

The Freethinker

Volume LXXX—No. 27

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

ONE OF THE MAJOR CONTENTIONS of Communist theory is that all ideologies including, perhaps very particularly, religion, ultimately serve political and economic interests. How far non-Communist freethinkers share this point of view may be doubtful, since how far a particular phenomenon—in this instance religion—is actually a product of any particular social phase, is a hotly disputed matter. But possibly most rationalistic critics of religion will agree that, historically, the tie-up between organised religion and reactionary politics has been a recurring feature throughout history. Nor is it only critics of religion who apparently hold such a view. Some of the bitterest critics of contemporary Communism appear to share the Communist standpoint upon such questions.

Ideology and Co-existence

A notable example of such thinking has just been drawn to my attention—one which stems from sources usually regarded as entirely alien to any suspicion of Marxist-Leninist trends. I refer to the booklet, *Ideology and Co-existence*, first published by the movement for Moral Re-Armament in September 1959 and issued in this country at the beginning of the present year. A notice on the back of this 32 page booklet informs us that 20,000,000 copies in twenty languages have already been issued—quite an achievement even when judged by the circulation standards of international best-sellers, and I have seen later figures of more than three times this number. I learn further that *Ideology and Co-existence* has gone into every home in six European countries. From the text, we learn that one of these fortunate lands is Switzerland, and that the editions (in, presumably, the four languages spoken in that multi-lingual Republic) intended for the land of William Tell, have been augmented with a preface by the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army—whether because of his adherence to “Ideologies” or to “Co-existence”, we are not informed! Since even in these days of mammoth circulations and big business (including religious big business), a circulation of 73,000,000 in a score of languages represents quite a substantial figure, my curiosity was, I must admit, aroused by this comopolitan document. Particularly so since, while I have had the pleasure of debating with representatives of such widely divergent ideologies as Jesuits, Methodists, and most recently, Christadelphians, I must admit that I have never yet encountered Moral Re-Armament in the flesh—or been morally rearmed by it!—though a former colleague of mine in another capacity the former MP, John McGovern subsequently became a leading (shall we say?) armourer in Dr. Frank Buchman’s set-up.

Little Ideology and Less Co-existence

On reading the pages of the Moral Re-Armament best-seller, I must confess to disappointment. Voltaire once went on record with the notable definition that the Holy Roman Empire was actually “neither Holy, Roman, nor an Empire”: the great satirist went on to add that other-

wise the description would pass. Similarly, *Ideology and Co-existence*, contains very little “ideology” and the last thing in this world that it appears to want is any sort of “co-existence” with the present Communist regime. In fact, the whole pamphlet is little more than a repetition that the choice before humanity in 1960 is between the ideology of Communism—viz. Marxism or Leninism—and that of Moral Re-Armament as embodied in the Moral

Re-Armament movement as founded by Frank Buchman in the dismal 30s. To make “confusion worse confounded”, no definition at all is made of Communist ideologies, not even in the specific sphere of religion; while even the ideology of Moral Re-Armament is only

sketched in the vaguest and most general manner. For example, it does not seem to get us very far to say, as Dr. Buchman is quoted on the title page as saying: “Upon a foundation of changed lives, permanent reconstruction is assured. Apart from changed lives, no civilisation can endure”. A best-seller, I believe, has been aptly defined as a “book from which nothing can be learned”. If so, the above string of platitudes which is multiplied many times in *Ideology and Co-existence*, hardly amounts to an ideology—any kind of ideology. One may disagree with the theoretical system of Communism, but at least it is a serious theory, a genuine ideology, which defines its terms as befits any ideology worthy of the name. (Even Catholicism, at least as expounded by such leading spokesmen as Aquinas or Newman—though not always as expounded by the Catholic Truth Society—can be regarded as serious ideology.) But it would be to use words in a sense not endorsed by any reputable dictionary, to use the term ideology of the recurring string of platitudes repeated like a ritual refrain about “absolute love”, “absolute goodness” etc., etc., which Dr. Buchman (or whoever wrote this pamphlet) tries to pass off as an ideology; and as one which offers itself to our contemporary civilisation as its only saviour and moral alternative to Communism.

Moscow or Mackinac?

So much for “Ideology”. What about the other half of the title, “Co-existence”? Precious little. For while we are aware that co-existence is a fashionable word—or at least, was so prior to the unfortunate result of the recent Summit fiasco—there is no evidence available in this pamphlet that either its authors or Moral Re-Armament in general have the slightest desire to practise co-existence with Communism. On the contrary, the whole argument—if one can dignify it by such a term—of this vitriolic broadcast against Communism is couched almost exclusively in terms of: either Moral Re-Armament or Communism. That, we are told repeatedly, is the present choice before humanity. Moral Re-Armament throughout, is depicted as the *sole* ideology that can save mankind from—you should be able to guess what by now. In fact the refrain recurs several times in Moscow or Mackinac. (The latter being the rendezvous of an M.R.A. international con-

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Moral Re-Armament

By F. A. RIDLEY

gress in 1958.) Only the various absolutes propounded by Buchman can save mankind from Moscow. Without taking sides in this quarrel, I seem to recall that in pre-war years, Dr. Buchman praised Hitler to the skies, and certainly this distinguished convert "rearmed" Germany quite efficiently in the physical sense. The Fuhrer also practised moral re-armament of a kind with the highly competent aid of Dr. Goebbels and the chief of the Gestapo, Himmler. The last-named was a self-confessed disciple, not only of Adolf Hitler, but of Frank Buchman. But as the Nazi version of "absolute love" ended in Belsen, Auschwitz and Ravensbroek, our pamphlet perhaps naturally, does not mention these erstwhile sympathisers with M.R.A. There is, in fact, no overt reference to Fascism here; but there are quite a surprising number of references to Roman Catholicism, with which apparently, M.R.A. is now *persona grata*. Converted Communists (mostly to both Catholicism and M.R.A.) cut quite a figure in these pages, including a formerly famous South American one, M. E. Ravines, now a kind of M.R.A. Douglas Hyde. And, of course, the whole booklet reeks of "absolute

morality", which like most "absolutes" in this relative world, has very little contact with the real world in which human beings live—and moralise.

Agents of Moscow?

I recollect once talking to a journalist who, before the war, covered both the meetings of Mosley and his B.U.F. and of Buchman and M.R.A. His most telling comment was that both organisations appeared to be manned by the same kind of people. It has been fashionable, in fact, in some leftist circles to accuse Buchmanites of being crypto-fascists. But a more subtle suspicion occurs to me on reading this perfect illustration of the Communist thesis that the primary function of religion is to serve reactionary political and economic interests. Can it be that Dr. Frank Buchman and M.R.A. are in reality, Moscow agents and crypto-Communists? And that the substantial finances ultimately necessary to pay for and advertise the 73,000,000 copies of this pamphlet in twenty languages, were ultimately paid for by "red" gold? The more I read *Ideology and Co-existence*, the more does this suspicion haunt me.

Galileo

VISITORS TO LONDON should make sure they go to the Mermaid Theatre, Puddle Dock. Not only is the theatre unique in itself—and most attractively so—but it is at present showing probably the best play in London. One, moreover, that is of especial interest to Freethinkers.

The great German playwright, Bertolt Brecht, is notoriously difficult to produce on the English stage, though he has had an important influence on methods of production here. Mr. Bernard Miles has overcome the difficulties remarkably well in a basically simple presentation of *The Life of Galileo*, and the result is a truly memorable evening.

The millenium of faith is ending; giving way to the millenium of doubt. Had one man acted differently, the Age of Reason might well have begun. That, I think, is the theme—the stupendous theme—of Brecht's play. The climate was favourable; there was plenty of support, and support in influential quarters. The Church, of course, was against, but not unanimously so, and was not all-powerful everywhere. And Galileo had found the proof he needed—the proof Copernicus and Bruno lacked—with the aid of a telescope. He *knew* he was right.

January ten sixteen ten

Galileo Galilei abolishes Heaven.

"Where is God?" he is asked. "Inside here or nowhere", he replies, pointing to his heart. "Does the Bible lie?" asks the thin monk. Indeed it does, as Galileo shows.

Here is the great man, the inspirer of others with his teaching: "Truth is the daughter of time . . . not of authority". The man who believes "in the brain". The man who proclaims: "He who does not know the truth is only an ass, but he who knows it and calls it a lie is a criminal". Yet he it is who fails them; fails humanity, for all the affairs of men are interwoven, inseparable. He, it is, who calls the truth a lie and so becomes a criminal on his own reckoning.

We cannot be unsympathetic to him: he was imprisoned by the Inquisition which knew only too well that "Independent spirit spreads like foul diseases", and which determined to stop the infection by stifling that independence. But what of his disciples who know he won't let them down? Who know "You can't make a man unsee what he sees"; who know that mariners are now "putting their faith in a brass bowl they call a compass and not in Almighty

God." It is for Galileo's assistants, waiting for the terrible tolling of the bell of St. Mark's that will announce the recantation; it is for them that Brecht gains our main sympathy. And here, as the bell begins to toll, I am sure the deliberate Brechtian detachment and dispassionateness is meant to break down—for a moment at any rate. Not for long, though. Galileo is back with a great speech on doubt, and knowledge, which is the product of doubt. And we may agree with him when he answers his assistant's "Unhappy is the land that breeds no hero" with "No. Andrea; unhappy is the land that needs a hero". Comprehend when he warns the same assistant to "Be careful when you pass through Germany with the truth under your cloak".

Bernard Miles himself plays Galileo, and I for one cannot fault him. But the whole cast is good, and the play, produced in close collaboration with Brecht's Berliner Ensemble and Brecht's widow, Helene Weigel, is admirably suited to the open stage, with no scenery and few props. The clerical studies are excellent, from fanatical monk to mathematical Pope (the dressing of the latter is an exquisite episode). "Can't they reach a decision on that paltry matter"? asks an old Cardinal about the revolution of the heavenly bodies. "Can society stand on doubt and not on faith"? asks His Eminence the Cardinal Inquisitor. Clearly not the old society, but the people seem prepared to adapt themselves and perhaps the highlight of a great play is the violently irreverent crowd scene which hails "Galileo the Bible-killer". Like everything else at the Mermaid Theatre (including the informative free programme) it is splendidly done.

C.McC.

A PARSON ON "CHURCHING"

THE REV. DOUGLAS JONES of Meir (Stoke-on-Trent) Central Methodist Mission recently let himself go on the subject of Churching, calling it "a superstition . . . which if allowed to continue unchecked, would reduce the work of a Minister of the Gospel to that of a witch doctor in the most primitive parts of the African jungle". Please, he says, "let us not allow the joy of childbirth to degenerate into something dirty and unclean which demands the mumbo-jumbo of primitive superstitions before a woman can emerge in public again". Let us instead, have "The Thanksgiving of Mothers on the Occasion of the Birth of a Child". Let us, at least, give our superstition a modern look.

Christian Evidence

By C. STANLEY

THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY has recently re-published a small booklet by the Rev. F. H. E. Harfitt entitled *Did Jesus Christ Exist?*

The author, being of course in all things very fair, examines what unbelievers themselves say on the matter and the following extract is given from a pamphlet written by the late Chapman Cohen (who is incorrectly described as "the secretary of a society for the advancement of atheism"): "I think this is the common attitude of the majority of those who cannot be called believers in Christianity. The majority may be divided into two groups—the larger one believing that some person actually existed at the time given for the life of the New Testament character, the other smaller group declaring that they cannot arrive at a definite conclusion on the subject". Mr. Harfitt then blandly states, "You will see that even unbelievers cannot arrive at any common opinion [of course Christians always do] and the larger number accept the position that a person known as Jesus Christ did exist".

Believers will no doubt maintain that this is a fair comment, but this is of course far from so. No unbeliever accepts that Jesus "Christ" existed! What they do accept is that a man named Jesus may have preached a political doctrine subversive to the Roman rule and thereby met his death, or that a Galilean faith-healer with a local reputation, may have met his death during a period of social tumult, and his story may have got mixed up with the myth. Unbelievers are not concerned to deny such a possibility. What they do deny is that Christianity can be traced to a personal founder who taught as alleged in the Gospels, was put to death in the circumstances therein recorded, and afterwards returned to life.

However, Mr. Harfitt proceeds to set out his "evidence", apart from the Bible (which isn't evidence at all) and as usual Josephus is dragged in, the reader being informed that he was a contemporary of the Apostles. No mention is made that in none of his works does Josephus ever name an Apostle or even mention Christianity.

The Reverend author points out that "It is sometimes asserted that another passage in which Josephus mentions the fact of Jesus Christ contains an interpolation, but there is no question of the authenticity of the passage mentioned above" (i.e. regarding the death of James the brother of Jesus). This would suggest that Mr. Harfitt has a very short memory, as he fails to record that even such modern Christians as Milman, Farrar, Chalmers, Keim, Hooykaas and others have given up the passage about Jesus Christ as an interpolation (which is of course simply the polite word for forgery). But it should also be evident that, if the longer passage in Josephus is an interpolation, it is hardly likely that the historian (who can hardly be described as brief in his narratives) would simply have stated "Annas assembled the Jewish Sanhedrim and brought before it James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ and others, to be stoned as infractors of the law" and left it at that!

The pamphlet also alleges that the Bible story is further strengthened by Josephus's mention of John the Baptist. (I have already dealt with the impossibility of the tale of John in Josephus in my article "*James Leasor and Pontius Pilate*"—THE FREETHINKER, 13th May, 1960), and that the "connection between John and Jesus is well understood" in spite of the fact that this wonderful forerunner of the "Master" is never even mentioned in the Epistles.

Mr. Harfitt may conceivably mean that both John and Jesus are myths—with which of course I would heartily agree—but this would be expecting a lot of him.

Tacitus and Pliny the Younger are next cited, although it is not mentioned that both wrote about the years 111-120 A.D. and simply recorded statements that they had presumably obtained from Christians, all which neither prove nor disprove the existence of a crucified Jesus. No mention is made of the fact that neither Pliny the elder nor Seneca, who were contemporaries of Jesus (if he ever lived) say not one word about his wonder works, his death or his resurrection. We are simply told that "one would have thought such evidence accepted as it is by Scholars of repute would be sufficient to convince the most sceptical unbelievers that there was some incentive for the sufferings of the early Christian martyrs".

Once again here is a statement slipped in entirely without any evidence. History records no persecution of any religion by the Romans and Josephus knows nothing about any such. Moreover, at the time when we are now told that the Christians were being made martyrs, Luke (that great "historian"), says in Acts (28. 30-31) "and Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him. Preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence no man forbidding him" which, to say the least, is rather strange in view of this martyrdom.

The final "evidence" submitted by Mr. Harfitt is Lucian, a Greek who lived in the second century. This consists of his remarks regarding Christians. "They worship that Great Man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced into the world this new religion". Mr. Harfitt does not explain what evidence this is for the existence of a God-man over 100 years before.

In view of the above, Mr. Harfitt considers there is no doubt that:—

- (1) Christ lived in Palestine;
- (2) founded a new religion;
- (3) was crucified in the reign of Pontius Pilate;
- (4) during his lifetime gathered a large army of converts, and
- (5) that his followers were subject to terrible persecutions.

It is perhaps worth repeating that there is no evidence anywhere that:—

- (1) "Christ" ever existed;
- (2) the Christian religion had not been in existence long before the alleged founding;
- (3) that Pilate ever "reigned" anywhere or that he had ever known or heard of Jesus; and
- (4) the alleged persecutions ever occurred as they are not confirmed by history and are denied by one of his "converts";
- (5) while, if (4) be true, Jesus selected strange converts who (a) did not understand him (b) denied him (c) deserted him in time of need.

After quoting further from Chapman Cohen who correctly says that "outside the New Testament nothing is known of the existence of Jesus Christ", Mr. Harfitt tries to take over to his side such "old timers" as Thomas Paine, Strauss, Goethe, Renan, Mill, Lecky, Parker, Greg and Cassells, remarking that these "would have nothing

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

The wonderful "magic" of Koran on TV must delight, and above all, mystify millions of viewers; and it must be heart-breaking for Spiritualists to know that "spirits", whether called Running Water, Black Eagle, or Sitting Bull, have literally nothing to do with Koran's extraordinary feats of divination and "supernatural" card tricks. The other evening, however, he had a panel of journalists—men and women—and he called them "the greatest unbelievers in the world". Commented the *Daily Express*, "he must have meant that as a compliment, because he called some of them 'Sir' ". But why shouldn't an "unbeliever" be called "Sir"? After all, it is a compliment to be an "unbeliever"!

★

A correspondent to the same newspaper must have given millions of its loyal readers a nasty jolt. He claimed that the famous Knights of the Garter ceremony "with its two covens" was based by Edward III on—of all things—witchcraft! It appears that the old black magic covens had 12 members and a leader—that it, 13. Edward and his son each led 12 members—hence the two groups in the Knights of the Garter. 13 is an old "occult" number, and even now the Order's "gold collar has 13 Tudor roses" on its representation of St. George and the Dragon. The Divinity which hedges a king these days seems to be wearing a little thin.

★

By the way, we often wonder whether those stout champions of St. George as a real Knight, who have formed a Society to keep his memory alive, vouch for the Dragon as well? Quite possibly, if they are all-believing Christians, they would shudder at the blasphemy of disbelieving in the frightful beast. They all believe in the Devil—why not in the Dragon?

★

So, in spite of our "faith healers" easily curing hundreds of thousands of incurable cases of illness every year, representatives of Britain's 40,000 doctors decided not to let them into hospitals at any cost. The doctors claim that only properly trained medical men and women are capable of the correct diagnoses—and this in spite of the fact that at least some faith healers insist that it is not "spirit doctors" who do the cures, but Jesus Christ himself; and surely no one would claim that "our Lord" was incapable of curing anything whatever?

★

Personally, we feel that the doctors are wrong. They should allow patients on their own responsibility to be treated by "spirits" or Jesus, and then note results. The number of *no* cures would be so great that their own position—properly trained doctors only in our hospitals—would be finally accepted. Surely this is the only proper solution?

★

Our very pious contemporary, *The People*, tried to stagger the world the other Sunday with a magnificent "scoop". It devoted a full page with photographs to Noah's Ark—though it must be admitted that the caption was not quite as positive as the pious discovery actually warranted. It asked "Can Noah's Ark be buried Here?" pointing to a photograph of a bulge on a part of Mt. Ararat, and saying this "scientific news" has "startled those who scoff at the Bible story of Noah and his ark".

★

Obviously, *The People* itself would never scoff at dear old Noah, and if the Bible had said that Elijah's chariot—in which it will be remembered he flew right up to heaven—had fallen back to earth from that beautiful celestial region,

and a scientific expedition had reported a "bulge", that would be proof enough for *The People* and its Bible-believing readers to believe in the story of Elijah and his fiery chariot.

★

However, it appears that the scientists who reported the glorious discovery are divided. Some say the "bulge" is only "a freak of nature". The others are convinced that it must be the Ark. But how are these going to dispose of the evidence of two Russian airmen who actually saw the Ark (or its remains) resting comfortably on Mt. Ararat some forty years ago? Surely they were not mistaken?

A Famous "Unbeliever"

IT IS GOOD TO THINK that at last we have a picture of one of the great Christian "Unbelievers"—certainly the brainiest man in the Christian Church of his day—given us in Canon Fox's *Dean Inge* just published by John Murray at 28s.

For the famous "Gloomy" Dean was no ordinary parson. A convinced Malthusian, and a superb journalist as well as an authority on the "mysticism" inherent in the theology of the Church, not only did his *Outspoken Essays* make him famous almost in a day but his *Evening Standard* articles were one of that paper's most outstanding features over the years. Think of it—his last one to the paper was written when he was 92 years of age!

How much did he believe? What did he think of his work as Dean of St. Paul's? Here is a passage from his diary:—

I have never before had work which wounded my conscience, but these services seem to me a criminal waste of time. I have held different views at different times about the character and nature of the Creator of the Universe; but never at any time have I thought it possible that he is the kind of person who enjoys being serenaded!

And he read books as an "effective remedy" during George V's Coronation to relieve its "extreme boredom"!

H.C.

CREDO

If you would lead and not be led,
Renounce all "truths" inherited.
Kneel to no idols of the dead,
Nor build new altar gods instead.

Follow that call or course or creed
Responsive to our human need:
None else is worthy of our seed;
Nor other guide or gospel heed.

Routers of myths, delusions, fears . . .
With these join cause; these are your peers:
Dissenters, dreamers, pioneers;
Martyrs, image-breakers, seers.

GUSTAV DAVIDSON.

CHRISTIAN "EVIDENCE"

(Concluded from page 211)

to do with assertions" like Cohen's. He also cites modern writers such as Sir J. G. Fraser and Dr. Conybeare as evidence for Jesus Christ.

This as Mr. Harfitt well knows is a red herring, none of the writers mentioned believed in the existence of "Jesus Christ". They may have accepted that a man named Jesus lived about the time alleged, but that is quite a different matter.

THE FREETHINKER

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THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 15s.; half-year, 17s. 6d.; three months, 8s. 9d. (In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25.)

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Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch). — Meetings every Sunday, from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, July 3rd, 6.45 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Confessions of an Atheist".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, July 3rd, 11 a.m.: W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., "The Royal Society: 1660-1960."

Notes and News

WE PRINT THIS WEEK Mr. F. A. Ridley's assessment of the Moral Re-Armament booklet, *Ideology and Co-existence*, which many readers will have seen. Not all may know of *The Guardian's* recent (13/6/60) exposure of Dr. Frank Buchman's "absolute honesty" claim. In a broadcast which received wide publicity and was reprinted in pamphlets and paid advertisements in newspapers, he said: "There is a hurricane of common sense sweeping through the world. 'A Hurricane of Common Sense'—that was the headline in a newspaper read by the leaders of Washington. It refers to the manifesto *Ideology and Co-existence* which in the past six months has gone to 73,000,000 homes". *The Guardian* thought that the identity of the "newspaper read by the leaders of Washington" would be of some interest and set out to discover it. *The Washington Post*? *The New York Times*? *Herald-Tribune*? *Washington Star*? *Baltimore Sun*? No. A Philadelphia paper, perhaps, or the *Richmond Times Dispatch*? No again. "On inquiry it turned out to be the Bethesda-Chevy Chase *Advertiser*", not a newspaper in the normal sense, but "a weekly given away free, and almost all its content is advertising".

WE SHOULD LIKE to THANK the anonymous sender of *The Trinity Light*, bulletin of the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady at Deptford. It gives us many laughs, and we have, as readers know, referred to it lightheartedly in these columns more than once. But, absurd though it is, it is tragic to know that 75 schoolchildren will be receiving

"our Blessed Lord into their souls, in Holy Communion for the first time". So, too, is the following: "For years we have tried to instil into the hearts of our children a very real and strong devotion to the Sacred Heart and to making the nine Fridays. We feel sure that if only we can succeed in this they will all get safely to Heaven".

★

MICHAEL FRAYN, who contributes the "Miscellany" column to *The Guardian*, is not a Christian, but he obviously has a sentimental attachment to Jesus. And, in his comments on the proposed Jewish trial of Adolf Eichmann (13/6/60), whilst not feeling able to extend compassion to such a man, Mr. Frayn thought that "the impossible might be done". "It was, after all," he said, "a Jew who set us the standards by which compassion is judged". The compassion of *eternal* punishment, no doubt.

★

ON RETIRING after a ten-year ministry for the Church of Scotland at Stornoway, Lewis, 70-year-old Rev. Dr. J. R. K. de Lingen was presented with a cheque for £100 by his congregation. Now he has announced his intention of becoming a Roman Catholic, because he believes "a more complete Christian life can be lived" in the Catholic Church (*Sunday Mail*, 19/6/60). We can't help agreeing with the Stornoway Kirk Session that "It is regrettable that Dr. de Lingen should not have confided his intention to those who most merited and were most entitled to this confidence", and we share a reader's view that the minister must have felt very awkward when he accepted that cheque. Still, it was for past services, we suppose. And we mustn't be too hard on the old boy. The last news we heard was that he was "very tired" after his long journey. Geographical, that is, not spiritual! He is now living in the Lowlands.

★

THE (EAST) *German Democratic Report* (10/6/60) informed us that Chaplain Paul Adenauer, a son of the West German Chancellor, had been named by the Vatican to the post of Privy Chamberlain of the Pope at the end of May. His father, of course, believes that Germany has been chosen by God to save the West from Russian atheistic-communism, a belief, alas, not unique among German chancellors, but one perhaps that will die with the elder statesman. We hope so.

★

THE *Trinidad Guardian* (11/5/60) reported that Occultist Madame Terfen Laila "predicts that from some Barbados fruit products some researchers in medicine will find a cure for cancer". She said she "saw these things when she went into a trance a few days ago in Teneriffe". Well, at least it brought her publicity.

★

WE ARE ALL for European co-operation and indeed, if possible, for a United States of Europe, but we suspect an ulterior motive when the *Scottish Catholic Times* (24/6/60) urges Scotsmen to "make it their business to see that the United Kingdom no longer hesitates on the fringe of Europe but boldly throws in her lot with that united Europe being brought to birth by the great Catholic statesmen of the continent" (our italics). Particularly when the appeal is headed "Independence for Scotland". In fact, what the *Catholic Times* wants is a Catholic United States of Europe, and that we definitely don't want.

NEXT WEEK

KINGSLEY AND NEWMAN

By H. CUTNER

“Natural” and “Artificial”

By COLIN MCCALL

ON SUNDAY, MAY 22nd, 1960, all Scottish Roman Catholics who faithfully attended their churches were privileged to hear a *Pastoral Letter* from their Archbishops and Bishops. These latter, mindful of their “grave duty . . . to safeguard their flocks from error both in faith and morals”, had met in Aberdeen some time before, and had prepared the epistle to their “Dearly Beloved Brethren and Dear Children in Jesus Christ”, appointing it to be read in all the churches on that day. One copy found its way into the hands of a FREETHINKER reader, and thence to me, and, although it contains nothing new, it is worth considering as the latest official declaration of the Roman Catholic Church on birth control. For that, not surprisingly, is its subject-matter. A subject, we are informed, “of great delicacy”.

For some time, Donald Alphonsus of Glasgow, Gordon Joseph of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, James Donald of Motherwell, James of Paisley, and the rest, have been “gravely troubled” by newspaper, radio and TV propaganda in favour of “family planning by practices within marriage which are [as everybody should know!] contrary to the natural law”. And, “so plausible” are the arguments put forward for these “immoral” practices, that the self-styled “guardians of Divine Truth” would be failing in their duty if they were to remain silent. So, they have raised their voices in time-honoured fashion—and in cliché-ridden invective. “The end never justifies the means”: “a perversion of the natural order of things”; “undermining the divine institution of marriage”; and so on.

The argument, it must be admitted right away, is plain enough and, if we grant the Bishops’ premises, it is irrefutable. But of course we don’t grant their premises. The argument then collapses. However, here it is: The Church of Rome is infallible in her official teaching on faith and morals: Family planning is a matter of morals: Therefore, the Church is competent to pronounce God’s law on the matter. The pronouncement is: “Without qualification the Church teaches that artificial birth prevention attempted by the deliberate interruption of the marriage act, by the use of contraceptive appliances or by the use of contraceptive pills or medicine, is a grave violation of the law of God”. And this applies “to all circumstances”. “Even to safeguard health or to avoid economic or social hardship”, birth control can never be “lawful”; on the contrary, it is a mortal sin.

The reasons for the Church’s teaching are clear, say the Bishops. The Creator “implanted in man certain instincts and appetites together with the power to satisfy them . . . The sexual instinct was implanted in man to ensure the preservation and propagation of the human race . . . Because the begetting and upbringing of children may involve self-sacrifice and hardship, Almighty God has attached a humanly great sensual satisfaction to the beginning of the process of generation . . . [but] To take the pleasure and deliberately frustrate the purpose for which it is offered is a grave violation of the law of God”.

Here again, all depends on the premise; or in this case, the implied premise that there is a Creator. If there is a Creator, then obviously He did give man sexual desires; equally obviously those desires are related to the preservation of the species. Given the premise, this much is clear, as the Bishops say. That the sensual pleasure is a sort of prior compensation for the self-sacrifice that may come

later, is, I submit, by no means so obvious to a non-infallible eye. This, in fact, is the weak point in the argument, even granting a Creator. And the Bishops themselves seem to see this. Or, at least they feel the necessity to give a parallel. Moreover, they admit that it is *not* a “perfect parallel”. Some of the Pagan Romans, they say, “used to eat and then cause vomiting, so as to continue the sensual pleasure of eating more”. We find this practice “horrifying” and “rightly so”.

It will be seen that this parallel is certainly very far from perfect. There are gluttons for sex, as there are for food, but it is not those who should primarily concern us, but rather the average, ordinary married couple. If the sexual appetite is to be compared to the appetite for food, then it should be on the normal level. Men and women can exist on dry bread and water. If there is a Creator, He made them capable of existing on that meagre diet. But He also made them capable of deriving pleasure from eating more attractive food. And the Roman Catholic Church raises no general objection to the gratification of the sensitive palate. In some respects, indeed, it specially caters for that palate and, incidentally, profits from it. Sometimes, however, there may be an unwanted, but quite “natural” result from eating and drinking well: indigestion. Many Papists, lay and clerical, I am sure take a tablet to prevent this undesirable result; and the Church doesn’t fulminate against this. The Church doesn’t teach “without qualification” that “artificial” stomach-ache “prevention” by “the use of” indigestion “pills or medicine, is a grave violation of the law of God”. It doesn’t declare: “Even to safeguard health . . . they are never lawful”.

Catholics are ever ready to invoke their “naturals” and “natural laws”, as opposed, of course, to the “artificial”, when it suits them to do so. I am not claiming perfection for my substitute parallel. What I am claiming is that there can be no reasoned argument along the “natural-artificial” line. Men and women have a “natural” appetite for sex; they have an equally “natural” appetite for food. The former is likely to bring a (humanly) undesired consequence: conception. The second appetite may likewise bring a humanly undesired consequence: indigestion. Prevention of the first unwanted result is no more “artificial” than prevention of the second. The “natural-artificial” argument is quite inadequate in this connection. More, it may be said, is involved in birth prevention than in stomach-ache prevention, and I would agree. Indeed, it is on these wider implications that advocates of birth control base their case.

For, whereas indigestion is mainly a personal matter (I say “mainly” because one man’s stomach-ache often has disagreeable consequences for others, e.g. through causing him to be irascible) conception generally involves at least three people very intimately (one of them in no way a responsible party) and many others indirectly. The Bishops deny their insensitivity to “the problem of under-nourishment”, though their very wording seems to confirm it. (I have lately been accused of emotionalism and may be again now, but I would point out that “starvation” is a factor in this “problem of under-nourishment”). Those who call the Church insensitive to this problem—the *Letter* continues—make “the false assumption that the only solution to local over-population and under-nourishment lies in the restriction of population through methods of artificial birth prevention”. Needless to say, this is not

true. There is one passage in the *Letter* with which no Freethinker would disagree: "Justice and Charity demand a fairer and better distribution of the available necessities not only within a national but between one nation and another. At the same time a determined effort is required to develop the resources of nature which have never been

exploited. At the moment only 10 per cent of the world is under cultivation".

But the Freethinker is justified in reminding the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Scotland that cultivation involves interference with nature; that it is "artificial", not "natural".

Tolpuddle—Yesterday and Today

By ALAN O. SNOOK

They (the labourers) must respect that property of which they cannot partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice.

BURKE.

EVEN IN THE YEAR 1960, it is difficult for a humanist to write with restraint of events which occurred in 1834, in the small Dorset hamlet of Tolpuddle. Indeed, the more radical among us may regret that Wesley ever lived, for it has been said that the preaching of the Methodist pope saved England from revolution. An English revolution on the French model might have sent the Establishment of those days to a well deserved fate: the men who conspired together to keep the workers of England in worse than feudal bondage were, in some respects, more brutal than their French opposite numbers.

Before investigating living conditions in the Tolpuddle of 1834—outside the houses of the clergy and gentry—let us take a brief look at the law and the prophets.

Firstly the law. For stealing a twopenny pie a starving man or boy could be transported to the Antipodes. If caught in a wood at night, armed only with a net, a labourer, poaching to save his family from starvation, could be transported for seven years. A sentence of fourteen years transportation was inflicted if three men were caught in a wood, one of whom was armed, if only with a bludgeon. For stealing linen, a boy of ten years could be, and was, sentenced to seven years transportation. Here it may be noted that conditions in the Australasian convict settlements were so appalling that children of ten years committed suicide.

It was unblushingly declared by one of England's leading statesmen "that the House of Lords was wholly, and the House of Commons was mainly, composed for the defence of hereditary property". The nadir was reached when the nobility of England defended pheasants against starving labourers by the introduction of spring-guns and man-traps. The wretched starveling, driven desperate by the sight of his hungry family, ending his days mortally wounded by a spring-gun, or writhing in agony in an outsize rat trap—it is hardly credible that these things actually happened in England's green and pleasant land less than two lifetimes ago. Nobody has given a more vivid description of a man trap than Hardy, in the penultimate chapter of *The Woodlanders*.

And what of Holy Church, in the days when a pheasant was sacred property, and men sentenced to transportation died in hundreds, at sea, before ever reaching Botany Bay?

In 1810 a Bill was carried through the Commons to abolish the death penalty for stealing five shillings. The Lords threw the Bill out, by 21 votes to 11. The majority included The Most Rev. His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and six Right Reverend Bishops. Lower down the ecclesiastical scale parson magistrates—of which there were many—sent working men to prison for refusing to pay tithes to their rectors. The average parson looked upon his duties as petty annoyances which interfered with

his hobbies and pleasures. To cut a dash at a fashionable watering place was his idea of heaven. Drunkenness was a common vice. I am indebted to the Hammonds for some of my facts and figures up to 1832, and cannot do better than quote their *Village Labourer* on the subject of reverend drunks.

On becoming Bishop of Chester, Dr. Blomfield astonished the diocese by refusing to license a curate until he had promised to abstain from hunting, and by the pain and surprise with which he saw one of his clergy carried away drunk from a visitation dinner. One rector, whom he rebuked for drunkenness, replied with an injured manner that he was never drunk on duty.

There were, of course, a few exceptions to the general run of clergy. However, the mere fact that the bishop "astonished" the diocese by doing his duty proves the rottenness of the Anglican Church of the times.

Possibly the greatest scandal was that of non-residence. When it is realised that the incomes from 1496 parishes went to only 332 parsons, and that 500 clergy divided the spoils of 1524 parishes, one has a classic example of the meaning of the modern word "racket". Following is Lord Walsingham's record as a typical pluralist: Archdeacon of Surrey, Prebendary of Winchester, Rector of Calbourne, Rector of Fawley, perpetual Curate of Exbury, Rector of Merton—plus a pension of £700 per annum.

In 1812, 6,000 out of 10,000 parsons were non-resident. Three or four years prior to the Tolpuddle "troubles" the labourers of England had risen in their rags to demand higher wages. In a leader of December 6th, 1830, the *Times* described these feudal serfs as "industrious, kind-hearted, but broken-hearted beings, exasperated into madness by insufficient food and clothing, by utter want . . ." On December 2nd, 1830, after the risings had been put down, Brougham told the Lords, "Within a few days from the time I am addressing your Lordships, the sword of justice shall be unsheathed to smite, if it is necessary, with a firm and vigorous hand, the rebel against the law".

When the sword of justice had been sheathed, and droves of men and boys sentenced to transportation for life, His Grace of Canterbury lifted up his voice in prayer, addressing the Almighty as follows:—

Restore, O Lord, to Thy people the quiet enjoyment of the many and great blessings which we have received from Thy bounty: defeat and frustrate the malice of wicked and turbulent men, and turn their hearts: have pity, O Lord, on the simple and ignorant, who have been led astray, and recall them to a sense of their duty; and to persons of all ranks and conditions in this country vouchsafe such a measure of Thy grace, that our hearts being filled with true faith and devotion, and cleansed from all evil affections, we may serve Thee with one accord, in duty and loyalty to the King, in obedience to the laws of the land, and in brotherly love towards each other . . .

The Holy Father himself could hardly have equalled this gem of hypocrisy.

It is impossible to write of the mass of the clergy of those days without utter contempt and loathing. Arrogant, haughty, supercilious, spongers, sycophants, lickspittles, toadies, hangers-on, shameless social parasites, contemptuous of social inferiors, and of all who worked with

their hands, servile flatterers of the nobility, worshippers of the rich, despisers of the poor. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum!*

Let us—who have never had it so good—spend a few minutes, in imagination, in the village of Tolpuddle in the year 1834. Let us follow that agricultural labourer, his wife and nine children. They enter what appears to the uninitiated to be a wretched shelter for cattle. It is their home. It is ten feet square, only slightly higher than a man in the centre, and is lit by a solitary window 15 inches square. The ragged roof is of thatch. The entire family of eleven souls sleeps in this one room. In passing, it may be noted that conditions in the neighbouring county of Hampshire are no better. "Their [the labourers'] dwellings are little better than pig-beds, and their looks indicate that their food is not nearly equal to that of a pig". Thus Old Cobbett. Nobody expressed surprise when, in 1830, four labourers were found in a field, dead of starvation.

To return to our labourer: in 1834, if he lives in Tolpuddle, he earns nine shillings per week. The general county rate is 10s. per week. Suddenly, the Tolpuddle farmers reduce wages to 7s. per week, after having promised to raise them to 10s., a promise witnessed, and then denied, by the parish priest. In 1830, according to Surtees, "a groom cost £6 per month and the keep of two horses £16, only £22 in all". Or £264 per annum, whilst the Tolpuddle labourer received £18 4s. a year to keep himself, wife and family.

The leader of the six men of Tolpuddle was George Loveless. Together with his fellows he decided to form a Union, as being the only means left open to them to avoid utter degradation and starvation. Trade Unionism was perfectly legal, but to protect themselves from spies and informers, union members were required to swear an oath of loyalty and secrecy, and this is where they fell down.

George Loveless, James Hammett, James Brine, Thomas Standfield, John Standfield and James Loveless—these are the names of the desperately worried men who formed the first Tolpuddle Union, names which should be emblazoned in letters of gold over the entrance to Transport House.

By means of spies the local magistrates soon became aware of the Tolpuddle Union. However, as Trade Unions had been legal since 1824, the magistrates, many of whom were parsons, were obliged to find other means of breaking up the labourers' struggle for existence. After much tortuous thinking the law officers of the Crown managed to find a minor technical illegality in the secret oath of loyalty the six men of Tolpuddle had sworn. It was still illegal to administer any oath not required by law, though most people had concluded that the Act was obsolete. Secret oaths were sworn by members of upper-class societies, such as Orange Lodges, with impunity: the chief of the Orange Lodges was a Prince of the Blood.

(To be continued)

CORRESPONDENCE

THE BLASPHEMY LAWS

Having read Mr. Ridley's review of *Socialism and Religion* by Archibald Robertson, I purchased a copy and read the essay. On page 29, Mr. Robertson says: "and in our generation [the Blasphemy Acts] have ceased to be used at all".

I do not know whether Mr. Robertson writes this from ignorance of the facts or whether he finds this sanguine observation necessary to support his arguments. Several prosecutions for blasphemy have taken place in England in his generation, resulting in terms of imprisonment or fines, or both. It would occupy too much space to list them here, but J. W. Gott, in 1921, was given a 9-month sentence when already an old, sick man. Only 2 years ago a threat of an action for blasphemy was brought against National Secular Society speakers at Tower Hill, where,

on complaint from a group of Christians, special police, including an inspector, were sent to investigate, showing that action could still be contemplated.

It seems that Mr. Robertson is over-complacent in such matters, especially in view of Sir Leslie Plummer's proposed new bill.

E. PRICE.

W. B. SMITH

I have just finished *The Birth of the Gospel* by Prof. W. B. Smith of the U.S.A. (1850-1934). Though the work was completed about 1927, great difficulties were encountered in finding a publisher until 1957, when it appeared posthumously from the Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 E. 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y. (\$2). When Smith's earlier work *Ecce Deus* (German edition 1911; English 1912), was new off the press, Professor F. Loofs and S. J. Case rated him in the lead of scholarship among the Christ-myth theorists, while Schmiedel of Zurich called him "hard to refute".

Smith, who was neither atheist nor agnostic, but developed his theory in *Der vorchristliche Jesus* (1906) and the two later books "in the interests of true religion", finds in the Gospels a remarkable allegory, and not a chronicle of events. To quote the Editor, Addison Gulick: "We feel that the careful reader . . . will find that Smith's evidence is astonishingly strong for the conclusion that the Gospel narrative took form from the start as an esoteric symbolic propaganda, totally and seriously allegoric".

Whilst I myself am not completely convinced of the non-historicity of Jesus, I would not care to be called upon to refute any aspect of Smith's theory. The work will be of intense interest to both Christians and Atheists, to thinkers of both the historical and non-historical schools, whether or not they accept Smith's final conclusions.

ROGER THOMAS.

CATHOLIC GANGSTERS

With reference to the article "Roman Catholic Delinquency" by Colin McCall in your issue of June 17th, it is, of course, a well-known fact that almost all the leading gangsters of the prohibition era were Roman Catholics, and practising ones at that. Examples were Legs Diamond, Al Capone, Dion O'Banion, Johnny Torriano, Bugs Ahearn, Bugs Moran, Frank O'Donnell, Hymie Weiss, and Roger Tuohy. There is no record of "the One True Church" having either refused their contributions or excommunicated them, which would have quickly happened had one of them attended a Protestant service or publicly questioned R.C. dogma.

Perhaps the astronomical number of R.C. delinquents is due to the fact that "there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents, etc"?

J. M. AHERNE.

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