

The Freethinker

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LATELY A TEENAGER who had left a Malayan Convent School, gave a most distressing account of the life of the orphans there. From my own personal experience I know of some three hundred orphans who were herded in a building only adequate for about thirty persons. The food was close to starvation level. Clothes were few, and poor in material and style. The education received was up to the Elementary in English and the Vernacular, in the Charity School. No amusements and pleasures were permitted, but there was an endless round of prayers and devotions. The orphans were made to live a communal life, being rounded up from place to place like cattle. Despite all this religion in their lives, the nuns were singularly unapproachable, and had no affection for the children, who in turn took little interest in each other, all solitary little units, just existing, disheartened and dispirited. The only contacts with the outside world were those "crocodile" walks, under strict supervision, taken at the weekend; all others were forbidden.

Marriages Arranged

In the East an orphan girl did not gain her freedom, or even take employment when she came of age. She had only two alternatives, to become a nun or to get married, and the latter course was by no means easy. A Roman Catholic man who wanted a wife, could apply and make his selection from a number of girls who were about 20 years old. The Sister would bring forward a likely candidate (who was probably anxious to get to the world outside) and they would mutually regard each other. After a few minutes they would be asked if they wished to marry; if they agreed the marriage was arranged forthwith. If they did not fancy each other, more girls would be brought forward, so that the man could make his choice.

In these Institutions the "class" element was not altogether lacking, and orphan girls admitted from middle class homes were accepted as second class boarders. In the Convent where I was (which for personal reasons I cannot disclose), there were about ten of these girls. About three of them who had taken the fancy of the Lady Superior, were placed as first class boarders, and they were all fair skinned. The mode of life for the second class differed little from the orphans, although they did get slightly better food and clothes superior in style and texture; also the accommodation was less congested. The first class boarders were fair skinned, and usually came from wealthy families. They received moderately good food, and were treated with more consideration. There were about ten of them. It should be noted that the orphans, first and second class boarders, and the nuns, all lived separate lives and never mixed.

The nuns were able to secure for themselves good European food, also good rice and curry. It was almost the same for the first class boarders. But the poor orphans, and the second class boarders, were not so

fortunate. They were the underdogs, and they had it hard! Even in cases of anaemia there was no variation. Orphans or boarders, if they were to survive, needed better diet. Would they be given it? No! Rules were made not to be broken. Such unfortunates must escape, or it meant a slow and painful death. The invariable cure for sickness was medicine, but not food. The attitude of the nuns was at all times rigid and unbending. "Rules cannot be

broken." What did it matter if the victims died, they would all go to Heaven!

Good cheap food was served in the Canteen, but it was only available for the day scholars. With these, the boarders were never allowed to mix, not even

during the recreation periods. Newspapers and magazines were unknown.

"Good for Them"

The main task was, at all times, to concentrate one's mind on religion: to pray for the unconverted without ceasing, and to pray that those who were converted would have a desire to become nuns. Hygiene was almost absent, for sixty to a hundred boarders shared one large bathroom. Those who bathed wore bathing costumes, and threw buckets of water from a huge tank, over their bodies, after having washed their clothes on the ground. The whole sixty to a hundred girls bathed together. At all other times the nun in charge kept the door securely locked. And grown-up girls were forced to strip nude and wash in front of each other; there was no privacy whatsoever. This was an incredible practice inspiring the horror with which the nuns viewed the disclosure of the body: even to show the elbows was immodest and indecent, and often patches were sewn on short sleeves. However, everything was nicely explained away with, "We keep them strict. We know it is good for them".

In their profession the nuns take hard and difficult vows, which they seem to practise more on their charges than on themselves. The headquarters of the Roman Catholic boarding schools and orphanages are mainly in France, and that is why so many French nuns are found in them. A nun of many years' service will be elected the Lady Superior. Then she has almost absolute power, although she may know little of other organisations or methods. Her mind has grown in a groove. To such people tradition is infallible and can never alter.

Charity Schools

Segregated charity schools of a low standard for orphans are another evil. Charity schools should be abolished, and the orphans should attend the same schools as other children.

As a rule, hostels or homes for boarders and orphans should not be in the same ground as the school, as this can easily decline into a form of prison life. There should be a good seven to ten minutes' free and happy walk to and from school which would encourage contacts and life similar to day scholars. The residence for boarders and orphans should be integrated with the residence of other

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

A Malayan Convent School

— By M. M. USHA —

citizens and not stand apart with high, prison-like walls.

It is regrettable to state than in the main, orphanages run by religious men or women, Catholic or Protestant, tend to be harsh and oppressive, with an unduly strong emphasis on religion, and most of the good things of life cut off from the children. There is one notable exception in the case of Father Flanagan's Boys' Town in the USA, where a modern and realistic outlook prevails.

One bright spot in the East is the work of Protestant lay-parsons in orphanages, with a more enlightened outlook untrammelled by tradition. They are really doing a fine work. And a happy spirit of comradeship and true democracy can be found in the American institutions—always so progressive—and conducted on entirely different lines.

No conventual training is needed for those who take charge of children. They should acquire a knowledge of true citizenship, sports, religion, agriculture, dietetics, dressmaking and cookery, and maybe add literature and music. In the East it is necessary to know something about local cookery. If the children are cosmopolitan, a knowledge of Eurasian cookery is essential.

It is both unjust and unwise to leave young children in the care of those in Religious Orders, whose outlook on life is too rigid and unbending. Yet, if changes are to be made, it must come from people, Parliament and

Government, who have been too long silent and uninterested. Children should not be committed to these prison-like places, in this democratic age. For they have committed no crime to be so punished.

My own unhappy experiences in Malaya force me to call attention again to these scandals, for such they are, without a doubt. For the same reason I wrote my book, *The State Within The State**, and outlined therein what I consider to be the best solution to the problem.

In Democracy, freedom and rights must be enjoyed not only by adults but also by children. But it seems clear that within this much talked Democracy there has grown up the hard crust of Autocracy where institutional life is concerned. This, with an iron hand, heedlessly inflicts untold miseries on those who are unfortunate enough to come in its care.

Let us aim at a Society to protect the rights of those in institutions—especially children in orphanages and boarding schools—so that they may be free to enjoy the good things of life that Democracy stands for.

*Published by Writers' Guild, Blackfriars Press, Ladybellgate Street, Gloucester.

For further reading, see the book, *Till the Day I Die* by Robert Markell as told by Frank Cenizio. This is the story of misery of a boy brought up in a Roman Catholic orphanage in New York. The book was published in 1958 by Secker and Warburg Ltd., London.

The Drift from Catholicism

By GREGORY S. SMELTERS

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY is genuinely so scared at the statistics of decay and apostasy that the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Lercaro, addressing the Congress of Sociologists of Religion in Milan, April 1954, warned the participants not to divulge them. The statistics might be, he said, not only exploited by the opponents of Romanism, but they would plunge into despair even the Roman Catholics themselves! (Professor G. Le Bras in his Preface to the *Acts of the 4th International Congress of Sociology of Religion*, Paris, 1955, p. 267).

The following items will give an idea of the reasons for the carefully hushed up Papist scare at the developing situation of abandonment of Romanism in Italy itself. Cardinal Tisserant, the most prominent Vatican boss, had to admit an increasing indifference towards the Church among Italian youth and demanded from priests new tactics for regaining the lost (in his report to XI meeting of Catholic youth. *Osservatore Romano*, August 28th, 1957).

According to *Il Ponte*, June 1955, p. 949, a Florence magazine, only 40 per cent of the villagers in the provinces of Po Valley attend Sunday mass, and only 20 per cent take part in the sacraments. In the larger cities such as Milan, Turin, Genoa, Bologna, Venice, only 10 per cent take part in Church activities occasionally. In other centres of Italy where a search of Romanist participation was made, only about 20 per cent take active part in Church life. For many Italians, as *Il Ponte* points out, "the religious duties are limited to baptism, marriage and burial". The article suggests that only slightly more than 25 per cent of Italians are believing Romanists and follow their priests, whereas the remaining 75 per cent are indifferent to the Roman Catholic Church.

In Rome itself, in 1952, only 10 per cent of men and youths took the Easter sacraments. Only 25-30 per cent of Romans regularly go to church on Sundays, as Bernard Wall reveals in his *Report on the Vatican* (London, 1955, p. 165).

As the Italian elections, largely favouring the Leftist parties have demonstrated, this drift away from Romanism is mainly among the working class. The French sociologist, F. Boulard, reports of his research in the diocese of Mantua in 1948 that only 20 to 24 per cent of industrial workers and pick-and-shovel labourers attend church on Sundays. (*Premiers itinéraires en sociologie religieuse*. Paris, 1954, pp. 56-58).

The same drift away from the Popish Church is revealed in France. At an assembly of French cardinals, archbishops and bishops in April, 1957, it was disclosed that in hundreds of country cantons and in industrial suburbs apostasy has become the rule. The data, given at this assembly, showed that only 15 to 30 per cent of city dwellers go to church and take sacraments. (*Le Monde*. May 3rd, 1957, p. 5).

Professor Le Bras reports on the Papist loyalty in a French agricultural community of 600 inhabitants and in a neighbouring (some kilometres away) industrial settlement of 3,500 people. In the village all inhabitants kept their Romanists observances and went to church. But in the industrial township not more than 100 people went to church, and of these only 6 or 7 were men. This situation, says Le Bras, is characteristic also for Belgian communities along the French border. (*Etudes de sociologie religieuse*. Vol. I. Paris, 1955, p. 15).

This last information also throws ominous light on the wily Papist "ghetto" tactics in Australia, trying to corral the Italian migrants into closed agricultural communities where the priests easily re-affirm their domination, lost on the Italian soil, thus isolating their victims from the surrounding Protestant civilisation and preventing an eventual liberation of conscience.

That is also the real reason why a Roman Catholic sociologist in Canberra University (a Polish migrant) strongly championed recently such a Papist view.

[Reprinted from *The Rock*, Australia, by special permission of the author.]

Toleration—and Its Limits

By P. G. ROY

A WELL-KNOWN American Humanist wrote me in the course of a postal discussion that he was convinced

... that articles that attack or discuss Christianity and/or the institutions of the Church do not interest our readers. Members of the American Humanist Association have long since detached themselves from the dogmas and creeds that the Churches represent, so that any discussion is outdated for them. We make every effort to provide ethical, moral and, perhaps, spiritual values for the "unchurched"—of whom there are at least 100,000,000 in this country... We are unconcerned at the persistence of the various religious faiths and beliefs, whether Christian or unchristian, because we feel that in reality they have so little hold on American public opinion that they are no longer a real problem. Decisions on social, economic, political and ethical problems are now almost universally made without any real reference to the deity. Consequently, protests against the Churches and religion are futile and outmoded.

Much as I wished we had already reached that stage, I doubt that we really can afford that condescending attitude of aristocratic aloofness. We have to differentiate between two manifestations of religion:— (a) The faith proper, *i.e.* the ideas and conceptions propagated within a religious community, pertaining to the relations of the individual to the deity, and (b) the relations between this religious body and society at large, issuing from the authoritarian claims of the Church in question as the only arbiter on questions of ethics, moral principles and rules of conduct.

Whilst (a) concerns the individual and therefore is a purely private matter, (b) must be open to challenge and the unrestricted scrutiny of modern society. In my reply I said that, "I myself have no patience with people who still waste their time arguing with believing individuals. Beliefs are least of all the result of rational thinking, they are a necessity for a particular individual who cannot help but adopt this attitude to his environment, therefore they can never be influenced by reason". However, whilst the rank and file religionist still may be "subverted", one day, by a great experience in practical life (*i.e.* some real, material happening), this does not go for the fanatic and the professional. There are people who really hold an opinion; they "possess" an idea and can freely use it; others, however, are *possessed* by it (in general, religion plays an important role in lunacy) and no sane person would argue with them. Nor with priests, of course.

Vested interests will always be particularly "touchy". Despite their dwindling numbers and decreasing influence, the activists of organised religion (in particular of the *Ecclesia Militans*) are readily up in arms whenever their "ideals" are challenged or their prerogatives endangered. Therefore they arrogate the time-hallowed right to censure what the public at large may be allowed to see, hear or read. Democracy applies to democrats only; the same goes for toleration.

The word "toleration" in its legal, ecclesiastical and doctrinal application has a peculiarly limited significance. It connotes a refraining from prohibition and persecution. Nevertheless it suggests a latent disapproval and it usually refers to a condition in which the liberty which it permits is both limited and conditional. Toleration is not equivalent to religious liberty, and it falls far short of religious equality... It should not surprise us that greater intolerance has been found in Christian nations than among any other peoples... Christianity... as well as the Judaism on which it is based, is necessarily intellectually intolerant... They... claim to be universal religions and they are essentially aggressive (*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*).

The question then boils down to this: May I remain tolerant to aggression, or isn't this in itself immoral? I

couldn't do better but quote from that excellent and up-to-date textbook, *Society (An Introductory Analysis)* by R. M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, that our great religions of the West have

... often been associated with tribal and national aspirations, with intolerance of one another, at times with bloody conflict. Perhaps we have much to learn... from the more flexible and more inclusive "religious philosophies" of the East...

The more conservative religions have resisted the fresh moral insights and the social applications derived from advancing science. They have opposed, for instance, the quest for truth concerning human origins, the first employment of anaesthetics for the alleviation of pain, the admission of divorce... and the practice of birth control... National campaigns against venereal diseases were opposed... The conservatism of religion has a large and well-known record. Can I stand aloof and permit that, in the name of archaic superstitions, poor families are still being encouraged to bring into this world more and more starvelings unable to live a full life and knocking as unwanted immigrants on the door of countries with a higher standard of life (and family planning)? Can I tolerate, in Jewish communities, the existing discrimination against women who have to sacrifice their hair when married and can be divorced, ritually, at a whim of their master? It is true, heretics are no longer burnt alive; but they are being gagged, their ideas must not be made public other than in some doctored form (*cf.* sham discussions on the BBC). Must we tolerate this discrimination? To quote again our American authors, there exist social restrictions, an almost

impersonal control exercised through institutions. The social structure rests on social heritage. It has been built through many generations. Its institutions express the prejudice and superstitions as well as the intelligence of their countless builders... Some of its institutions may be harmful survivals, repressive of the individuality of their present members. Conventions and mores, especially of the prohibitive type, may derive authority from the mere fact of long establishment. They are apt to grow sacrosanct and thus resistant to change, all the more because they fail to justify themselves by the only legitimate test, the service they render to the members of the society. The demand for conformity is often unreasoning, and history is strewn with instances of the suppression of those less gregarious and more original minds whose insight proved in the retrospect to be greater than that of the mass of their fellows... However, the majority conforms to the codes. Although at times everyone feels an inner resistance to some of its aspects, most of us accept them most of the time and nearly all of the time approve the conformity of others.

Conforming to a norm is not morals. Kenneth Allsop, the columnist, in his latest book *The Bootleggers* (Hutchinson) relates that many Chicago gangsters were pious Irish or Sicilian Catholics, attending Sunday Mass, wearing crucifixes round their necks and carrying rosaries whilst killing their victims. However, they were told that by confession and ransom money to their Church they could always wash off their misdeeds. Nor is it enough to feed Humanists with "ethical, moral, spiritual" values which they do not require, as they have to obey their human conscience and not an extra-mundane code of behaviour, laid down in semi-barbarous times.

Let me conclude on a personal note.

It was in 1929 in the Austrian Alps. In a remote spot I entered the farmstead of what the Russians would call a *Koulak*—the richest man in the district, and asked for a drink. For a while we sat in silence; my host seemed to ponder a question which he eventually formulated:

(Continued on next page)

This Believing World

An American monthly entitled the "Christian Heritage" lists three "isms", called a "poisonous brew", responsible for "near fatal results for the Christian faith itself". One is Clericalism. Its "organisation, laws, and priests" are the "essential components of the machinery of Clericalism". And needless to say, "the Pharisaism of the New Testament" is an example of Clericalism, thus doubly damning it.

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It seems that it was "Clericalism" which made "holy men crucify their Lord"—a very neat way of telling readers that not only was Clericalism but the Jews responsible for the death of "our Lord". Moreover, Marx's famous aphorism that "religion is the opiate of the people" really means, not the religion of *The Christian Heritage*, but that of Clericalism.

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But of course it is Secularism which "makes a god out of materialism and reduces religion to the worship of its own works", a statement which proves how very difficult it must be for a Christian to believe that the Secularists can live quite happily without a God. We *must* have a God if only a God of Materialism. In actual fact of course, Secularists get rid of all Gods as quickly as possible. They are far happier for shedding the mythical habitants of Heaven.

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Finally, there is "Indifferentism" which has to be blamed for the plight Christianity is increasingly getting into. People go on and on just as if there weren't a religion called Christianity and Christ Jesus didn't die on the Cross. In fact, the "Indifferentists" have lost their taste for truth. It is all so very sad. But what can *The Christian Heritage* do about it? Nothing at all!

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We have at least some sympathy for the gentleman who was "driven to crime" the other day because his wife became a devoted disciple of the Witnesses of Jehovah. Her weekly itinerary was the constant reading of the Bible and *The Watchtower*, and before he turned to crime, her husband joined her in Bible study in their front room every Friday evening. But six weeks of this devotion to God Almighty was enough, and as a relief, instead of turning to drink—which many normal husbands might have done—he broke into two houses, and was put on probation for three years.

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A book entitled "An Agnostic in the Hereafter" has just been published written by a Mr. Bernard Morgan. It is his own wife who was the "Agnostic" who died, and who soon after began to "communicate" with him relating her experiences "in the Beyond". In any case, she is quite certain that dead people do not live on "planes"—"spiritual" or vibratory planes or not—so beloved by so many Spiritualists like Mr. Arthur Findlay for example. Lots and lots of the dead do not realise (we are told) that they are dead—like the lady she met in the Spirit World who tried to cook a chicken. The chicken vanished and the lady burst into tears. Probably that was because the chicken cost too much even if paid for by Spirit Money. There is plenty of twaddle still to be had from Spiritualists.

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We felt certain that Mr. Hannen Swaffer, relating his marvellous spirit experiences in *Psychic News* would at last come to the "famous" Mrs. Margery Crandon who, forty years ago or so, was earning a great reputation as

a Medium. She was considered so utterly genuine that nobody ever toppled her off the pedestal she had so marvellously created for herself. Nobody, that is, except Houdini, who proved in a pamphlet that she belonged to the same hoary gang of frauds like the Fox Sisters (who began it all), Florrie Cook, Eusapia Palladino, Eva C., and lots of others.

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The truth is of course that most of the new readers of psychic journals only know these frauds by name, and do not know how often they were exposed as such when at the height of their "powers". The usual apology these days is to admit that they did fraud *a little* but only not to disappoint their sitters. Otherwise, they were truly "white and immaculate" always ready to call up spirits from the mighty deep. The way Mrs. Crandon bamboozled so many of the "scientists" and others who tested her "psychic powers" is reminiscent of the way Florrie Cook bamboozled Sir W. Crookes and similar "investigators".

TOLERATION—AND ITS LIMITS

(Concluded from page 339)

"You, sir, being a learned man from afar—may I ask you for advice?"

It then turned out that the local priest in his Sunday sermon had told his congregation in general and my man in particular that in the coming year, 1939, the world would come to its end. "Soon you will stand in front of your Maker and Judge. You have always been great sinners, how will you hope to find mercy on that Day of Judgment? There is one possibility, my Beloved. Turn everything you possess to the Church, your Mother. It will be of no profit to you, but it may prove a great asset when your Soul is being weighed".

For centuries the Church has amassed immense riches by such stratagems, even in countries where the hard-toiling peasant hardly produced his mere livelihood out of the stony ground. I do not know whether the holy parasites tried the same confidence trick in 1960. Perhaps they have modernised the tune on the H-bomb theme and are selling plots on the moon, seats in a space Arch or merely blessed medallions of some saint invented to protect from blast?

Did someone mention "toleration"?

OBITUARY

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

"I am one of a dwindling remnant who can remember the reign of Victoria and the last premiership of Gladstone", wrote Archibald Robertson in a reminiscence article, "Seventy-Five Years", printed in the current issue of the South Place Ethical Society's *Monthly Record*. His own death on October 15th reduces that remnant still further, and robs the Rationalist movement of one of its best writers and speakers.

The son of the Bishop of Exeter, he first wrote under the pseudonym, "Robert Arch", but most of his best work appeared later under his own name, and his last book on *The Reformation* (1960) was highly praised in these columns by F. A. Ridley.

Mr. Robertson was until recently on the Board of the Rationalist Press Association and an appointed lecturer to South Place Ethical Society. Bad health compelled him to resign both positions, but he was present at the Conway Hall reunion on September 24th, and seemed much better. He died from a heart attack. He left his body to medical research.

He was also a member of the Communist Party and in the article mentioned he said: "I never conceal my opinion that the real conflict of our day is between pre-scientific institutions, politely labelled 'Christian civilisation', and scientific humanism, which on the political plane takes the form of international Socialism".

We send our condolences to Mrs. Robertson.

[Copies of *The Monthly Record* containing Mr. Robertson's article may be obtained from Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, price 6d.]

THE FREETHINKER

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

London Branches (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. G. H. MILLS and G. A. WOODCOCK.

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.

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

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 31st, 7.30 p.m.: P. R. CRELLIN, M.A., "Attitudes to Youth and its Problems".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 29th, 6.30 p.m.: SAMUEL J. LOOKER, "John Masefield, His Life and Work".

Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 29th, 7.15 p.m.: PROF. HYMAN LEVY, "The Conquest of Space".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, October 29th, 2.30 p.m.: H. L. SPENCER, "Imprisonment".

Nottingham University Union Debating Society (Portland Lecture Hall), Tuesday, October 31st, 4.30 p.m.: DEBATE, "This House Believes that the Christian faith is an obstacle to clear thought".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 29th, 11 a.m.: DR. JOHN LEWIS, "Who are the Materialists Today?"

Notes and News

"MR. MACMILLAN presented himself to the Conservative rally on Saturday in the role of philosopher-statesman" said *The Guardian* political correspondent a little ironically (16/10/61). Francis Boyd's irony was justified for, whatever the Prime Minister's abilities as a statesman, he revealed none whatever as a philosopher. It was the same old stuff about Christianity versus Communism, Idealism versus Materialism. And there was no attempt to confine Idealism and Materialism to any philosophic sense. The former was used indiscriminately to mean a "philosophy based on belief in God" or "idealist inspiration". And now, said Mr. Macmillan, "we are faced with vast communities and widespread doctrines which wholly reject this view of life". "Materialism is all they think about", continued the spokesman of "You've never had it so good", and "If this mood were to spread either in the form of positive acceptance of Marxist atheism, or in perhaps more dangerous form—the indolence of

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

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agnosticism—then I believe that Western society would be doomed".

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"TWO FAMILY PLANNING CLINICS are to be set up in the Burgh", we learn from the *Wishaw Press* (6/10/61), "despite strong protests from all four Roman Catholic members who were present". Councillor Patrick Duffy saw no need for "such a service" and didn't think it was "Christian at all". Councillor Murray "took the Council to task for allowing the [Family Planning] Association the free use of the clinics and for providing two couches at a cost of £25", while Councillor Edward McCardle declared, "It is wrong for us to give any assistance to a scheme which is abhorrent to a large section of the community". Police Judge James Twaddell agreed that the clinics would be abhorrent to some, but he contended that those who wanted to use them should be able to do so. Bailie George Steven agreed, and dismissed the argument on cost, which, he said, was very small indeed in relation to the happiness the scheme could bring "either by way of controlling births or assisting couples to have a family". The clinics will be at Motherwell on every second Friday afternoon and at Wishaw on every second Wednesday afternoon.

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A CANADIAN YOUTH of 18, who was charged with indecent assault on a 17-year-old girl was declared mentally unfit to stand trial (*The Gazette*, Montreal, 11/10/61). A psychiatrist told the Court of the Queen's Bench that the youth had an "exaggerated preoccupation with religion" and "suffered hallucinations during which he believed he was possessed by the devil".

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ON OCTOBER 10TH, the *Daily Herald* explained the financial set-up of the Church of England. A graph of the increase in the Church Commissioners' income was particularly striking, showing a rise of nearly 50% in the last six years. In 1960 it was £14,300,000.

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THE SAME PAPER recently asked seven "under-25's" if they looked to the Church for any part of their social life. One girl belonged to a church youth club, and two boys said "yes" with qualifications ("but I go to other entertainments as well", and "if they don't pump out too much religion"). Another boy said he could enjoy himself "without bothering about Church", and two girls said respectively: "I have no time to have anything to do with the Church" and "I don't understand Church, so have no interest in it socially". But perhaps the best answer came from Barry Kirkaldie, a 16-year-old Rams-gate shop assistant. "No", he said, "I'm more interested in live theatre".

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FOLLOWING OUR Notes and News reference last week to the late Dag Hammarskjold, a reader informed us of a BBC Home Service tribute to the UN Secretary General by the American commentator, Alistair Cooke. "He was not a conventionally religious man", said Mr. Cooke. "But he had great intensity of feeling". The tribute was, we believe, reprinted in *The Listener*.

“Scottish Moderator to Visit Pope”

By E. G. MACFARLANE

THIS TITLE IS A QUOTATION from one of the newspaper headlines, which bore the news that the Moderator of the Church of Scotland has decided to visit the Pope next year. The little stir caused by this announcement shows how low the concern for the traditionally Protestant regard for the dignity of the individual and the rejection of the principle of authoritarianism in the sphere of morals has sunk in the vicinity of Dundee, which is now my home town.

If, as Protestants in the tradition of the Reformation pretend to believe, brave men like Luther, Calvin, Knox and martyrs like Wishart are now in heaven watching developments in the contemporary scene, such men must surely be horrified as they watch how their personal sacrifices are being betrayed by the decaying principles of those who pretend to be carrying on the traditions established at the Reformation.

As I see it, and I speak as one who has been educationally subjected to Protestant teachings enough to appreciate the importance of the changes made at the Reformation, the Moderator is really a traitor to the essentials of Protestantism, which are a rejection of the principle of hierarchical authority in the sphere of morals in favour of a proper respect for the dignity of the individual person. In my view the great change at the Reformation was the replacement of the principle of delegating responsibility for making moral decisions to priests, cardinals and the Pope by the new principle which asserted that each individual person was responsible for coming to a personal decision about what was right or wrong. This principle is really the basis of free democracy and as such cannot lightly be dismissed as being of no great importance.

Actually I do not think I would be far wrong in saying that the true spiritual heirs of this aspect of the Protestant movement are now the members of the freethought, rationalist and humanist movements. I think that we have been responsible for developing this central principle to its logical conclusion of being in complete harmony with the spirit of scientific enquiry which has contributed so much to the increases in knowledge and human effectiveness in recent years.

Authoritarianism on the other hand, whether moral or political, has consistently opposed and frustrated the advances offered by the discoveries and innovations provided by the individuals whose personal standards were independent of authority.

Yet the Church leaders in Scotland have decided to team up with the representatives of authoritarianism rather than with the representatives of individualism.

We of the freethought, rationalist and humanist movements can well understand why this should be of course. It is the traditional attachment to the myths and nonsense of Christianity which has had yet another victory over the principle of encouraging men and women to have a high regard for their own personal responsibility to follow the truth wherever it may lead without hindrance of imposed beliefs or required assumptions. What men like the present Moderator fail to realise, is that the kind of doctrines which they seek to defend by making approaches to the Pope are incapable of protection in any other way than the reprehensible methods employed by Roman Catholics throughout the ages. By preferring theological affinity to the affinity to be found in the defence of personal freedom

and personal responsibility, the Moderator is therefore proving how unsuited he is to life in a scientific age.

What I have in mind here is that there is an incontrovertible soundness about the dictum that “To prescribe the findings of an investigation is to preclude the making of the investigation”. Scientists naturally accept this dictum without hesitation or reserve, and herein lies the great rift which has developed between Christian Protestants and the newer and more logical Protestantism of the freethinking, rationalist and humanist groups. The newer Protestants have simply crossed this rift and stand agreed with the men of science that ideas like the Virgin Birth and the other so-called Biblical miracles are inconsistent with biology and ordinary human experience. We are therefore honour bound to come away from an honest examination of the writings in the Bible with conclusions which are unacceptable to Christian dogmatists. The Moderator, on the other hand, despite all the evidence to the contrary, is so set upon justifying the traditional Christian conclusions that Christ was the living son of God, etc., that he has decided to look round for people who agree with him on this point rather than with those who have actually exercised their right to investigate the Bible without reference to prescribed findings which certain hide-bound theological dogmatists have laid down.

Apparently the Moderator prefers to associate with those who are supporters of an authoritarian hierarchy rather than with those who support and continue to develop the process begun at the Reformation, and I can only hope that he, or at least some of his associates, can be persuaded to see how wrong they are in pursuing their present course.

I would like to see all Protestants present a united front against the Roman hierarchy and declare together their adherence to the principle of upholding the dignity of the human individual in defiance and opposition to the pretensions and the arrogance of the Roman Church.

Answering Critics

By H. CUTNER

LET ME BEGIN by apologising to the Rev. A. Perry for misquoting him in *This Believing World* in *THE FREETHINKER* for September 22nd. I have mislaid the cutting I used, but he has sent me his complete article from the *Penkhill Parish Church* magazine. What he actually wrote was,

Have we got the right to ask God that the Church may joyfully serve Him in a peaceful world when that very Church is so divided?

And this is rather different from what I supposed he said.

At the same time, I hope that I am not unfair to him if I think that the whole of his article—too long to quote fully here—is really a plea for an undivided Church praying to God for Peace though he puts it in this way—“Surely the time has come when ordinary Christian folk throughout the world should say we want the Church to be united, ‘one in hope and doctrine, one in charity’. And as we say that let us begin here and now in our own lives and in our attitude towards others to work for the healing of the broken Body of Christ”. It seems to me, looking back on the recorded history of the Church, that from its very beginning the “body of Christ” has been broken. Peter and Paul and Barnabas constantly

CORRESPONDENCE

quarrelled and the fact that ever since there have been dozens of sects all with more or less different doctrines and ideas as to what Christianity really is, surely proves that "Unity" is as far away as ever.

In the *Daily Mail* for October 4th, there is an interview with the Roman Catholic Archbishop John Heenan, and in the course of it he categorically says,

You can take it for granted that we shall never alter one single point of dogma. It is not ours to alter. It belongs to Christ. We can't change it to suit the whims of the people or to please other Churches.

So that if there is a "broken Body of Christ" it is all due to the "other Churches" among which, I am sure, the one to which Mr. Perry belongs is included.

As for Peace—and this is my own purely personal view—if there is a God, he is always on the side of the biggest battalions or, in modern parlance, on the side which has more and bigger bombs. Prayers wafted to Heaven will have as much chance of bringing about peace as Buddhist praying wheels, or the savage dances of witch doctors.

Then there is Mr. Harland in the number for September 29th, who does not like my saying that child and animal torturers have been "thoroughly indoctrinated with Christianity". Here I must admit that there can be a variety of opinions as to what the word "thoroughly" means. At school we were all thoroughly indoctrinated with Christianity—though I venture to say very few studied that and other religions in the enthusiastic (though quite unbelieving) way I did. I consider it is not unfair to say that child and animal torturers were brought up to believe in the Bible, that their background was thoroughly religious, that many if not all went to Sunday School and that they all (or nearly all) always take the oath in court on the Bible. Of course, I do *not* say that Christianity made them into torturers—but I do insist that it did little or nothing to prevent them in their fiendish crimes.

Finally there is my old friend William Kent still (in spite of illness) as lively as ever in his writing. Unfortunately, I must have written very badly or Mr. Kent did not read me with quite the attention he usually does. I did not say that "Paine was really an Atheist". At the outset, when I was dealing with Sir Leslie Stephen, I wrote, "Even when Stephen had to deal with Paine's Deism . . .". Later, I wrote "Paine clearly expressed his belief in God", though for

"Christian readers, the book [*The Age of Reason*] with its unashamed attack on the Bible had been vomited from Hell itself. Paine was not really a Deist—he was an Atheist . . .".

That is, for the mass of Christians in those days anybody who attacked the Bible and the Christian religion was literally "an Atheist". No more terrible accusation could be made than to call a man an Atheist—as is the case even in these days. In Paine's day, it was a word which indicated the last word in sheer bestiality. In any case, I did point out that *The Age of Reason* was written by Paine because he "felt that the French Revolution was going headlong to perdition—partly through Atheism".

Like Mr. Kent, I was sorry that Mr. Aldridge did not enlarge on the way that William Blake saved Paine's life. Incidentally it is now the custom to claim Blake as a Christian. However, it is sometimes very grudgingly admitted that he was not "orthodox". He certainly was *not*. His *Everlasting Gospel* finishes with

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

The most we can say of Blake is that, like Thomas Paine, he shared with that great Englishman a vague, a very vague, Deism.

A CRITICISM

On October 2nd, Dr. Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave an interview to Rhona Churchill of the *Daily Mail*. He made some astounding statements, saying that belief in the Virgin Birth was not absolutely necessary, and that Hell certainly was not a physical place. Also those who have led a good life on earth, but found themselves unable to believe in God, will not be debarred from Heaven. Then he said, "I expect to meet some present-day Atheists there"! He concluded this remarkable interview by saying that the story of Adam and Eve must now be regarded as only a parable, because it contradicts what geology tells us of the origin of the world and what biology tells us of the evolution of the human race. Although two issues of THE FREETHINKER have been published since this gift to Atheists was made, there has not been one article written concerning it or one comment on it. All we have had is long articles on subjects far above the heads of the masses of people, who, unable to accept the religious drivel handed out to them by the Churches, are seeking confirmation of their doubts.

I consider THE FREETHINKER is written mainly by people who wish to use long and little used words and phrases, and now has little or no appeal to the masses of people to whom all our efforts should be directed. If a wavering Christian, or anyone seeking reason and truth, had bought the issue October 13th, then the impact on their doubts would have been nil. We often accuse religious crusades of only re-converting the already converted, but THE FREETHINKER seems to be published just for the benefit of those who are already unbelievers. Why not cut out some of the journalistic snobbery and get down to the full time work of trying to improve our poor resources by publishing articles with more appeal to the masses of people. Surely the statements of Dr. Ramsey were the ideal material for an article proving that, at last, the Church has had to admit that unbelief is well-founded. Why, he even made us "respectable", by expecting to meet some of us in Heaven!

I have been a reader of THE FREETHINKER for nearly 30 years, and in that time I have seen it change from an organ that attacked religious belief with every weapon, to a weekly publication containing articles of no value whatsoever for the conversion of unbelievers to Freethought. There are too many highbrow articles in the paper and not enough attacks on religion, written in simple language that can be understood by everyone. Even the New Testament has been re-written in a more simple language in an effort to help to understand it better. We should do the same with THE FREETHINKER.

F. H. EASTMAN.

A REPLY

Mr. Eastman takes us to task for not dealing with a *Daily Mail* interview with Dr. Ramsey. While we are not sure that it was quite as momentous as our critic thinks, we might have noticed it had he sent us a copy of it. The *Daily Mail* isn't on our regular reading list. Whether that is because we are journalistic snobs we can't say; what we can say is that, though our contributors have varied styles, each one tries to make himself as clearly understood as possible. If this necessitates the use of long words occasionally, we expect our readers to refer to a dictionary, as we ourselves have to do on many occasions.

Obviously a paper must change over a period of 30 years (it wouldn't be much good if it didn't), but THE FREETHINKER has never been solely devoted to attacking religion. What it has always aimed to do is to interpret the current scene from a free-thinking standpoint. The attack on religion should never be neglected, of course, but it must take a different form as times (and religions) change. Can the trouble be that Mr. Eastman hasn't moved with the times? His tone of amazement at the Archbishop's statement suggests that this might be so.

We don't know what is meant by "highbrow". Was G. W. Foote "highbrow" because he wrote eloquently, J. M. Wheeler because he was scholarly, or Chapman Cohen because he had a philosophic bent? We pride ourselves on having imbibed a little culture in the course of life and we are prepared to share it. We also like others to do the same with us.

Mr. Eastman says THE FREETHINKER "seems to be published just for the benefit of those who are already unbelievers". Substitute "mainly" for "just", and we concede. In fact, we provide the only weekly freethought commentary on current affairs in the English-speaking world. Given more resources we could obviously do better, but even then we wouldn't expect to please all of the people all of the time. In no circumstances would we try to emulate the *Sunday Pictorial* or the *News of the World*.

EDITOR.

THE VATICAN AND THE COMMON MARKET

In THE FREETHINKER dated June 3rd, 1960, F. A. Ridley finished an article ("The Vatican in 1960") with these words: "The Vatican as a world power is facing stormy seas. Will it be able,

eventually to surmount them? Will another John Raymond be able to record new triumphs for the Papacy in 2060 AD? Or will it have run its course by that time? Time alone can answer this question, but it is one of the most intriguing, as well as important questions that confronts us in 1960".

In THE FREETHINKER dated October 13th, 1961, the same writer finished an article ("The Common Market and The Holy Roman Empire") thus: "In, say, 2061 after a century of effective participation in the new Vatican Empire, will Britain still be a Protestant land? It seems to be at present a moot point. There is a growing volume of evidence that indicates a negative reply to this leading question".

In June, 1960, Mr. Ridley was not at all sure that the Papacy would still exist 100 years later; about 16 months later he regards the existence, in 100 years time, of a non-Romanist Britain as "a moot point" adding that current trends point to the disappearance of such a Britain. Obviously Mr. Ridley is becoming acutely aware of the Vatican threat in the Common Market, a threat to which I pointed in THE FREETHINKER of August 4th, 1961. He shows this clearly when he writes: "Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne; Pope John blesses the Common Market".

It is to be hoped that more and more progressives open their eyes to the threat hanging over mankind. THE FREETHINKER can certainly play an important part in exposing the Common Market as, among other things, an instrument with which the Roman Catholic Church (*semper eadem!*) hopes to conquer the world.

DEREK GREEN.

THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER 1882

I trust you will forgive me for taking up some of your space with a query. It is with regard to a copy of THE FREETHINKER which I possess and which I am anxious to sell if anyone is interested. I have had it for about 25 years and it was presented to me by my good friend—who died some years ago—Gwyn Evans, journalist and detective story writer who also contributed, I believe, a weekly article to THE FREETHINKER in those days, under a pseudonym. It is the notorious copy of December, 1882—the Christmas number with the verses and cartoon used in the blasphemous trials of Regina v. Ramsey and Foote on March 1st to 5th., under Mr. Justice North, in which G. W. Foote was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, W. J. Ramsey to nine months and H. A. Kemp (the printer) to three months.

I am now 73 and in bad health and have had to give up my work, journalistic freelancing and writing children's short stories; my circumstances force me to sell this copy of THE FREETHINKER, which is in fair condition: quite legible. It was given to me by Gwyn Evans in December, 1936, when he heard that I had spent some time in prison in the USA because of anti-war activities. I spent 10 years in America.

I may say that I first read THE FREETHINKER when I was nearly 17 years old and also the *Literary Guide*, organ of the Rationalist Press Association. I then also joined the Ethical Society, and was employed as clerk in the Head Office of the Fabian Society. Then left England for South America and, subsequently, the USA. I have spoken in Leicester in the hall of the Secular Society on "Religion in the Soviet Union", after returning from that country.

If anyone is interested in purchasing my Christmas number (1882) of THE FREETHINKER, I shall be most grateful to hear from them. I regret that I cannot keep it, but it might help to interest and instruct others, so I shall not so greatly regret losing it in that case.

CHARLES ASHLEIGH

(8 Vernon Terrace, Brighton 1).

OBITUARY

C. E. RATCLIFFE

The death of Mr. Ratcliffe at the advanced age of 92 removes from our midst one of the oldest members of the National Secular Society. There must be quite a number of us who still remember the hectic discussions and debates, the very earnest lectures on a variety of "urgent" subjects which characterised the work of the North London Branch just after World War 1, with Mr. Ratcliffe as the urbane Chairman. In those days we certainly kept the flag flying, and nobody did more valiant work to keep it aloft than young Mr. and Mrs. Ebury and many older members who are happily "of the same opinion" still, and carrying on the good work. In the course of years, though, Mr. Ratcliffe felt slight disagreement with some of the ways of our approach to religion and in his largely autobiographical novel, *Circumstantial Evidence* (published in 1934) he expressed his point of view as thus:—

... Chris came into touch with anti-religious expressions, sincerely, vigorously, and eloquently uttered. At times sceptical utterances were accompanied by what seemed to him scurrility and abuse; there was also an objectionable element

consisting of needless sarcasm and cynicism . . . With much he heard he strongly disagreed . . . And so on. It was in this mood that he disappeared from active work on the platform of the NSS, and turned his attention to writing very sceptical verse, much of it no doubt known to our readers. But he remained a loyal member of the North London Branch to his death. And though he even toyed a little with Spiritualism, he remained to the end a thorough sceptic. As he said of his hero in the novel,

In Secular, Labour, and Co-operative movements he saw abundant scope where, by tongue and typewriter, he would enjoy self-expression . . . and hoped to retain, "Peace which passeth understanding" . . . In his declining years, this was the logical outcome of his life experience. It had been forced upon him by the weight of circumstantial evidence.

All this is true of Mr. Ratcliffe's long life. "Right or wrong he could hold no other view" remained his philosophy. The cremation took place on October 3rd at Bristol, and to his family we send our sincere sympathies.

H. CUTNER.

ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION

A Public Meeting

will be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn W.C.1, at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1st, 1961

Speakers:

MISS JOAN VICKERS, M.P.

Subject: The Status of Women Commission

MR. R. S. W. POLLARD, J.P.

Subject: Practical Problems of Getting the Law Amended
Questions and Discussion
Admission Free

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