73, where the people say to Peter, “Surely thou art also one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee,” leads to a sermon on “the subject of oral diction, not merely as a surface trait but as an expression of national or racial character.” And an interesting sermon it is, too; but by no stretch of the imagination religious. And when we recall that his church has “five rooms and two baths downstairs—dining area, kitchen and three parlors”; and upstairs, “an auditorium for putting on plays, a gymnasium for athletics, and a ballroom for dances,” with “a small worship area at one end” where the free-form pulpit is “set on four legs of four delicately differing fruitwoods, to symbolise the four Gospels, and their failure to harmonise,” Mr. de Vries’s irreverence is firmly established.

Not that the novel is solely fun at the expense of Christianity and the “advanced” social-club churches of America. If it were, it could hardly be called a novel. It has an entertaining plot, with moments of suspense, and poor Mackerel getting into not a few scrapes. It has also a love interest, with Mr. de Vries here at his wonderful, wicked best. For Mackerel is a 35-year-old widower who finds his eye continually drawn to the feminine form, which he mentally undresses in the time-honoured fashion: “She was about twenty-five, and naked except for a green skirt and sweater, heavy brown tweed coat, shoes, stockings, and so forth, a scarf knotted at her throat and a

brown beret.” For peace of mind he hopes to find some flaw—of face, figure, speech or intellect—in the women he rapidly overtakes to examine. And he sighs with relief as he finds it. He is “off the hook,” at least for time being.

His deceased wife is a severe handicap. She is absurdly exalted in the eyes of his parishioners, who intend to erect a memorial in her honour, and his love affair with a faultless female has to be conducted in secret lest it should cause a scandal. Getting the lady the post as his secretary helps, of course, but the wedding has to be indefinitely postponed as one occasion after another relating to the memorial make the time inauspicious. And the strain of being a minister’s wife begins to tell on Molly before they are married.

Mackerel has also to fight his love of *double entendre* which, coupled with a slight misreading of his written sermon, leads to disaster and the psychiatric clinic. Here Mr. de Vries effectively satirises the “modern” psychiatrist who practises “Christian therapy,” and with whom Mackerel cannot see eye to eye. The minister does, however, like one fellow very much: a man whose tongue is too big for the floor of his mouth, so that it lies against his lower teeth “like the edge of a rug against the wainscoting of a room too small for it.” This man understandably exclaims, “Great architect! . . . Huh!”

Piety, though, Mackerel finds “hard to cope with,” and evangelists he cannot stand. “Brother, have you found Christ?” one asks him. “Is he lost again?” he retorts. “Oh, brother, don’t mock. . . . Won’t you take him tonight?” the man persists. “No, I will not,” is the emphatic reply. On the other hand, he dislikes “Tepid liberalism that never lashes out at anything, intellects too stocked with information to draw a conclusion, educations scrimped and saved for, that one may dawdle in the green bowers of non-commitment.” These, he rightly thinks, “lack something possessed by an honest bigot”; and he says so from the pulpit, after he has been bailed out of gaol just in time to preach. “The instant I entered the church”—he tells us—“I saw how far my reputation had fallen. The place was jammed.”

However, Mackerel banks on “greater resilience than could reasonably be asked of a folk still short of the desired urbanity” and, after a series of comically-exciting adventures, he loses even what little faith he had. He finds a wife, though, and she summarises all religions in the phrase, “To be as humane as is humanly possible.” And, if there is nothing, says Mackerel, “so much the more need to tend your own visions of truth, beauty and goodness.”

I have, I think, said enough to show that Mr. de Vries is witty, irreverent, yet humane. He is also a keen observer of those odd small things which mean so much in a novel. Not so much the people. Mackerel himself is not, so far as I recall, ever described, and there are few details of the other characters; but there are enough. The fat man who looked from the side like “a pair of parentheses that have slipped out of line”; the woman who, “gazing between the candlesticks that bathed her cheeks in rose and gold, looked like the meek who shall inherit the earth.” Mackerel we know by his thinking; by his attitudes; and these are more important than his face. Other details, I feel, are just right. The little girl, for example, who would sing a carol at the top of her voice:

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Although we are living in 1958, and although there is not a scrap of evidence for any of the famous Ten Plagues in the Old Testament, there will always be found people who are almost ready to fight to the death for their place in history. For example, a *Sunday Pictorial* reporter tells us of a woman scientist who has discovered "a rare and deadly poisonous microbe in the English Channel," and in large quantities, it can turn the sea blood red, "and kill everything in it." On the strength of this, we are also told, "British and American scientists think the dinoflagellate [the microbe] may have been responsible" for one of the Plagues—"And the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died."

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It would be most informative to learn who are the "British and American scientists" who connect the murderous microbe with one of the Plagues to prove that it must be true. This kind of proof is on all fours with the impudent Christian lie that some years ago a sailor was swallowed by a whale and three days later, spat out quite alive—a story which always goes the rounds when the truth of the Book of Jonah is questioned. Anybody who swallows that deliberate lie can swallow anything.

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If no other proof of Christianity is forthcoming, that is, proof from the Bible, the Saints, and the Witness of the early Christians—believers nearly always fall back upon the "miracles" of healing. One of the latest deals with a Miss Dorothy Kerin, who has had a book written about her. It appears that for five years "she was bedridden, suffering from advanced tuberculosis, diabetes and other complications," and was given up as a quite hopeless case. Then one day, while she was in bed, she tells us, "a great light came all around me, and an angel took my hand and said, 'Dorothy, your sufferings are over; get up and walk.'" And 16 witnesses have come forward to prove that she walked downstairs unaided and ate a "hearty meal."

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Does any doctor vouch for this? Does any doctor who has had to deal with diabetes and tuberculosis believe one word of it? Who are they? We are told that "her recovery" baffled doctors. Is this true? Does even a devout Christian doctor believe that an "angel," a real angel, told Miss Kerin to get up and walk? These stories are, of course, part and parcel of many religions and appear to have always been so. They belong to the mythology of "miraculous" cures, no evidence being deemed necessary. It is astonishing what "miracles" of healing have been performed through the centuries without, of course, any miracles of evidence!

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It is the fashion sometimes to claim that Scotland is the land of the "Wee Frees," or that here is as much apathy in religion there as in England. But the 750,000 Catholics in Scotland celebrated the election of the Pope quite as enthusiastically as Catholics did in Italy; and Archbishop Campbell pointed out to a wildly happy crowd of believers that it was with the help of the Holy Ghost that the Pope was elected. We often wondered where the Holy Ghost came in these days—if ever—but there he was, helping to elect the Pope. What a pity he, too, was not televised.

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No doubt, millions of Christians still believe in the "Second Advent" of Jesus, but the idea that "our Lord" was returning exactly as he appeared in Galilee and Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago was laughed to scorn by Dr. J. Robinson, Dean of Clare College, Cambridge, on ITV

in its "About Religion" programme the other Sunday. The idea of Christ's return was merely a picture, he insisted. There was no need for a Second Advent, he went on, for Jesus was now everywhere with us, wherever his divine presence was needed. In fact, Dr. Robinson gave us pictures of newspaper headings of world and local events to prove how much Jesus was needed and how splendidly he responded. As a variation of the usual verbosity about Jesus, the reverend speaker was a great success. It is difficult to imagine, however, he himself could really believe all he poured out with such exuberance.

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Writing in the "Sunday Express" recently, Mr. Bernard Harris asks, "Where does Dr. Buchman get his cash?"—Dr. Buchman being, as is well known, the head of a religious group fighting for "Moral Re-Armament." Mr. Harris estimates that the group is spending £500,000 a year; but he himself can only account for a beggarly £186,000 income—if that. But surely most religions do pretty well? As a first rate business organisation, few can beat the Roman Catholic Church, for example. It can almost always get as much free publicity as it wants on the radio and TV, as well as in the press—and not on the advertising pages either. Or take Christian Science—it almost equals the Roman Church in wealth.

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The Mormons have a great city at their disposal and can afford to send out hundreds of missionaries; while even Jehovah's Witnesses print its publications by the million. And the Church of England? It is a great landowner, administered by Ecclesiastical Commissioners with power to buy and sell. No, when it comes to easy cash, religion has "secular" big business beaten to a frazzle.

LIBERAL MINISTER (Concluded from page 403)

"Oh well, oh well, Oh well oh we-ell, Born is the King of Israel." The little boy who used to pray, "Hallowell be thy name." The chair, high-backed and black leather, "studded with buttons like navels."

On a serious level, Mackerel, and Mr. de Vries, I assume from acquaintance with his other works, voice a valid "pet notion" that "certain theological systems (like Calvinism) are inversions of the humility they profess, since they appeal to human vanity rather than deflate it. Poor man, that he needs the doctrine of the Fall to invest him with a little glamour." Likewise, narrator and author. I think, refer to "those visions, penultimate to madness itself, that turned the brains of the saints into nests of maggots. The fruit of chastity: the Temptations of Saint Anthony."

Mr. de Vries, then, has written a very civilised, as well as a very funny and readable novel. It is assuredly not a novel for the pious or the prude—who are often one and the same anyway. But FREETHINKER readers are hardly likely to be either, and to them I recommend *Mackerel Plaza* as a book that gave me a great deal of delight. I think it will affect them similarly.

RIB TICKLER

IT WAS RIGHT for woman to be made from a rib of Man . . . to signify the social union of man and woman, for the woman should neither use authority over man, and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man's contempt, as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet.—ST. THOMAS AQUINAS in the *Summa Theologica* I,q.92.a.3.

The above is a gem from the *Angelic Doctor* who, according to Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, has the answers to all the problems of our time.

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.:

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

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Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street).—Sunday, December 21st, 7 p.m.: J. W. BARKER, "The Church's Biggest Deception—the 25th of December."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, December 21st, 7 p.m.: C. SIDONS, "Pasternak and Dr. Zhivago."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, December 21st, 7.15 p.m.: S. CASH, "Is Marxism Out-of-Date?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 21st, 6.30 p.m.: Miss S. MORRISON, "Pacification in the Nuclear Age."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, December 21st, 2.30 p.m.: Councillor P. MYERS, "Thinking Aloud."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 21st, 11 a.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "The Ideal City."

Notes and News

The *New Zealand Rationalist* appeared in attractive new format for the October issue, which reached us recently. It contains, among many interesting items, a reprint of Mr. Ridley's article, *Religion and Politics* (THE FREETHINKER). But we learn with regret that Mrs. Bowden, wife of our occasional Australian contributor, John Bowden, has died after being in poor health for many years. We send our sympathy to Mr. Bowden.

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ROMAN Catholic trade unionists have won "their biggest victory in factory elections in Italy's most important navy arsenal" at Taranto, reports the *Irish Catholic* (20/11/58). There has been a swing from 90 per cent. Communist control, five years ago, to 64 per cent. Catholic (20 out of 31 seats) now, and much of the credit for this change is apparently due to "a mild-mannered" Jesuit priest, Father Guiseppe Boccadamo. For some unaccountable reason our thoughts turned to Shakespeare's "look like the innocent flower, But be the serpent under't."

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £377 9s. 6d.; T. H. Grimley, £1; J. Molyneux, 5s.; W. Hawks (South Africa), £2 2s. 5d.; Manchester Atheist, £5; A. Addison, £1; W. Wilkie (Australia), 6s. 6d.—Total to date, December 12th, 1958, £387 3s. 5d.

THE same copy of the *Irish Catholic* gives news of the newest branch of the Apostolate of the Worker started in The Hague, for hotel and restaurant personnel. "The movement, under Redemptionist direction, works through cells of laymen assisted by priests" and older branches cater for industrial workers, dock workers, government employees and coal miners. The movement has grown considerably since the last war, and today, we are told, "some 20,000 persons benefit from it."

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BUT perhaps the most important item in that paper reminds us that "The late Holy Father of Sainly and Immortal Memory" was consecrated Bishop on the same day and at the same hour on May 13th, 1917, that "the First Apparition took place at Fatima." "He passed to his eternal reward"—it continues—"on October 13th, 1958, the anniversary day of the Final Apparition and of the Great Miracle of the Sun in the Heavens foretold by Our Lady to Lucia, Francisco, Jacinta." And, of course, "Our Lady said 'If my requests are granted Russia will be converted and there will be peace.'" Therefore—it follows with inexorable logic—everybody should join the Reparation Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (who could resist a society with a name like that?). So get your enrolment forms, 1s. 6d. including postage, immediately.

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MR. E. D. BRANNAN has just changed his address to 2 School Lane, Batheaston, near Bath, and would be glad to hear from other members of the National Secular Society or readers of THE FREETHINKER in any part of the country. He would also be pleased to welcome visitors to the famous spa. Mr. Brannan reports a recent visit, along with two typists from his office, to the vicar of the church that the ladies attend. The vicar, it seems, was disturbed by the thought of a Freethinker working alongside members of his flock, but the most he could offer in their defence was prayer. This has not, so far, dispelled their growing doubts and, candidly, we don't think it will.

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THE November issue of *The American Rationalist* contains an unfortunate error. It reports (page 25) the death of Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe, of Somerset. Mr. Ratcliffe, we are glad to say, is very much alive. Our American friends seem to have confused him with the late S. K. Ratcliffe, whose name appears on the same page as "Tarcliffe."

Xmas Quiz

1. The Pagans celebrated the re-birth of Sol (the Sun) on what date?
2. Who first used mistletoe as a Yuletide symbol?
3. When were Christmas cards first sent in this country?
4. Who was the (supposed) mother of the Buddha?
5. What feature of Christmas connects it with the old vegetation gods?

(Answers on page 408)

—NEXT WEEK—

FREE WILL

By DR. J. V. DUHIG

Religious Education in the U.S.A.

By D. SHIPPER

(Concluded from page 396)

OBVIOUSLY in a country where public support of sectarianism is under legal prohibition, what constitutes sectarianism is a matter of dispute. The wearing of religious garb by schoolteachers is a case in point. Can this be designated a "sectarian influence" and thus prohibited? As long ago as 1894 a Pennsylvania court decided it was not an influence, but a "mere announcement of a fact"—that the wearer holds a particular religious belief. The following year a law was passed forbidding Pennsylvanian teachers in public schools from wearing any "dress, mark, emblem or insignia indicating the fact that such teacher is a member or adherent of any religious order, sect or denomination." This was challenged by religionists as unconstitutional, but the court ruled that teachers were not being debarred because of their religious beliefs, but merely fulfilling a condition of dress applicable to all. (*Commonwealth v. Herr.*)

In 1902 a New York court found that the wearing of religious garb could not constitute sectarian instruction, but in 1906 they upheld the state superintendent who had issued an order forbidding such garb. In 1936 a North Dakota court dealt with the case of four nuns who had been employed as public school teachers. They found that dress did not concern the court and that state laws did not "prescribe the fashion of dress of school teachers." (*Gerhard v. Heid.*) A N. Dakota statute of 1949 now prohibits public school teachers from wearing religious garb, and Nebraska and Oregon have similar statutes, but none of these have yet been before the courts. An Iowa statute holds that employment as public school teachers cannot be given to nuns.

Many public schools in the U.S.A. commence their day with exercises of a religious nature and a number of states have statutes authorising the repetition of the Lord's Prayer (e.g., Arkansas, Delaware, Maine, New Jersey) and the teaching of the Ten Commandments (Maine, N. Dakota—to be displayed in every classroom). The National Education Association assert that almost half the states "require or permit daily Bible reading." Louisiana decided that reading New Testament passages (and repeating the Lord's Prayer) discriminated against Jews, thus violating constitutional assurances that no preference would be given any particular creed. Texas, Georgia and Kansas found the repetition of the Lord's Prayer to be constitutional. Kentucky upheld the practice of including another prayer, markedly Christian and Protestant, pointing out that R.C.s and others with conscientious objections could withdraw.

Pennsylvania and Nebraska held that hymn-singing was unconstitutional (both cases being strongly denominational) and an Illinois court agreed in an instance not identified with any particular denomination. (*People v. Board of Education.*) Although a number of states prohibit the use of books, tracts, etc., which favour a particular sect, the same states (and others) authorise Bible reading (i.e. Alabama—required daily, Arkansas—required daily, without comment, Delaware—required daily, five verses, Florida—daily, without comment, Georgia—daily, Idaho—daily, 12 to 20 verses selected from educational authorities' list, if pupils ask questions to be referred to parents, etc., etc.).

Many cases have been brought charging that school

Bible reading violated church-state separation, and the various state courts have not always agreed with each other. Most courts regard the Bible as a non-sectarian book, which *may* sometimes be used for sectarian purposes. In that case they would take action, but most state courts take the view that Bible reading is connected with moral teaching rather than religious teaching.

I believe the last Bible reading case was heard on March 9th, 1956, in Tennessee (American readers may correct me). Certain teachers were keeping Sunday school attendance records and requiring non-attenders to copy Biblical passages on Monday. The court stated: "It is beyond the scope and authority of School Boards and public school teachers to conduct a programme of education in the Bible and undertake to explain the meaning of any chapter or verse in either the Old or the New Testament." (*Carden v. Bland.*) The court ruled that repeating the Lord's Prayer, reading a Bible verse without comment and singing religious songs did not violate state or federal constitutions. The Supreme Court has never ruled on Bible reading and declined to accept jurisdiction in a New Jersey appeal of 1952 (on a technical point).

The U.S. Office of Education reported that 38 states were operating released-time programmes, whereby children leave school for religious instruction, in 1941, although laws permitting this existed in only 14 states.

In 1947 Champaign, Illinois, schools had one period a week when religious teachers (employed by the Council of Religious Education) came into the public schools and gave religious instruction, the pupils being split into Jewish, Protestant and R.C. classes. The result was the famous McCollum case, when Mrs. Vashti McCollum (now secretary of the American Humanist Association, and, incidentally, the daughter of our contributor, Mr. Arthur G. Cromwell), as a parent challenged the plan on the grounds that it violated federal and state guarantees of religious freedom, the state constitution prohibition against public funds being used for sectarian education, and the school code prohibition against sectarian education in schools. The Illinois court held the Champaign plan to be constitutional, but an appeal to the Supreme Court brought a crushing 8-1 decision that it was completely unconstitutional.

Although this decision means that *similar* plans are ruled out by the Supreme Court verdict in this case, other cases where details differ may be regarded as constitutionally correct, and when the Court reviewed the released-time programme of New York City in 1952 they found it constitutional by a 6-3 majority. New York pupils are excused from school to go to religious centres for religious instruction, the religionists paying the costs. The majority Supreme Court opinion stated that this was neither religious instruction in public school classrooms nor the expenditure of public funds on sectarian education. The three dissenting opinions were strongly worded. Justice Jackson concluded by saying: "The wall which the Court was professing to erect between Church and State has become even more warped and twisted than I expected. Today's judgment will be more interesting to students of psychology and of the judicial processes than to students of constitutional law." Justice Frankfurter noted that coercion was alleged by the petitioner, but the lower court had

disallowed this contention, thus preventing the Supreme Court judges from dealing with the alleged coercion. Justice Black commented that "The First Amendment has lost much if the religious follower and the atheist are no longer to be judicially regarded as entitled to equal justice under law" . . . and: "State help to religion injects political and party prejudices into a holy field. It too often substitutes force for prayer, hate for love, and persecution for persuasion."

A Nebraska court decided that a schoolhouse could be used for occasional religious exercises or Sunday school. Judge Hamer stating: "It is my opinion that to impart knowledge concerning religion and religious subjects is educational to the extent that our civilisation covers and includes those subjects. . . Religion is a part of our civilisation. It is, therefore, of necessity, part of our education. An intelligent discussion of religion and its kindred sub-

jects approximates as nearly to the ordinary use of a schoolhouse as its use for the purpose of receiving a lecture on geography, philosophy, history, or agriculture."! It will be appreciated that space restrictions permit me to give only a brief outline of the position here.

For those who may be interested in further reading I would recommend the following: *The Attack upon the American Secular School*, by V. T. Thayer (Beacon Press, Boston); *Church, State and Freedom*, by L. Pfeffer (Beacon); *American Education and Religion*, by E. F. Johnson (Harper and Bros., New York). *Public Education in the United States*, by E. P. Cubberley (Houghton Mifflin Co., New York) has several interesting chapters, while for those who prefer summarised material, the quarterly *Research Bulletins* of the National Education Association (Washington, D.C.) are invaluable.

How Strong is Rome?

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

(Two lectures by M. Jean Simond, the energetic secretary of the Upper Savoy Freethought Society, are resumed in an article in the *Bulletin Rationaliste* of this month, and provide the material for the following article.)

The increasing political activity of the Vatican has aroused some apprehension among non-Catholics as to the power of the Church. M. Simond's enquiry reveals that the Church is not today founded on solid rock, and that each advance in doctrine has been made at a cost. The figures quoted are all drawn from ecclesiastical or religious sources, mostly from statistics prepared under the direction of M. Gabriel Bras, professor of Canon Law.

Although 94% of French people have been baptised, 70% do not go to church even once a year; and of those who do go occasionally, many go only once, usually at Easter, in a twelvemonth. Urban populations are less pious than rural, e.g., only 13½% of Parisians attend Sunday mass; the proportion is about the same at Lille and at Marseilles, and a little higher at Toulouse and at Roubaix. These figures include children, who can scarcely be said to go of their own freewill; and a large proportion of the young cease to attend as they grow up. If the working class is considered apart, the proportion is much lower, e.g., at a Paris parish for each member of the working classes who came to Sunday mass there were 2 clerks, 4 civil servants, 2 shopkeepers, 4 of the professional classes, 5 of the managerial stratum and 3-4 of independent means. In fact in Paris only 1% of the working class population makes any pretence at church-going; and in one great factory of over 3,000 employees no more than 15 were practising Catholics.

A map prepared by a Canon Boulard shows shaded regions where 45% or more of the population are practising Catholics; not half France is shaded. Upper Savoy is nevertheless a census taken at La Roche, a thriving rail and road junction, indicated that only 32% attended Sunday mass, despite the existence in the neighbourhood of a convent, two Catholic schools and a Seminary for priests. Moreover, the attendance at church schools in this region has dropped from 18% in 1954 to 16½% in 1957.

The Gallic church has been much exercised over the lack of candidates for the priesthood of recent years: in 1901 the country was ministered to by 71,000 priests, in 1949 by 56,000, a drop of 35%. In Paris, whereas in 1802 one priest served 1,600 persons, today he has to minister to

4,500. At the picturesque medieval city of Carcassonne there were, at the beginning of this century, 632 priests in function; today 297. In fact, in 16,000 parishes there is today no parish priest; one curé has to serve two or more parishes.

Nor does the Church derive much satisfaction from the missions to China, India and elsewhere, formerly much publicised. The converts in Mahometan lands do not amount to a half of a tenth per cent. of the populations: in Algeria after a long century of propaganda officially encouraged, of ten million inhabitants, including 1,100,000 of French origin, not even 900,000 pretend to be Catholic.

In addition the quality of belief of those claimed as faithful leaves much to be desired. *La Vie Catholique Illustrée* of August 25th, 1957, laments, in a report of a conference at Rome, that few young working people nominally Catholic are genuine believers; for, though they admit perhaps the existence of heaven, they doubt that of hell; or again, they believe in the resurrection of Christ and doubt the existence of a life hereafter; and few, save in Spain, do not question the virginity of the Virgin Mary! What is more, the journalist reports, there are many who attend mass but have no belief; while many who believe do not go to mass. It would appear that there is a widespread confusion of belief (cp. *Puzzled People*).

The report goes on to lament that in countries such as those of South and Central America, Catholic rites are contaminated with pagan ritual. In Europe and N. America the contamination is not with paganism, but with ideas that are "atheist, nationalist, individualist and anarchist."

Not long ago Cardinals and Archbishops of France appointed a commission to investigate the educational standards of French clergy; and the commission concluded that the general standard was lamentable, especially in view of the general rise in culture of the people.

In the past fifty years the Vatican has made one sacrifice after another of medieval dogma, once claimed as unalterable. Each sacrifice has been made at a cost; each acceptance of modern scientific or economic fact or theory has wrought further confusion in the minds of the faithful. Each such sacrifice has been a victory for scientific thinking, for Freethought.

The Churches remain immensely strong, having made friends with Mammon, but their foundation in contemporary belief is no longer solid rock, but is disintegrating into sand.

FOR NEWCOMERS

"OUR LORD"

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED what a biography of Jesus would look like if it were based on the original "source," the New Testament, instead of on the imagination of the pious? What a bombshell it would be!

For instance, we do not learn that he ever worked a day in his life; he hated those who did and held in contempt those who tried to save for a rainy day. He was a homeless vagabond, wandering about the countryside, seeking figs from a tree that did not belong to him and then cursing the tree. We hear of him placing devils in swine that he did not own and sending the latter to an unpleasant death. We read of him chasing the money changers from the temple when he neither owned the temple, held public office or paid taxes for its support. He was a faith healer who pretended to heal the blind by making mud-balls from his own spittle, and claimed to perform miracles that just didn't happen. He held in contempt all the family ties that normal men hold dear. He condemned others for using the word "fool," yet used it himself disparagingly of others.

He had for others a moral philosophy quite at variance with his own behaviour and he almost always answered a direct question by a most indirect answer—or a curse.

He taught Hell and all its connotations and left a curse on mankind which, if it were really believed, would never permit one to go to his grave except in abject terror. He seemed to love and care for the harlots more than for his own mother or decent women. He was prepared to curse the stranger when the stranger invited him in to supper and suggested he wash before sitting down to eat. He plotted his own death and then got scared when he saw his plot coming down upon him. He lost what faith he may have had in his god and in himself and wailed in fear when death closed in upon him.

A. G. CROMWELL (U.S.A.).

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. December 25th, around the Winter Solstice. 2. The ancient Druids (pre-Christian). 3. About the middle of the 19th century, the earliest traced being possibly 1844. 4. The Virgin Maya. 5. The Christmas Tree. G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

PURPOSE

I am glad to have Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe's cordial agreement with the substance of my letter (THE FREETHINKER, November 14th), but he raises a query on my saying that fundamentally life has "no other purpose" than to perpetuate itself. Now I know that this urge to the reproduction of kind is instinctive and blind in its operation; but the pattern is so unmistakably and unvaryingly the same through the whole gamut of life that I do not think we wrongly describe it if we call it purpose.

However, I guess what is in Mr. Ratcliffe's mind, here. We thinking human animals create our own self-conscious purpose in our living; but if we ascribe purpose to the phenomenon of life itself, then who or what has implanted that? Are we in danger of falling back on the time-worn hypothesis of a First Cause—a Divine Cause? I would say No, for I believe the matter to be explainable in terms of evolution by the process of natural selection. Unnumbered forms of life have gone completely out of existence because at some point they did not meet the stringent requirements of survival. By the accident of biological inheritance, or by chance biological endowment, some forms of life have met these requirements, and they prevail today. Naturally, in them there is a powerful urge to procreate, a basic condition of their continuance as species, and without which they would not now be in existence.

As is common knowledge, in all but the most primitive forms of life, sex is the agent by which life renews itself. Perhaps there

have been animals with very limited sexual feelings. If so, they would swiftly take the path to extinction. The sexual instinct in all creatures is so urgent and persistent simply because it had to be in order to ensure their biological continuance and presence in our world today. It is noteworthy that among fauna in the state of nature we do not see the evolutionary failures that fall by the wayside. We see only the successes, which *ipso facto* are pre-eminently endowed with the will to live and the qualities necessary to their survival as individuals and as species. G. I. BENNETT.

PEN PALS

I was pleased to read the article in your November 7th issue that Mr. Dave Shipper had written from my letters to him, and was even more pleased by the results it brought. It is very kind of your readers to send me magazines, etc. I am writing personally to thank those who enclosed a return address, but I would be glad if you could, through your columns, express my gratitude to those who did not. I have been in correspondence with several members of the American Rationalist Federation, and we have hopes of starting a similar organisation in Canada, where it is badly needed, and I would greatly appreciate hearing from any Canadian readers who would like to help, or to join such a society, or from anyone at all who could advise me on how to go about starting one.

Thanking you for the use of your columns.

(Mrs) HELEN ELKINGTON (Ontario, Canada).

BLESSINGS

It is always a matter of regret that my slender income does not permit me to be more generous towards Freethought. We old age pensioners are hardly in that port wine and ripe pheasant environment to which a more or less prominent politician referred some time ago. Perhaps if I were a pious and devout follower of that paragon Jesus, I would count my blessings one by one and give him the credit for a surprising amount of good health, physical stamina and perhaps, what is no less important, a mind which has succeeded in discarding all the mental lumber and superstitious nonsense which so bedevils the brains of most people today. I think that of all freedoms, mental freedom is the most valuable. A complete social freedom may be an impossible ideal, but mental freedom can be obtained by anyone of average intelligence. In my case I think I have derived more lasting enjoyment and satisfaction in the exercise of this freedom than in any other way.

FREDERICK E. PAPPS.

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