

The Freethinker

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THE DATE OF THE INAUGURATION of the new Bishop of London, Dr. Robert Stopford (the former Bishop of Peterborough), may well come to represent a red-letter date in the annals of Christianity and in particular of the Established Church of England. For this auspicious occasion was marked by an event to which—as far as my knowledge goes—no historical precedent exists since the days of the Reformation. Upon this occasion when (as is the invariable custom in Anglican Episcopal elections), the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, the Metropolitan Church of London, were both called upon to elect Stopford as the chosen nominee of the Crown, one of the Canons, Canon Collins, rose and solemnly protested, not only at the election of Dr. Stopford as an unsuitable nominee, but at the whole procedure that has been followed in the Church of England ever since its establishment four centuries ago. One may perhaps relevantly add that Canon Collins's protest was timely as well as bold; and historic as well as personal. For it appears to coincide with a growing volume of opinion both inside and outside the established Church, that demands an end to the present arrangement by which Church and State are indissolubly bound together. It is well within the bounds of possibility that the Canon's protest will start an ecclesiastical landslide that will end in a long step forward in the direction of the eventual separation of Church and State.

The Holy Spirit v. Praemunire

The present appointment of the hierarchy of the Established Church is still governed by the medieval *Act of Praemunire* first passed in 1306 under Edward I and subsequently confirmed by his successors. Not all monarchs in the Ages of Faith were utterly subservient to the Church, and Edward Plantagenet, one of the ablest of English kings was, if not heretical, at least markedly anti-clerical in his political outlook and administrative practice. The *Act of Praemunire* was consciously aimed at curbing the virtually totalitarian power of Rome in relation to the English State; and in particular was aimed at preventing foreign (chiefly Italian) ecclesiastics sent over by Rome from virtually monopolising the higher positions in the Church in England. At a later date, Henry VIII, "the mighty Lord who broke the bonds of Rome" (as a Protestant historian has styled this formidable Tudor monarch), utilised the already existing *Act of Praemunire* in order to carry through his variation of the contemporary Reformation which severed England from the jurisdiction of Rome, and in its stead created the Church of England as the ecclesiastical department of the Tudor State. Cardinal Wolsey was prosecuted under *Praemunire* for sacrificing the King's interests to the Papacy, and after the break with Rome had been completed under Elizabeth I, all dignitaries of the Church of England have been appointed by the Crown (i.e. in modern times by the Prime Minister of the day), after a really farcical election by the Dean and Chapter who pray for the guidance of

the Holy Spirit with the royal nomination already in their pockets! Not only this, but should they fail to elect the particular person nominated by the Crown, all the (nominal) electors are liable to the pains of confiscation of their personal property, imprisonment and even execution for High Treason as provided for in the ruthless *Praemunire* legislation of medieval English kings. Every Anglican bishop owes his election nominally to the Holy Spirit, but actually to the Crown—or rather in our modern constitutional monarchy, to the Government of the day.

Canon Collins Protests

Accordingly, Canon Collins made history when he protested against the

traditional method of nominating bishops. He denounced this as "blasphemous", and upon theological grounds, it seems to be difficult to answer such a charge. For after all, why should one necessarily assume that the Third Person of the Trinity *must* (as the present practice always assumes), automatically agree with the choice of every Tory (or Labour) Prime Minister? Canon Collins has already proved himself to be a very courageous man in other (non-ecclesiastical) fields; e.g. he has long been a leading figure in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Once granted his theological perspectives, and one cannot (in my opinion at least) refuse to acknowledge both the courage and logical consistency of this timely protest. Canon Collins could obviously (as he stated frankly) not vote for a Bishop like Dr. Stopford who has publicly stated that he would prefer even a wholesale nuclear war with all its appalling consequences, rather than accept Communist domination. After all, a Christian unilateralist like Collins, can hardly be expected to accept without any kind of protest, the rather startling proposition that the Holy Spirit invariably sees eye to eye with the present nuclear policy of the Tory Government, or that (even more surprisingly) the Third Person of the Christian Trinity who is canonically defined in the Creeds as "The Lord and Giver of Life", is prepared to give his blessing and his unqualified approval to a Bishop who has publicly expressed his willingness to see human life totally obliterated upon this planet rather than the triumph of Communism. I submit that when viewed from his personal standpoint, it is difficult not to sympathise with Canon Collins, both in his theological and political capacities.

The Future of Church and State in England

However, the points raised by Canon Collins in this historic election at St. Paul's, are of much more than personal interest. Do they point towards future changes in the English Church-State relationships that have hitherto subsisted unbroken since the days of Henry Tudor? Is *Praemunire* destined for the legislative scrap heap? More far-reaching still, is the Church of England, "by law Established", on the way out? Will future bishops really allow the Holy Spirit some say in the election of his earthly representatives? Will Mr. Macmillan and his successors as incumbents of 10 Downing Street always have the last

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Mr. Macmillan v. The Holy Spirit

By F. A. RIDLEY

word in episcopal appointments? Is it to be the Holy Spirit or Mr. Macmillan? Be the ultimate answer to these and similar queries what it may, it could well be that under present circumstances Canon Collins has, so to speak, launched the established Church upon the historic highway that leads ultimately to Disestablishment. Is a new era in English Church-State relationships now

due to begin?

[Footnote: The original purpose of *Praemunire* seems to have been to prevent Papal nominees, usually foreigners sent from Rome, from appropriating too large a share of the English Church revenues at a time when the Church was the biggest property owner in England. It was only at the Reformation that this Act was used to bring about a total religious, as well as ecclesiastical breach with Rome.]

Catholic Action: The Pope's Propaganda Machine

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

PART I

THE VATICAN has very few good cards in its hand, but the Pope does possess one really excellent trump-card—his propaganda machine, which is generally known as "Catholic Action". It must be regarded as a sinister menace to Freedom and Democracy. It amounts to the establishment inside every country of little groups of "fifth columnists" who are pledged to promote the papal interests; these fanatics hold themselves in readiness for orders from their clerical superiors, and they blindly obey these orders, irrespective of whether they go against their own powers of reason, whether they are in the national interest or even whether they imperil their own personal safety. If commanded by the Vatican, members of Catholic Action will even go as far as to commit High Treason; Archbishop Stepinac of Yugoslavia provides a concrete example of this enormity.

Background

For centuries, the popes have depended upon the fanaticism of local catspaws in any given country, for the furtherance of their political plans. (Guy Fawkes is the classic case in Britain, and his type has lived in every country—and they exist today, working for their Italian master in every country—Britain included.)

Catholic Action was reorganised in 1923 by Pope Pius XI, the pontiff who enabled Hitler and Mussolini to achieve power. As a concrete example of the terrible effects of this insidious method of sapping and undermining a country, one only has to compare the performances of France and Belgium in the two World Wars. In the Kaiser's war, both countries were uncorrupted by Catholic Action, and they both had creditable records. However, after Pius XI had founded his new propaganda machine in 1923, the Belgian and French fifth-columnists had 17 years in which to train and to prepare themselves. By 1940, they had made such progress that both Belgium and France collapsed like houses of cards when the Catholic Action members came out to assist the Axis powers to the victory which their Holy Father, Pius XII, so earnestly desired.

Roman Catholics are faced with the impossible task of trying to serve two authorities, i.e. the Vatican as well as their native country. For the more devoted Romanists, the Pope's interests take priority. This basic fact explains why Roman Catholics are not ideal citizens, however worthy and well-meaning they may be in other respects.

Organisation

The numbers of Catholic Action members are relatively small—only reliable Papists being enrolled. These enthusiasts are from the laity, and they may be called the lay arm of the Church Militant. Working under orders from the clergy, they prepare themselves for furthering the Papal interests, depending on local conditions. Collecting information about local trends, opinions and prominent personages is one of the tasks of Catholic Action members.

The Bishop of each diocese sends these collections of information to the Vatican Intelligence department which receives every week hundreds of similar parcels from all parts of the world—with the possible exception of Russia and China. They come from places stretching from Tahiti to Timbuktoo; from Persia to Patagonia. The contents of these parcels are then examined by a body of experts who specialise in sifting out the wheat from the chaff. Any valuable items of interest are carefully card-indexed and filed in the appropriate dossier pertaining to the country concerned. Scotland Yard has a similar system of cleverly collected evidence, for use when required. Every five years, each Roman Catholic bishop travels to Rome and gives to the Vatican Intelligence department an account of the position in his diocese.

Thus the Pope has at his disposal an up-to-date picture of the local conditions existing in every part of the world, thanks to the devoted efforts of his Catholic Action workers. Like a giant octopus, the supreme pontiff remains with his head in Rome and his tentacles stretching out to the uttermost parts of the earth where his fanatical servants await any commands which he may care to give them, should an occasion arise.

Abstract Case

Let us suppose, for example, that a general election is impending in Peru where it is, of course, desirable for the Pope that a man favourable to the Vatican should be successful. The cardinals in the Vatican political department merely have to go to the Vatican Intelligence department and inspect the current dossier on Peru and they will find an accurate and up-to-date picture of the local situation. This enables them to instruct the Peruvian fifth columnists how to act.

There may be three candidates for political power. Senors "A", "B" and "C". Candidate "A" may be a docile Roman Catholic, obedient to the bishops, and prepared to give money to the Church and to support Reaction. On the other hand, candidates "B" and "C" may be progressive and intelligent men who prefer to build hospitals and schools rather than monasteries and nunneries—and who are prepared to introduce such innovations as cremation, votes for women, divorce and family limitation where desired. If the Vatican is to survive, such men must be defeated at all costs.

Along the Papal tentacle to Peru will go the Vatican commands to the waiting members of Catholic Action. The clergy will mount their pulpits and brazenly order their congregations to support candidate "A", threatening the usual clerical blackmail about a prospect of hell-fire if the people do not vote as instructed. Quite a number of the simpler Peruvians will obey this arrogant sort of clerical impudence, which is only used among illiterate people—and then not always with success. In 1960 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Porto Rico commanded the people not to re-elect the progressive Popular Democrat Party which did not meet with his approval. (It is

pleasing to know that his orders were flouted—and this provides yet another indication that the Holy Church is losing some of its former influence in the face of modern progressive tendencies.)

As regards candidates "B" and "C", any scandals which can be dug up from Vatican archives will be forwarded to the fifth-columnists to be used in disparagement, and "B" and "C" will find that their meetings and canvassing are hindered by Catholic Action zealots, sometimes with violence.

Thus the Pope has considerable influence in the election result—although very few people realise that the Vatican has had anything whatever to do with the campaign, which illustrates how insidious is the system. In fact, Catholic Action is usually within the Law and is almost foolproof, and it is, therefore, very difficult to combat.

Contemporary Concrete Examples

Belgium, France and Yugoslavia all provide modern instances of the devilish efficiency of Catholic Action in undermining the welfare and happiness of three European countries. During the 1930s, the Papal boll-worms ate their way into the morale of these countries and played the Pope's game by supporting Fascism and Nazism. These "caterpillars of the Commonwealth" (an apt expression from *Richard II*), deliberately betrayed their countries in order to serve the interests of their Holy Fathers, Pius XI and Pius XII, who were two of the most disgraceful politicians of our 20th century.

Belgium

This country has always been in the centre of European wars owing to its strategic position. It follows, therefore, that during the 1930s, the astute Vatican plotters had taken especial note of Belgium, in order to soften up the country prior to the war which Hitler had made inevitable. As the Vatican hoped that Hitler would win, Catholic Action in Belgium was very alert indeed. Instead of working underground—as is usual—the local "caterpillars of the commonwealth" came right out into the open. They called themselves "Rexists" (after "Christus Rex" = "Christ the King"). Under a fanatical Romanist called de Grelle, these right-wing extremists (who were akin to our Mosleyites in their admiration of Hitler) made no secret of their sympathy with the German dictator who threatened their homeland.

Whenever any unfortunate country is invaded, it is an easy matter for a minority of disaffected persons (especially if they have been trained in advance for the purpose) to spread dismay and confusion to the hard pressed majority, often trudging along roads as fugitives in bewilderment. It is easy to arrange traffic jams, to blow up bridges and to spread false rumours—thus increasing the general despondency and the desire to surrender. The weak King Leopold was very much under the influence of the clericals who urged him to capitulate. When Belgium was invaded by Hitler, the Papal Nuncio and the Cardinal primate were extremely active in pestering the Monarch to order surrender: indeed it was the Cardinal (not the King) who, over the radio, announced Belgium's capitulation on May 28th.

France

This important country was betrayed to Hitler by Romanists at the top, i.e. the leading politicians, generals and admirals. No nation, however brave—and the numerous French partisans showed that they were extremely brave—could have withstood the heavy handicap of Roman Catholic politicians such as Flandin, Bonnet, Baudouin and Laval (this devout criminal was a Papal knight!). In 1940 there was no tough old secularist such as Clemenceau to pull the nation together. Also assisting

in sapping morale were the defeatist general, Weygand, and the Anglophobe admiral, Darlan. The worst of this craven collection of Roman Catholics was the contemptible Marshal Petain. During the 1930s, this muddle-headed old man, who was born as long ago as 1856, held considerable influence, and he was Defence Minister in the 1930s. Under his administration, the Maginot Line (upon which millions of pounds had been spent), was not fully completed. The old traitor contrived to get himself appointed Ambassador to the new Franco Government in Madrid in 1939, which was an ideal position for him to contact both Hitler and the Vatican. His actions became so suspicious that even the complacent government in Paris decided to recall him. When in the summer of 1939 he received the news of his recall, he became furiously angry and let out a very significant remark: "They will want me in the second fortnight of next May"—proof enough that he knew all about Hitler's advance plans. Events proved that he was correct, as in May 1940 the Germans poured through the gap in the Maginot Line and the old man became Head of State of the ignoble Vichy Government. Needless to say, he was showered with compliments and honours from the Vatican, and most of the French bishops and clergy joined in praising him.

The surrender of France was a catastrophe for freedom and democracy—and a correspondingly great moment for the Vatican. The Pope's official newspaper came out with these amazing words, (quoted from the *Catholic Herald* of July 12th, 1940): —

The good Marshal seems to personify the best traditions of his race.

He heralds the dawn of a new radiant day—not only for France, but for Europe and the whole world

Under the Vichy rule of the "good Marshal", about 50,000 French patriots were slain, or handed over to the Germans for the gas-chambers and the ovens. This was the Vatican's idea of a "radiant day" for France! After the Allied victory in 1945, the intrigues of Catholic Action were fully revealed. A box was discovered in Vichy, containing a thousand documents signed by Petain, Laval, Weygand and Darlan which all proved the extent of the pro-German policy of Catholic Action and the Vichy government. With Laval and other traitors, Petain was condemned for High Treason, but the death sentence was remitted to life imprisonment owing to his age, 89. He died in disgrace in 1951. Like Guy Fawkes, he had served his Pope rather than his country; and, like Guy Fawkes, he had to pay the penalty.

INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONFERENCE

The Conference of the World Union of Freethinkers, held at Beatrice Webb House, near Dorking, Surrey, last weekend, was unanimously declared a success by the seventy-five people who attended it. A lovely house, set in delightful grounds, in beautiful country, what else could anyone ask, except good speakers and good weather? These, too, were provided.

After the Conference had been opened on Friday by Lady Barbara Wootton, and Mr. F. A. Ridley (for the National Secular Society) and Mr. J. Hutton Hynd (for South Place Ethical Society) had welcomed the visitors, M. Jean Cotereau (France) responded on behalf of overseas Freethinkers. On Saturday and Sunday, Professor Marcel Homès (Brussels), Professor A. Sargant Florence (Birmingham), M. Olivier Lutaud (Sorbonne), Dr. Maurice Burton and Mr. Fenner Brockway MP, enlightened and stimulated their audiences, and interesting discussions ensued.

Mr. A. T. Kovoov, the President of the Rationalist Association of Ceylon gave us a glimpse of the religious situation in his country, and Mr. J. G. Rausch (Netherlands) and Mr. G. A. Kirk (Leicester Secular Society) gave what the latter called the benediction.

Mr. C. Braddlaugh Bonner, President of the World Union of Freethinkers, presided.

This Believing World

Though "taken" from the Old Testament, the text "Love thy neighbour as thyself" is always considered one of "our Lord's" brightest sayings. But in practice things don't work out quite as well as should be expected. For example the Shepherd's Bush Road church is to have as its neighbour a betting shop, and the Rev. O. Sutton is "most unhappy about it", he says. But why? why shouldn't he love a child or animal torturer, a habitual drunkard, a wife beater — or even a betting man — if these people are his neighbours? Didn't Jesus *always* love his neighbours — and, for that matter, tell his followers that they should *hate* their parents? Mr. Sutton should read his Bible.

★

The way the marvellous precepts of Jesus are nearly always flouted these days is astonishing. An animal torturer (no doubt thoroughly indoctrinated by Christianity) plunged a *red-hot poker* into the body of a poor little terrier and killed it. Its owner, Mrs. Farmer, resolutely refused to forgive the "fiend" and obviously would not even provide another dog for the same fate, in direct opposition to Jesus's "Give the other cheek as well". Are there now any Christian animal lovers or anybody else who follow Jesus *literally*?

★

One of the ways in which Spiritualists assert tremendous victories over opponents is by claiming famous "antis" as convinced believers directly they are dead. For instance, the late J. N. Maskelyne, one of the greatest illusionists of the nineteenth century and an uncompromising opponent to all Spiritualistic claims, was immediately hailed as a *secret* Spiritualist after his death was announced. Houdini, who spent the last years of his life in hunting out mediums as arrant swindlers and liars, is now (according to various mediums) doing his best to send messages to his wife admitting that he was completely wrong, and is deliriously happy and alive in Summerland; and there are many other examples.

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And now comes Mr. Hannen Swaffer who in "Psychic News" admits that, while Edgar Wallace was alive, he "attacked me in the *Sunday News*", sneering "at my Spiritualism". Poor Wallace! With Maskelyne and Houdini, he is now in Summerland doing his utmost to let Mr. Swaffer know the truth. "I thank God", he says in "an automatic writing by a woman of small education in South Wales"—a description which gives us the halo of truth—"that he has shown me a way to come back and tell the world that I can find peace by acknowledging I was wrong". So now we know. In this life Edgar Wallace "sneered" at poor Mr. Swaffer's beliefs. In the other life, Edgar is a shining Spiritualist. It's all so true and *verifiable*. Mr. Swaffer tells us so.

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Very high praise comes from the Bishop of Carlisle for ITV's wonderful services to religion. In a page article in *TV Times*, he insists that "the Christian religion is intended to permeate the whole of life and work and recreation"; and Television enormously helps this divine work. The Bishop said in the House of Lords in a recent debate, "The religious programmes shown by the ITV in recent times have been better than those of the BBC". They make "greater impact on viewers". In fact, ITV gives Christians a medium "by which the Christian Church can proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ".

★

The truth is of course that the Christian Church was dying of apathy before our heaven-sent television took it in hand; and with clerical zeal, mixed rock 'n' roll with

parsons who smoked pipes, and told enchanted teenagers that they were going to appear on TV asking questions so long as there wasn't a glimmer of heresy in them. After that, all was plain sailing—TV parsons and bishops pointing out with boring regularity that only in Christ can we be saved; and on the radio, all kinds of church services are now regularly broadcast. As for genuine "heretics"—like Mrs. Knight for example—they are conspicuous for absence these days. No wonder we have a happy Bishop smiling at us in *TV Times*. The Churches have captured the two mediums, radio and TV, so why should he not be happy?

★

Although he has never seen a Flying Saucer himself, the Rev. F. V. Hodge of Kingswood, Surrey, told the *Sunday Express* (August 20th) that he believes in them—and so he should believe without seeing as a good Bible believer. After all, he believes that "our Lord" flew straight up to Heaven after the Resurrection, and Mr. Hodge never saw that powerful expulsion from the earth's atmosphere. But he does want to see and speak with the airmen who fly Flying Saucers even though they come from Mars or Venus. He wants to welcome them, and probably induce them to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. In fact, if a Martian were to come into his garden, he would be offered at once a cup of tea. There's no end to such true Christian hospitality.

The Lighter Side of the Law

IN THE FREETHINKER Notes and News column published on July 14th, we referred to a *Leicester Evening Mail* (29/6/61) report that a 7-year-old boy who appeared before Nuneaton magistrates alleging that he had been bitten on the ankle by a dog, said that he did not know what a Bible was. On Tuesday, August 15th, the *Daily Sketch* reported that "A boy of ten has never heard of God. And he had never seen a Bible until he held one in his hand in court yesterday . . . The boy, from Canvey Island, Essex, said this at Southend county juvenile court yesterday. He alleged that he was bitten by a dog. A case against a 12-year-old boy alleged to have set the dog on him was dismissed".

C. H. Hammersley, Secretary of Leicester Secular Society (who supplied us with the original *Leicester Evening Mail* cutting) wrote to the *Daily Sketch* about the matter and received a cutting headed, "I fibbed about God, says boy, 9", and a letter from the News Manager saying: "As you can see from the enclosed cutting we 'followed-up' the story and learned that David had 'fibbed'. I am sure you appreciate that his earlier statement was made in the County Juvenile Court and was reported in the normal way". The moral would seem to be that little boys, like newspapers, can be unreliable.

A legal misunderstanding of rather a different sort was recounted in the *Nottingham Evening Post* recently. A wife and a co-respondent who had formerly admitted committing adultery later denied it, claiming that "because of their misunderstanding of the word they considered they had not committed adultery"—though they had lived together for two and a half years. Summing-up, the judge said: "I don't believe this story. I am perfectly satisfied that a case of adultery has been established". The couple were both Jehovah's Witnesses.

—NEXT WEEK—

SIR JULIAN HUXLEY AND RELIGION

By COLIN McCALL

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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

Notes and News

FOLLOWING OUR PRINTING of Dr. J. V. Duhig's translation of the final chapter of the late Professor Prosper Alfaric's *Origines Sociales du Christianisme* in March of this year, we received many requests for a reprint of the four parts in pamphlet form. We are pleased to say that this is now available from the Pioneer Press for 6d., plus postage 2d. The title is, *From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church*.

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THE ANNUAL REUNION of South Place Ethical Society will take place on Sunday, September 24th in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, and the Guest of Honour will be Mr. A. Fenner Brockway, M.P. The informal meeting of members and friends will be at 3 p.m., followed at 3.30 by speeches and music. Tea will be served at 5 p.m. Readers who would like to attend should write to Miss E. Palmer, Executive Secretary of the SPES at Conway Hall for an invitation card.

★

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY, about which F. A. Ridley wrote in our September 1st issue, begins its Winter session this year with a concert on Sunday, October 1st in the Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate, Leicester. Among the speakers on subsequent Sundays are two journalists, a barrister, a psychologist, and the President and Secretary of the National Secular Society. Two film programmes are also planned.

★

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY member Mrs. Kathleen Tacchi-Morris is, as the *Somerset County Gazette* said (19/8/61), an "indefatigable world traveller in the cause of peace", and she has lately been to East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russia, hoping "to see if

something could be arranged for more co-operation between our women and theirs". A conference of women is indeed to be held in Budapest in October, taking as its theme, "The responsibility of women towards modern society, and the responsibility of society towards women", and Mrs. Tacchi-Morris hopes to attend.

★

CRIS OF "Shame!", "Shocking!", and "May the Lord forgive you!" greeted the Rev. John Beall when he spoke at a public meeting in Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, in favour of the Sunday opening of cinemas (*Burnley Evening Telegraph*, 25/8/61). "Let us get off our moral high horse", he said. "I have never been to, and I never intend to go to, a cinema on a Sunday, but I don't think we have the right to tell other people whether they can go or not". 85 of his 100 listeners, "mainly women from the Methodist and Baptist Churches in the town" disagreed with him, and defeated the motion to apply to Whitehall to allow Sunday opening. "I knew I would be talking in vain", Mr. Beall said afterwards, because the hall had been packed with church and chapel goers.

★

"FEW STUDENTS of the supernatural could rival Mr. T. C. Lethbridge in their encounters with ghosts and ghouls", said Kenneth A. R. Kennedy, reviewing Mr. Lethbridge's book, *Ghost and Ghoul* (Routledge and Kegan Paul 18s.) in the *New Scientist* (13/7/61). Indeed, Mr. Kennedy went on, "the frequency and nature of his 'parapsychological' experiences would have driven a lesser spirit beyond the grave in half the time that it will take the reader to peruse the 150 or so pages of this personal document". The book's "attempt to secure our sympathies as scientists" concluded the reviewer, "can evoke at best a tolerant yawn".

★

THE AUGUST issue of *Films and Filming* reported from Italy that two films produced by Dino De Laurentiis, *Barabbas* and *Sodom and Gomorrah* are vying for "the title of the 'Colossal of 1961'", and confirmed De Laurentiis's intention to "stop his regular production at the end of this year and concentrate all his energies on the realisation of a twenty-five million dollar film, a ten-hour version (in three parts) of the Bible; yes the whole of the Bible". The English poet and playwright, Christopher Fry, will "inevitably" be in charge of the literary side of the project, we were told.

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THE SEPTEMBER *Films and Filming* contained a review of *Whistle Down the Wind*, a story of some small children who find an escaped murderer and take his expletive, "Jesus Christ", literally. They believe him to be Christ. "However the clerics may twist in their arguments to justify this [film] as a restatement of 'the love of God', the total effect of *Whistle Down the Wind* is a restatement of the essential goodness in Man in spite of (and not because of) the trappings that Christianity—and for that matter any other organised religious body—has imposed on it to exploit for Church, or State, or other gain", said the reviewer. And, "By destroying, on the one hand, the Christian dogma, *Whistle Down the Wind* establishes in its place a philosophy of humanism". We haven't seen this film yet, but we can well believe that, "With religion in any guise other than Bing Crosby ringing the St. Mary's bells a taboo subject for non-Communist Cinema", it "is a veritable hurricane". It is produced by Beaver Films (Bryan Forbes and Richard Attenborough) and the screenplay by that talented pair, Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall, is from a novel by Mary Hayley Bell.

Motorcycling and Religion

By R. D. MARRIOTT

AT FIRST SIGHT it may appear that the two subjects are not in any way connected. The link is, of course, money. It appears to be the practice of many motorcycle clubs to make regular donations to their local church. Usually this is done very quietly, almost, one might say, surreptitiously.

My own club, the Worcester Auto Club, recently donated the sum of ten pounds to a local church and, a most unusual thing this, pinned to the club board the letter of acknowledgment from the church. This caused me to make a few inquiries, and I discovered that these donations are a regular occurrence, although the amounts donated vary, being on one notable occasion as high as forty pounds.

I wrote a letter of protest about this latest donation to the Editor of the Club Magazine. The Chairman of the Club replied, defending the gift on the grounds that the club had held a scramble in a field within the parish of the church concerned (Martley, Worcestershire) and the Vicar had raised no objection other than a protest at the noise of vehicles leaving the course at the end of the meeting (about 6 p.m. on a Sunday evening). The Editor refused to publish the correspondence in the magazine on the grounds that the local press, who always receive a complimentary copy, would misrepresent the matter in their paper, to the detriment of the club. I understand now that there is a proposal that the club should run a social event of some sort in Martley Parish Hall, the proceeds to go to the Church.

One might well wonder what the Churches do for motorcycling in return for all this cash. As far as I can ascertain, there is no record of their having done anything at all. On the contrary, certain Christian bodies, such as the LDOS, are actively opposed to any form of motorcycling on Sundays. Perhaps the worst recorded case of religious interference was in August 1955, when, following a complaint by a member of the LDOS, six officials of the North-Western Centre ACU were prosecuted for holding a motorcycle scramble on a Sunday at Cuerdon Park in Lancashire, or, in the words of the summonses "using the park for public entertainment on the Lord's Day".

In their defence the club officials pointed out that, over the past five years, about 180 clubs had organised similar events on a Sunday, and that in 60 of these the Police had provided facilities inside the course, receiving payment in 30 of them! However, the six men were convicted and fined a total of £290. Some six months later, in the Queen's Bench Divisional Court, their appeal was dismissed and they were ordered to pay the costs. It seemed that the presence of a few motorcycles had turned Cuerdon Park into a "disorderly house" and, if their lordships did not uphold the Leyland Magistrates' conviction, it would follow that "every racecourse in England could be opened for racing on Sundays". Incidentally, when the nature of a scramble was explained to the court, the then Lord Chief Justice, Lord Goddard, is reported to have remarked "A nice noisy thing on a Sunday afternoon". Not exactly a comment to inspire confidence in the impartiality of the Lord Chief Justice of England!

So the position remains that a club wishing to hold any kind of sporting event on a Sunday is expected to bribe the local church. I feel sure that readers of THE FREETHINKER will agree that the Churches who accept

this money are in a very dubious moral position. If they have some objection to motorcycle sport on a Sunday they are entitled to their opinion. But it seems that they are quite prepared to forget their objections in return for cash payment, the price of conscience in the case of Martley Church being ten pounds. So much for Christian principles.

Another aspect of the matter that strikes me rather forcibly is that a motorcycle club consisting mainly of working-class youngsters should, in order that the youths may enjoy themselves on their only full day off work, have to donate to an organisation which, on its own admission has assets totalling over two-hundred and fifty-three million pounds. And in return the motorcyclists are *tolerated* — provided they don't make too much noise. How much do the Churches pay *us* for tolerating them and their infernal bell-ringing on a peaceful Sunday morning?

Surely, it would be far better if these young folk were encouraged to partake in a healthy open-air sport that harms no one, rather than to hang around coffee bars and ride, with more noise than skill, up and down the local High Street getting the whole motorcycle movement a bad name in the sensation-mongering press. If they can't go scrambling on a Sunday, they certainly won't go to church, so what do the Churches hope to gain by their attitude—other than money?

Roman Catholicism in Australia

By T. HUNTER

I HAVE NOT READ Mr. Tom Truman's book, reviewed by Mr. F. A. Ridley in your issue of June 23rd, but from comments I have read by competent critics, the author's assessment of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia is substantially correct.

Rationalists are fond of declaring that the Roman Catholic Church is losing ground in many countries, but this certainly does not apply to Australia. Long observation merely confirms the astonishing growth and prosperity of that Church. Its large and imposing churches are in strong contrast to the pitifully small wood and tin tabernacles dotted over the suburban landscape, sorry tribute to the finely divided state of Protestantism.

Recently an anti-Catholic paper quoted a priest as saying that motoring on the outskirts of Sydney one could almost imagine himself in a Catholic country. Certainly churches, schools, convents, monasteries, orphanages, hospitals and other institutes testify to the growth and prosperity of the One True Church, and the Roman Catholic clergy are looking forward confidently to the day when Catholics will be in the majority, and that before the present century is out.

The proportion of Australian Catholics may not be a quarter of the total population, but their influence is far greater than their numbers would indicate. The extent to which the Roman Catholic element has penetrated into the administration of this country has to be experienced to be believed. They bulk large in every Government department, in every activity, and everywhere where there is a secure, well-paid job. Control of the Trade Unions is largely in their hands, and although the mass of the electors is non-Catholic, the number of Roman Catholics in leading positions in several Parliaments is simply

astounding. A list of the names of New South Wales Cabinet Ministers would make one wonder whether one was in Dublin rather than Sydney.

The British policy of transporting rebellious or criminal Irish to Australia started something. Many of the ex-convicts later became large graziers and landowners, and the landscape is dotted with Irish names. They are also prominent in the legal world, as solicitors, barristers and judges. They figure prominently in Australian literature, and of recent years almost every successful novelist has been of Irish extraction. Indeed, the whole Australian atmosphere smacks of a strong Irish flavour.

Dr. J. V. Duhig has said that the pretensions of the Roman Catholic hierarchy are largely bluff. That is perfectly true, but unfortunately there is no one with the temerity to challenge it. The fact is that the Roman Catholic hierarchy has the non-Catholic community well and truly bluffed—and cowed as well. The mildest adverse criticism at once raises a howl of sectarianism, and Australians shrink from the charge as they would from poison. The insistent propaganda for toleration, and the growing spirit of humanitarianism has been so successful that today we seem prepared to tolerate anything, even intolerance. The Roman Catholic clergy have gained acceptance of the claim that their Church is particularly holy, a sort of spiritual sacred cow, to criticise which is extremely bad taste.

Some time ago the Australian Federal Government handed out a cool million (Australian) to a Catholic hospital for a building programme, and now the New South Wales Government is paying the cost of converting a large mansion with grounds into an annexe of the same hospital, the mansion itself being a gift from a rich non-Catholic. We have a Prime Minister, himself a Presbyterian, who goes round extolling the virtues of denominational schools. Such is the situation that politicians, service chiefs, public men and the whole tribe of officialdom find it expedient to pay lip service to religion.

One could enlarge indefinitely upon the extraordinary performance of the Irish Catholic element in Australia, which would make a fascinating study for a competent writer. So favourable to Catholicism is the intellectual climate that the Roman Catholic Church marches forward to sure victory practically unopposed.

Points from New Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

SIR FRANCIS ROSE was born with a whole set of golden spoons, knives, forks and soup ladles in his mouth. His first home, in 1909, was one of the great country houses where the doctor still had to keep his place and come in by the back door. Now the fourth baronet tells us in his autobiography, *Saying Life* (Cassell, 42s.), about the fabulous world he lived in before the second world war. His jewelled butterfly wings took him from Germany to the Far East and then back to playgrounds in the South of France where a man who lost £30,000 on the tables considered that he had indulged in a very modest evening's entertainment.

It is amusing to note how worldly clerics turn up in this glittering bird-of-paradise pageant. For instance in pre-war Paris there was the Abbé Meunier, that "great priest" with "society wisdom". "The poor have so many priests to look after them, but the rich have so few", was one of his favourite sayings. This cleric was "as witty and *méchant* in the confessional as in the drawing-room"; and "to the dreary boxes in a church". He would tell his

penitent to confess seated and in the form of conversation. "Now, my son", he would say, "is it to be a Louis XVI bergère, or is it to be a mahogany chair by Jacob; I have forgotten which is the fashion".

Sir Francis Rose writes: "I remember him saying in a bored voice when I started my confession in the formal way on the first occasion that he heard it, 'My son, do not talk to me about mortal sins. I know you have learnt your Catechism, but tell me quickly how many sins of stupidity you have committed or perhaps acts of brilliant wickedness?'"

Then there was the head of the American Seminary in Paris. "Monsignor Hemmick, who loved driving around Paris in an open car, had an *Hotel particulier* on the Ile St. Louis, where, in a private chapel, Anton Dolin and other artists often served Mass. This American ecclesiastic was a man of social intelligence who, later, when he was head of the American College in Rome, married Tyrone Power and Anabella with the due pomp of the Church and of film stars.

I think I can imagine something of Monsignor Hemmick's happy days and of the spectacle in Rome. At least Sir Francis Rose has a story to help me picture the prodigious performance of a great Catholic wedding, for he was an eye-witness of the marriage of the Princess Mafalda of Italy and the Prince of Hesse in the gingerbread cathedral of Milan. "I recall that in that vast tunnel of gloom, starred with a thousand candles, moved the voluminous robes of the prelates and clergy followed by the almost automatic silhouettes of half the Royalties of Europe, solemnly taking their places at the heraldic *prie-Dieus*". In the middle of the Mass, the officiating Cardinal dived into his robes to produce his snuff-box. "From force of habit he calmly took a pinch and returned the box to its hiding-place before continuing with the ceremony".

I was reminded, when I read about this episode, of an incident in the Spanish landscape from a recent novel called *Varieties Of Love*, by Herbert Kulby (Gollancz, 16s.):

"I met a funeral, a hearse and wagons of followers pulled by donkeys and everyone screaming, as they do. You know how upsetting something like that can be . . .

"The hearse stopped in front of me and parked right in the middle of the road and the undertaker got out and . . . Darlings, I was frozen."

"What happened?" asked Bobby.

"He pee-ed right on the hearse!"

"Darling what can you expect?" said Illex compassionately. "If they had donkeys it was obviously a peasant funeral."

But to return to Sir Francis Rose, as I'm sure everyone will want to read about this lost world of glamour. I would like to add, and to underline, that it is instructive for the freethinker to note how the author's Catholic faith, to which he makes many references, did not prevent him from becoming a close personal friend of Goering and Röhm, and of admiring Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. In spite of all the glitter, then, it's all really rather depressing — for those who believe in the ennobling grace of religion!

CORRESPONDENCE

KANT

Kant's Categorical Imperative adds little to Aristotle's theory of Substance, Quantity, Relation, Place, Time, Posture, Possession, Action, Passion, etc., and the quotation given by Dr. H. George Farmer from Schiller, that "Men in the main, only do their duty, when they do it with aversion", is near the mark. Metaphysical philosophy, unlike materialistic philosophy, is full of poverty.

Kant lived in a period when almost all men believed in the false theory of "Special Creation", and man was entirely separate

from animal life, and they would have been horrified at the truth that man is an animal that has slowly evolved through millions of years.

The sciences have advanced at a terrific rate since Kant's time, and his metaphysical theories have been exploded by science.

"Men", said Herbert Spencer, "Do not act as they think, they act (in the main) as they feel". Few men do their duty as their intellect dictates, for they are always in fear that if they expressed their thoughts, they would be, materialistically (in another sense) ruined.

Kant contributed much to human knowledge, but added nothing to morals or ethics, for all that can be said for these were said thousands of years ago. And when Charles Darwin produced his epoch making works, *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, he destroyed for ever, all the religions and philosophies of man's creation, and placed him in his proper category as, "a mammal of the order of primates".

Kant's greatest contribution to universal knowledge, was his work on *The Theory of the Evolution of the Solar System*. This had a tremendous effect upon the oldest and most advanced of the sciences, astronomy, and Kant's material conception of the Universe, surpasses all his philosophical and subjective theories on Ethics and Morality. But we must remember, that he lived before Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. PAUL VARNEY.

EIRE

Might I, as an ex-Roman Catholic, offer Eire as an example to those who think Rome will ever agree to "live and let live"?

There, the Roman Catholics talked so much of tolerance and liberty that they deluded even British Liberals. Today Eire is a Vatican colony; divorce and birth-control are illegal, censorship and priestly control of the state a commonplace. The position of the dwindling minority of Protestants is more precarious than many realise, for one Catholic Action group (Mario Duce) works openly, and others less overtly to abolish what is left of religious freedom, so that "Christ's Church" may not be insulted by being placed on an equality with "heretical sects". Will we ever learn? FRANCIS SOATER.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I was born in Yugoslavia, and before the last war I had the opportunity to observe priests of the religious sect "X" blessing bombs, bombers, and their crews at Zemun, an airport near Belgrade, where these combat units were preparing for their imminent conflict with the Axis forces. At the same time in Italy, the clergy of the same religious sect were also blessing bombs, airplanes, aeroplane crews, and troops. A few months later the two armies clashed. In that conflict, as in any other, lives were lost. This was an act of God, as every priest will say. In short, there was no condemnation for this conflict by the sect "X". So if I had been a bomber pilot and killed people I would not have been considered a sinner. If I, as a married man, find an attractive woman and commit adultery, I will be condemned by my Church. If I were a flier, and my plane would carry an H-Bomb, I would be blessed by my Church, although I can, under certain circumstances, extinguish the lives of a million people. My Church would not condemn me, because killing a million people is not a sin; but adultery is. All this caused me great concern. If I remained a Christian I could be blessed by my Church and decorated by my government for such actions as described. Freethought started entering my life about ten years ago. I disapprove of taking lives in any fashion, and now I have become a convinced freethinker. Am I all that bad? While I am on this subject, I wonder what the findings would be if this religious sect were investigated by the house of un-American activities.

"One who cannot see the Christian way".
(Sacramento, U.S.A.)

MEMBER'S DOUBT

I received the annual report of the National Secular Society recently and reading it brought to mind a question which has bothered me many times since I became a member of the NSS several years ago. The question is this: Are *all* the aims and objects of the NSS really compatible with the accepted meaning of the word "secular"? Broadly speaking I suppose the answer is yes, but is it wise to pursue objects on so wide a front?

I feel strongly about the reactionary part played by the Church in modern society and I joined the NSS because it is essentially an anti-religious body. Its other aims, such as resolution of the colour question and the abolition of fox-hunting and capital punishment, do not move me particularly and therefore I see no reason to be unfriendly with a fox-hunting atheist, an agnostic who is all for vivisection or an unbeliever who is also a lover of the monarchy. I am in agreement with them in denying or doubting the existence of God, but, whilst not necessarily approving their other activities, I must accord them the right to hold their own opinions in these matters.

There are no doubt, many readers who are with the NSS in all its aims and objects, but there are bound to be a lot of people who are dissuaded from joining because of the interpretation of the aims by the Society or because they hold contrary opinions regarding these aims. The obvious outcome of such a situation is that the strength of the movement is dissipated. I wonder if there are many readers who will agree with me that, with the approach of the centenary of the NSS, the time has come for a review of its aims and objects.

My reading of the annual report and accompanying literature leads me to the conclusion that the NSS is dabbling more and more with humanist activities instead of concentrating its attack on the Church's attempts to restrict freedom of thought and expression. In fact the Society has now lined itself up with a movement which is basically religious, has political undercurrents and is mainly supported by cranks and weirdies. Regarding this movement I hold strong opinions—almost as strong as my feelings on religious matters—and thus I find myself in the same situation as the fox-hunting atheist. How shall I offer my allegiance?

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament stems from fear. It is the envisaged scale of devastation which produces its supporters, not the NSS principle of "advancing universal peace". With nuclear warfare they believe all will perish; with conventional weapons the majority of the population will survive and so they will stand a chance. When the campaign becomes one for universal disarmament (not unilateral) I shall regard them less as hypocrites.

In the meantime, as support for these people now appears to be NSS policy, I can only wish the NSS members good luck on their Aldermaston march next Easter and hope they do not get themselves turned into Christians by Dr. Soper and his crowd. D. KENNEDY.

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