

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXXII—No. 30

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

"WHILST I greatly admire your efforts in search of ultimate truth... I am somewhat disconcerted by your attitude to survival after death." So begins a letter from a London address, typical of many received at THE FREETHINKER office. "Are we to dismiss *all* the evidence of spiritualism as a mere chimera?" it goes on. "If so, what is the purpose of life? To my mind, if we adopt this attitude, we may as well accept the statement accorded to Shakespeare, to wit, that life is 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing'."

That, I think, is a suitable moment to pause. Whether Shakespeare thought that life was a tale told by an idiot, or whether he just thought Macbeth might think it so, is arguable. Had I been through what Macbeth had—witches, daggers in the air, moving woods and so forth—I might have felt the same way, but I haven't and I don't. I can afford to be a little more detached, if you like; to point out that because one can't detect purpose in the universe at large, one doesn't thereby admit chaos. I don't believe that the world is governed or controlled, or was created, by an intelligent being, but I don't therefore consider it unintelligible, at any rate in principle. I don't share the Existentialist view that it is absurd. I believe, in fact, that the world is, at least in part, susceptible to reason, though in itself neither reasonable nor unreasonable, but just existent. I search for truth, if not "ultimate" truth, whatever that may mean. I further hold that it is only by the use of reason (and science is fundamentally that) that we can and do learn anything, and that we foresake reason at our peril.

## Survival

Now it is precisely in relation to religious matters that man is most prone to revoke the use of reason. And especially in regard to survival. We don't want to die—at least as long as life seems worth living—and we don't want our loved ones to die. This applies to the theist and atheist alike. There are few Christians who can restrain their tears when a loved one dies, however strong the belief in heaven. A future life, in short, is a hope, a wish, and man seeks to prove it, to support his own desire. Paradoxically, it is an indication of his lack of conviction that he should seek proof: the completely convinced don't need proof; they are certain already.

Take this excerpt from another letter I recently received from Chicago:

There is a girl who plays the piano for me; would play more often for me, but that my piano medium lives too distant from me. The girl calls herself Kathleen. On her first visit she told me that she had died in Ireland four years before at the age of eight. That made her 12 in December, 1947. She left via a concrete floor after her first recital (Dvorak's *Humoresque*).

One may think the music well chosen, but I do not quote the passage to make fun of it. The writer is obviously sincere—and convinced. It would be useless to argue with him: reason is helpless in such a case,

and one might as well leave the man (presumably) content in his illusion.

## "Evidence"

Illusion? Not for him, of course. He has the evidence of his ears and eyes, of his senses. Useless to point out that these are easily deceived, that in everyday life we are constantly correcting them, making allowance for their deficiencies. "Evidence" is easy to come by: it is the assessment of it that is hard. "Are we to dismiss *all* the evidence of spiritualism as a mere chimera?" asks my London questioner. Far from it. The "evidence" for spiritualism provides interesting study—in suggestion, deception, and human psychology generally.

Above all, though, we should consider what acceptance of spiritualism would involve. Briefly and bluntly, it means the belief in ghosts. Ghosts of little Irish girls who speak and play Dvorak, then disappear through concrete floors; of little Irish girls who have been dead four years, who presumably wear ghostly or spiritual dresses, shoes and socks, etc., and who can only put in an appearance when a medium is present. The example is typical, and the point is that to accept the story as interpreted would involve rejection of far more accumulated evidence than can be adduced to support it. This is something that supporters of spiritualism, ESP and what not, never seem to appreciate. Weigh the evidence, they say, but they are really asking us to reject the overwhelming mass of evidence which is against spiritualism.

Notice that I say the story *as interpreted*. I don't deny that the Chicagoan saw and heard the little girl, any more than I deny that I occasionally see and hear peculiar things. What I deny is their objective reality. And should a thousand people parade before me and say they had spoken to the ghosts of little Irish girls, I should still deny the objective reality of ghosts. Of course, the Spiritualist will accuse me of obstinacy, even dogmatism. If I am obstinate and dogmatic, it is at any rate on the side of reason, on the side of the overwhelming accumulation of tested fact.

## Insensitive

Now, the time has come to move on, and I do so with some reluctance. For a letter which had previously been tastefully unobjectionable suddenly becomes nasty. I suppose some people can't help being insensitive, but they should at least try not to be so on paper. This spiritualistically-inclined Londoner refers to an obituary notice in our columns and asks:

If ..... is extinct, why waste time, paper and ink on paying respects to someone who is no longer in a position to appreciate them? If on the other hand ..... has survived the tomb, why not acknowledge the truth of survival and stop criticising spiritualism in general and mediums in particular?

In the ordinary way I should have ignored this, but it is instructive in its way; indicative of a serious limitation,

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## A Spiritualist Critic

— By COLIN McCALL —



a lack of understanding that is still extremely common. Moreover, it is possible that the writer of the letter may read this article.

If he should do so, I would suggest that he read some of the sincere and tender appreciations that have been written and spoken by Freethinkers about their dead relatives, colleagues and friends. G. W. Foote's tribute to J. M. Wheeler, for instance, or to Bradlaugh; Ingersoll's

funeral orations, and many others. If my correspondent reads these, he may learn something about human love and affection, something about human life and death; that spiritualism apparently hasn't taught him. He may learn that with a firm belief in reason, the full employment of the human intellect, can yet go a deep human sensitivity. That there can, in fact, be sympathetic understanding.

## African Notes

By MARK LILLINGSTON

AS I AM IN West Africa for a spell, I thought you might be interested in a few comments with relation to religion here. There are a large number of missionaries from many countries and sects. They have considerable success with the Africans, who are in this and other spheres, anxious to copy the "superior" white man. The unfortunate result has been that they ape the missionaries, who are by no means the cream of Europe.

The education and indoctrination by the Christian missionaries have produced a desire for Africans to become white collar workers — inevitably very inferior ones — with the consequent extreme neglect of agriculture, which is looked down upon. This is very serious, and causes prices for many agricultural products to be much higher than in Britain.

The children are definitely not taught the most important subjects, like how to act intelligently on their farms (if you could call them that!) and villages, so that they may increase productivity and improve their standard of living. Instead they are taught to dress "decently", say the Lord's Prayer, and in general to live the life of a respectable person in an English town: not much use to them here!

However, the West Africans seem a peaceful, happy and tolerant people, partly no doubt because it is difficult to exert oneself to be otherwise in this climate.

As to my own experiences, I came across a copy of Ingersoll's works in a resthouse at Ilesha, Nigeria. I taught commercial subjects at an American missionary school in Freetown, had meals with the Principal and lived in a hotel which was also used as a brothel. In Bathurst I had lunch with an English Bishop, who complained bitterly that he was unable to arouse enthusiasm to do anything about the main pastime of the Africans — fornication! He said they needed houses like those on an English housing estate instead of their crowded but sociable communal life. I now realise that the urge for better housing is sometimes on religious as well as sanitary grounds.

★

"IF YOU have a love problem, this is your page", states a heading in the African monthly magazine, *Drum*. And the letters pour in to "Dolly" as they do to her counterparts in English papers. Mixed marriages for instance, can be a problem in Africa as elsewhere, and in the July issue, "F.K.", a man of 24 says that he is married to "a smashing girl of 22". They are in love, but "I'm being asked by her parents to betray my God, something I'm not prepared to do. During the performance of customary rites for my wife to be able to come to my house, I was told to slaughter a sheep to my girl's family god, so that we would be blessed with children. This I refused to do". "Later", the man says naively, "through the grace of God, the girl gave birth to a child who died five months after birth". Now he is being blamed for the child's death, and his wife is urging him to offer a sheep to her god. "Shall I do it?" he asks. "Dolly's" reply is equally naive, as well as being

slightly equivocal and singularly unhelpful. "Since the sacrifice of sheep to other gods is against your beliefs", she says "don't do it. Rather be steadfast and pray to the mighty God for guidance and 'thy faith will aid thee'".

★

FEATURED in the same issue of the *Drum* is the "Miracle Man". Chief Adu Shade of Akure Province, Western Nigeria. The sick in mind flock to him to be cured and "because of the uncanny way in which he has restored sanity to those who lost it", he has "become famous as a wonder-worker". Unfortunately, we are told little or nothing of the Chief's marvellous methods. We learn that he is the son of "a famous medicine man", that he has 17 wives and 100 children, five of whom help him in the clinic, that he charges a fee of £15 and that those who can't pay it help him on his farm. He believes that he is inspired by Olokun, the sea-goddess but there is nothing more about his methods, says *Drum*, "to suggest any hocus-pocus". Indeed, one of his sons is studying medicine in Britain and may "help to refine some of his father's medicine". From the account, I judge that the Chief's "uncanny" powers are not always successful. The clinic is "never without nerve-shaking screams" and some patients have to be manacled. "It gives me pain", says the Chief, "but it can't be helped"—apparently not even with the aid of Olokun.

## Racial and Religious Discrimination

THE Colin Jordan affair has given rise to a great deal of argument—and some dangerous suggestions from normally responsible people, who should remember about the road to hell. R. H. S. Crossman, MP, for instance, in *The Guardian* (13/7/62), lent his support to a Racial Discrimination Bill or—following Lord Walston—to the insertion of nine words into the Public Order Act, 1936. The words proposed are: "or speeches calculated to incite racial or religious prejudice", and they are undoubtedly well intentioned. But laws are not always interpreted as originally intended. In his desire to prevent the Nazi-like anti-semitism of Mr. Jordan, Mr. Crossman may well provide the police with a means of curbing freedom of speech. It is perfectly possible that an anti-Catholic speaker might be charged with incitement to religious prejudice. That is why the National Secular Society argued against the National Council for Civil Liberties' support for a Racial Discrimination Bill. No society is more strongly opposed to racial—or religious—discrimination, but the NSS fears the *unintentioned* uses to which such a bill might be put. And so does Mr. G. J. Finch, whose letter appears in our Correspondence column this week.

## NEW PENGUIN AFRICAN LIBRARY

(just issued)

*A Short History of Africa*, by Roland Oliver and J. D. Fage, 5s.

*African Profiles*, by Ronald Segal, 6s.

*Portugal in Africa*, by James Duffy, 4s. 6d.

*The Arab Role in Africa*, by Jacques Baulin, 3s. 6d.

*Guilty Land (South Africa)* by Patrick van Rensburg, 3s. 6d.

Available from the Pioneer Press

postage 6d. each



# Cardinal Newman's Brothers

By F. A. RIDLEY

[The following is the substance of part of a lecture given to the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society on July 1st, 1962. The second part, dealing with Cardinal Newman, will appear next week.]

THE city of Birmingham, nowadays the industrial metropolis of the Midlands and the second city in Great Britain in respect of population, has naturally been the home of many men of unquestioned eminence. These no doubt include both the known and the unknown, since we should not be unmindful of the observation of that great French Freethinker, Anatole France, that whilst he had known most of the famous men of his day, yet the most brilliant man that he had ever met was an entirely unknown doctor in an obscure Paris suburb.

Amongst those born or domiciled in Birmingham, who have since been enrolled in the Hall of Fame, one can mention that great scientist and Radical, Joseph Priestley, a name honoured in all circles that cherish civil and religious liberty; Joseph Chamberlain, the maker of modern Birmingham, a still famous, if controversial figure, and such notable ecclesiastical figures as Bishop Barnes and John Henry Cardinal Newman, who lived in this city for over a generation and eventually died here. It is upon this last named famous, and in his day, also controversial figure, and his hardly less remarkable family that I propose to speak today.

Whilst John Henry, the future Cardinal Newman, lived nearly half his long life (1801-90) in this city, the Newmans were a family of London origin whose pedigree can be traced back for several generations. The grandfather of the Newmans lived and died in apparently extreme poverty as a grocer in Holborn. The Cardinal's own father, John Newman, pursued a chequered career as, successively, a banker, a bankrupt (several times), and a brewer — or in less respectable terminology, a publican. In which last capacity he ended up in the salubrious district of Clerkenwell.

Newman's mother, Jemima Foudrinier, originally French Huguenot stock, came of a better or at least a richer family, and brought her husband a dowry of £5,000. The six offspring of this alliance, three of either sex, made up the Newman family upon which, or upon the male section of which I propose to concentrate.

There were his three sons, John Henry, (1801-90), Charles Robert, (1802-84) and Francis William (1805-97). Apart from the obvious fact that all three Newmans lived to an advanced age, the three brothers would certainly seem to have had little in common. In so far as heredity can be invoked in this genealogy, the future Cardinal seems to have owed most to his deeply religious Protestant mother, whilst the two younger brothers took after their easy-going latitudinarian and chronically impecunious father. A degree of literary talent was common to most of the Newmans; one of the sisters, Harriet, was also an authoress. Leaving John Henry aside for the moment, one must note the bizarre characters and peculiar careers of the Newman brothers: of Charles, Socialist, Atheist and perennial pauper, and the equally bizarre, if slightly more respectable Francis.

Charles was, and remained throughout his long life, the black sheep of the Newman clan. An Atheist and Socialist could hardly have been anything else in the strait-laced atmosphere of a middle-class evangelical Victorian household. Charles Newman indeed, committed the two supreme crimes in that Christian-cum-capitalist society:

he never had any religion and he never had any money! In addition to which, he suffered from what his friend George Jacob Holyoake described in a posthumous memoir, as an "indeterminate" mind which made Charles Newman incapable of sustained effort. (cf. *Essays in Rationalism* by C. R. Newman with Memoirs by G. J. Holyoake and J. M. Wheeler.)

With such views and such a mental outlook in such an environment, it is not at all surprising that Charles Newman's life story was just one damn thing after another. He was, in fact, a failure in everything that he undertook: as a clerk in the Bank of England, as a schoolmaster, as a student in a German university (Bonn). Finally giving up the hopeless struggle, he retired to the Welsh seaside resort of Tenby, where he lived for some twenty-five years (1860-1884) in Spartan austerity, in a scantily furnished attic, upon a pittance charitably supplied by his brothers. Here, he was visited by the Cardinal in 1882 in what must have been one of the most extraordinary interviews *not* on record!

In Tenby Charles Newman died in 1884 as obscure as his brother was famous (a contrast forcibly made by J. M. Wheeler). John Henry Newman defrayed the cost of the funeral, placing—with a flash of mordant Newman irony—this inscription on the modest tomb: "Lord, despise not in thy eternal mercy the work of thy hands". In the posthumously published *Essays in Rationalism*, Charles Newman insisted on the doctrine of rigid Determinism that he had learned from his Socialist master, Robert Owen. It would be an interesting speculation what a less strait-laced and more flexible age than was the 19th century would have made of Charles Robert Newman. The possible result might astonish some of our orthodox devotees of Freewill.

If John Henry ended up world-famous, whilst Charles Robert died in total obscurity, the youngest brother, Francis William, achieved an intermediate degree of fame. Like his eldest brother, he embarked upon a spiritual odyssey that eventually led him into "strange woods and pastures new". However, his general direction was the reverse of that trodden by John Henry. For Francis became successively, an evangelical, a Plymouth Brother of the strictest sect (in which capacity he journeyed to Bagdad to convert followers of the false prophet, Muhammed, to the saving Truth of Christ as exclusively interpreted by John Darby, the founder of the Brethren), and he finally ended up as a pure Theist, beyond the confines of any brand of Christianity.

With this, however, went a measure of worldly success, if not complete respectability. For Francis Newman ended up as a professor of Greek in the then heterodox University of London, in which relatively respectable capacity he translated *The Iliad* of Homer and engaged in a public controversy with Matthew Arnold, on translating Homer. Like his eldest brother, Francis Newman was a versatile and voluminous writer. Like John Henry, he also composed an *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, which, under the heterodox title of *Phases of Faith*, achieved considerable fame amongst what my friend Mr. Cutner would describe as the "reverent Rationalists" (a then numerous body), of the Victorian era. These literary activities won him a respectable reputation in the current republic of letters.

In addition, Professor Newman (as his contemporaries referred to him in distinction from his brother, the

(Concluded on next page)



## This Believing World

At last there's going to be a new "drive"—according to the *Daily Mail* (July 14th)—to unite the Anglican and the Presbyterian Churches. We wonder which is going to give up what? Will all the Anglican bishops immediately resign when the Presbyterians come in, and will the Presbyterians admit that an Anglican can be "saved" through "good works" only? Will Anglicans accept the Calvinistic "predestination" which is part of Presbyterianism, that "God alone" determines man's salvation? However, whether "unity" will be the result or not, we note that Dr. J. Dougal, one of the leaders of Presbyterianism, declared that "we want to encourage the growth of unity". That looks about as far as it will go.

★

But what are the two Churches going to do with that delightful sect known as the Plymouth Brethren? At one time (we think), they were undivided, but now a Branch has sprung defiantly out known as the Exclusive Brethren—all of whom we are sure, if invited to join the Anglicans and Presbyterians, would answer back in the dulcet voice of Jesus addressing the Pharisees, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?"

★

One of the Exclusive Brethren, or rather one who ought to have been but prefers Methodism, calls the EB "utter misery". His parents and brothers are rigid members, and when they found out that their son Peter Poore despised the whole exclusive but predominantly Christian set-up, they called him "unclean and defiled". The *Daily Mail* (July 13th), devotes nearly a column to the way Peter has been treated in this Christian family, and a sorry story it is. It is no use invoking them to "Love thy neighbour as thyself" here, for to the EB the only neighbours they must love are Exclusive Brethren!

★

So it is not surprising that the EB are dissatisfied with God's Precious Word as produced by Catholics, Protestants, and the other sects. They are going to print a special Bible of their own which "strangers" will not be allowed to read. Will it be the version produced by J. N. Darby last century, or a brand new one? If the latter, have the EB even one scholar who could do it?

★

Now that the New Testament has had to be translated afresh so as to make God's Wonderful Message for all mankind intelligible, the question of the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England has come up for discussion on precisely the same grounds. The problem was discussed in Parliament in 1927 and produced a most unholy row—the *Daily Express* (July 9th, 1962) called it "a fierce parliamentary quarrel"—for any new revision in more modern language would completely lose, as it did in the New English Bible, that reverent glamour which makes so many Christians so sure that the Prayer Book, like the Bible, came to them literally from Almighty God.

★

The truth is that the Prayer Book's "doctrinal approach" is as obsolete as its language. Most of it is so archaic that it sounds funny to the modern ear. If, for example, a bride knew that she could have "a white wedding" with all or most of the trappings which make a marriage in church so attractive to her, in a modern register office, the out-of-date Tudor terminology from the Book of Common Prayer could be for ever dispensed with. But it looks as if church people are afraid of more concessions to the

modern ear. They may make for far more *unbelief* than for the Church.

### CARDINAL NEWMAN'S BROTHERS

(Concluded from page 235)

Cardinal) wrote upon many other subjects, some of which have a distinctively unprofessorial, even odd, sound. For example, he was interested in domiciling the Bactrian camel in Europe; he wrote a treatise on the ancient Numidian language of North Africa; further we note that he "thought plants felt pain and had a high opinion of the intelligence of bugs". Added to which he was a vigorous anti-vaccinationist. Most of the above themes were at least, unusual in Victorian intellectual circles, and certainly Professor Newman went well beyond the bounds of respectability when he published a pamphlet with the title, *The Errors of Jesus*.

In view of such facts—and titles—it is hardly surprising that Professor Newman was on strained terms with his brother the Cardinal. However, they continued to meet intermittently until John Henry's death in 1890. But a posthumous memoir on the Cardinal by the then only surviving brother, aroused much comment for its unfraternal tone, even amongst anti-Catholic critics. Francis himself died in 1897 at the age of 92, the oldest and the last of the Newmans. Contemporaries described him as a man of keen and versatile intellect, but indiscriminate in his tastes—as one might guess from the above—and entirely without any sense of humour.

One may perhaps comment in conclusion that whilst the 19th century had its full share both of oddities and of men of genius, both types can seldom have been found in such close juxtaposition in a single family as was the case of the Newman family.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, JULY 10TH, 1962. Present: Mr. F. A. Ridley (President) in the Chair, Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Barker, Borsman, Cleaver, Ebury, Hornibrook, Miller, Mills, Shannon, Tribe, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apology from Mr. McIlroy. Encouraging news was reported from Glasgow and Edinburgh Branches, which were co-operating for outdoor activities. A further letter had been sent to the Admiralty regarding Queen's Regulations, and a reply was awaited. New North London and Individual members were approved. Correspondence with the Committee of 100 and the BBC was reported. The Secretary was asked to express the good wishes of the Society at the Committee meeting of the World Union of Freethinkers in Vienna commencing July 27th. Humanist Council report was given. Tickets would be limited for the House of Commons dinner on November 3rd. A possible second Freedom from Hunger campaign scheme was a practical, as well as secular, school in Bechuanaland under Mr. and Mrs. Patrick van Rensburg (the former, author of the Penguin *Guilty Land*). An article written by Mr. Tribe for the National Council for Civil Liberties was unanimously approved. It was decided to protest to the Minister of Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer against subsidies to theological colleges and denominational training colleges. A contribution was authorised to the VVN Children's Holiday Fund, whereby children of victims of Nazism were provided with a holiday in the Isle of Wight. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, August 22nd, 1962.

### JUST OUT

- Yuri Gagarin's autobiography  
★ **ROAD TO THE STARS** ★  
(cloth covered, illustrated)  
5/- plus postage 9d.  
From the PIONEER PRESS

Will National Secular Society members please note that Colin McCall, the General Secretary, will be on holiday until August 13th.



# THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1  
TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.00; half-year, \$2.50; three months, \$1.25.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m. MESSRS. I. EBURY, J. A. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE, J. A. MILLAR.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoons. (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

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: L. EBURY.

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

### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, July 29th, 6.45 p.m.: J. A. MILLAR, "God, Gold and Blackmail".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, July 27th, 7.15 p.m.: A Meeting.

## Notes and News

WE HOPE that Commander J. S. Kerans, Conservative MP for Hartlepool will get a favourable reply from his question to the Minister of Health on July 30th: "whether in view of the number of deformed children now being born as a result of the prescribing of the drug distaval, he will introduce legislation whereby, in future cases of extreme deformity, medical practitioners may be authorised to apply euthanasia?" We hope, but not very hopefully. The Government is too scared of offending Cardinal Godfrey and his followers, one of whom wrote to *The Guardian* (18/7/62) asking in his most dramatically emotional manner: "Who is to be the murderer—the parents, a doctor, or a Ministry of Health official?" In a rational society the answer would be quite simple: the doctor, with Ministry of Health backing.

JUST IN CASE that last sentence sounds callous, we ask you to picture a case we heard of the other day. A baby, without legs, and with hands growing directly out of its shoulders. An expert medical opinion: that it will never leave hospital.

CARDINAL GODFREY was right when he said that the "principle" that the priest's work was intertwined with the doctor's, "will not be acceptable to many" (*The Guardian*, 10/7/62). And the Cardinal's speech to the international congress of Catholic doctors at Westminster showed plainly that a sensibly-run society must draw a distinction between the two roles. Non-Catholic doctors must make it clear that euthanasia and abortion do not, as the Cardinal contends, offend against human dignity; that they do not "defile" the medical profession. As for "those

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged £214 14s. 10d. S. Merrifield, 2s.; C. Jones, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. D. Behr, 10s.; Mrs. N. Henson, £2; Mrs. Lord, 5s.; W. Mawhinney, 4s.; F.S., 15s.; Mrs. A. Vallance, £1; J. Gazolas, 9s.; Mrs. G. Matson (in memory of J. H. Matson), £10. Total to date, July 27th, 1962, £230 2s. 4d.

eternal moral principles" that the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster extolled, they seem a little less eternal after the Vatican's permit to nuns to use birth control pills for "self defence" if in danger of being raped. Surely this is a glaring example of "mere expediency", of man seeking "to supplant the sovereignty of the Author of life", which Cardinal Godfrey expressly condemned.

A LETTER to the *South London Press* deplored "the persecution of Sophia Loren and her committal for trial on a charge of bigamy" (technically, we believe, it is Miss Loren's husband who is charged with bigamy and she with "concurrence"). "The secular arm", said Mr. Cavan McCarthy, "is being twisted by ecclesiastical bigots too stupid to understand that a civil divorce frees a person to remarry legally". The *South London Press*, surely the liveliest of the London regional papers, referred to Mr. McCarthy's letter in its editorial columns. The paper's lack of sympathy for Sophia was "due to a feeling that people who accept the discipline of a religion should not complain at what they get". And it added: "The civil law will free us from church government if we want to be free. Blood was spilt to win that freedom, and it is worth having".

"I HAD given him a Bible of his own. He used to sit there and read passages aloud and the other boys sat quietly and listened." So said 75-year-old Sunday school-teacher, Herbert Crane (*Daily Herald*, 11/7/62) about Ronald Fletcher. A year later Fletcher was sent to an approved school. At 17 he was given three months' detention for assaulting police; at 18 he was fined for illegal possession of coal; at 19 he was placed on probation for stealing a car; then fined £10 for theft, and imprisoned for one day for smashing up a public house and again assaulting a policeman. Now this "wolflike, miserable unpleasant coward" (as the judge called him) has received a five year sentence. Nine years ago, Mr. Crane had detected "something there that needed moulding—that same deep force that has perverted him into what he is today"—leader of a flick-knife and bicycle-chain gang. Clearly the Bible and Sunday school can't claim success in moulding Ronald Fletcher.

AN "improved, enlarged and more comprehensive" syllabus for religious education for use in Gloucestershire schools is to be published next spring, reported the *Cheltenham Echo* (13/7/62). From it, said Mr. W. Tiplady, Headmaster of Monkscroft Secondary School, Cheltenham, each individual school and each individual teacher will be able to make a selection to suit their own programme of religious education. The syllabus, he said, was a revision made by members "drawn from all interested parties". As a headmaster, though, he must be aware of the great problem of religious education, the fact that teachers, for the most part, are uninterested parties.

WE ARE pleased to learn from Robert H. Scott of California, that he has succeeded in gaining broadcast time for an atheistic talk at a radio station near Saratoga. Though only a small station, says Mr. Scott, it has a considerable audience, and "it is a step in the right direction".



# Morality and the Catholic Clergy

By Dr. J. V. DUHIG

BEFORE dealing summarily and effectively with the pretensions of the Catholic clergy to teach morality, let us look at their suitability for the job and the material at their disposal. It seems to me, on the evidence, that all they can hope to do is to direct a gullible people towards a mythical heaven after they die; for all other social purposes they are not only useless but an actual danger, as the crime record of the Catholic laity shows. And it must be remembered that the body of doctrine which makes Catholics the most criminal of all social groups is identical with that by which the Catholic clergy attempt to live. So that their standard of conduct is worth investigating, particularly as they have, in addition to evil doctrine, certain additional burdens which make life for them not only grossly abnormal, but dangerous. They have to take a vow of celibacy, and subject to rigorous restrictions on their physical and intellectual liberties. Their life, in effect, is inhuman and indeed pitiable. Not surprising that the sacerdotal casualty lists in the battle against misconduct are numerous and long.

Catholic doctrine is based on God, Jesus, the Scriptures, and a weird lot of rubbish called Theology, composed of the ravings of frustrated, sex-starved medieval mystics, all of it pure conjecture and guesswork. For God and Jesus there is no evidence, and the Scriptures are the work of chroniclers who were not above a little faking and imaginative fiction; in fact the New Testament is a fake to prove that the prophecies about a Messiah had come true. The idea of God was born in the mind of primitive man in an attempt to explain the Universe; it has landed modern man, especially churchman, in some awkward difficulties. For half a million years at least, God went on gaily destroying his creatures by fire, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal-waves, landslides, lightning, epidemic and sporadic disease and congenital malformations, and possibly other means. Then man stopped him as he brought Nature under control, so that God's brutality has been largely ended. I think it easier and less distressing to act as if no such personality existed.

And as to Jesus, the Catholic theologian who believes such a person existed is in trouble right from the start. The only evidence tendered in support of this belief is the New Testament, which is a big fake to prove that the alleged prophecies of the Old Testament about the coming of a Messiah had come true. But the theologians made the silly mistake of stating that these books are infallible, in spite of the herds of palpable errors in them. If we consult the infallible New Testament about Jesus, we find that on the question of the year of his birth one author places it in 5 BC, another in 7 AD, a very serious range of error especially for infallible authorities. And one author says the birth occurred in a house, another in a stable.

And a really crucial difficulty is that there is not one single reference to Jesus in the writings of any contemporary historian. The few ragged little alleged references quoted by Christians are not nearly good enough. At the time of the alleged Jesus, there was a Roman army of occupation in Palestine as well as a corps of civil officials. Is it likely that amongst these thousands there was not one single person, chronicler or interested observer, who would be aware of the allegedly mighty goings on, miracles and Billy Graham-size audiences all over the country? Not to speak of professional historians who could not fail to

hear of such prodigious things as the "Massacre of the Innocents" and the execution of a pretender King of Israel.

No, the Jesus story was all faked up a century at least after the alleged events. And another curious thing is that intertwined in the faked-up story of Jesus, the gospel writers worked in a lot of pagan folklore, integral parts of the worship of the old gods displaced by the new one — the Virgin birth, the scapegoat Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the theophagy foreshadowed in the Last Supper and now the central core of Catholic "worship," etc. There is not a major belief in Catholic doctrine which is not so derived. How curious that God should inspire an infallible book with ritual used for rival gods! As if these palpable weaknesses were not enough, later writers wrote into the story, centuries later, things that happened to suit their own guilty designs, so as to give it the seal of infallibility.

On this gigantic mass of falsehood, the theologians erected their most monstrous structure of conjecture which mostly has no reference to everyday life, but is what I call a "sin system," designed to promote in the minds of people expecting the world to end any minute, a sense of guilt and of what they called sin, an offence to God, punishable by eternal pains but redeemable by payment of various sums of money. Thus was started the great Catholic swindle, the later history of which, studded with torture, murder, war, etc., is now known to one and all. And when we are talking of the Catholic clergy, we must not forget to make mention of the dearest sin of all, that connected with sex. This repulsively unhealthy obsession of Catholic theologians with sex has done immeasurable harm, most of all to their own clergy, as we shall see, and to female Catholic adolescents whose curiosity is overstimulated.

What the Catholic clergy, then, have to teach, is an out-of-date sin system based on fraud, falsehood and bad science, particularly psychology. And in preaching such a bad system they naturally run serious risks, and consequently the people to whom they preach are exposed to danger, too, as proved by the crime, delinquency and prostitution statistics. Add to all this the limitation of freedom of thought and action, and you have revealed the wickedness of Catholicism and the pitiful poverty, moral, intellectual and social, of its clergy.

We need not go back to its wicked popes, John XII, Alexander VI or Pius XII; to its treacherous Cardinals such as Stepinac; for examples of anti-social conduct; we have the sacerdotal sinners right on our doorsteps. And as sexual function is the main avenue of sin-guilt, it can be said that celibacy is the cause of enormous wrongdoing so far as the Church is concerned, and it can be said that the infamous Council of Trent, God-inspired, must be held responsible for most of it.

From the Council stem all the evils of sex-frustration and starvation. Drunkenness and masturbation are enormously common among priests, masturbation, according to ex-Jesuit Paul Jury, being practically universal. Apart from the sense of frustration that immediately succeeds it, there is absolutely nothing harmful about it medically, but Jury tells of the pitiable misery of the chronic sacerdotal masturbator because, you see, it is a mortal sin. To get over this trouble the priest often seeks solace in drink, and if I put down the name of every priestly drunkard I have known I would have no room for anything else in this article. Then come attempts (I



knew two such) by priests to use the confessional to procure girls for immoral purposes. In the particular cases I know, one failed, but the other often succeeded. I knew two cases of rape by priests: in one the Church had all police action suppressed, in the other all proceedings after the first charge in the magistrates' court were also stopped.

Seduction of girls in the ordinary way is very common. In two cases the priest changed into lay garb when on a fornication foray. One of these gentlemen was a magnate of great repute who spent every holiday with a mistress in an expensive hotel in another capital, the lady being entered in the books as Mrs. O'Dwyer or whatever. Occasionally the sweetheart is a Protestant, a situation which caused great sorrow in a Catholic congregation of a small town I know of. Homosexuality is not common amongst priests, though I know of one priest expelled

from New Zealand for this who, believe it or not, was made Chaplain to a boys' boarding school in the Brisbane diocese. Sex murder occurs but is rare.

Priests are not supposed to go to horseracing, but they can do so by simply changing into lay dress, and they often bet heavily. I know a bookmaker who is owed many hundreds of pounds by defaulting priests. Gambling at cards is very common. On top of this horrible life led by lonely sex-starved priests, there is the almost total lack of intellectual interest, since the prohibition on the priest's wish, if any, to join in intellectual pursuits leaves him no liberty in this respect. And in any case, his lack of education unfits him. The poor pitiable priest's main fault, however, is just hypocrisy; if it were not for this, I would wish him good luck with his sweethearts. Roman cardinals have been known to enjoy fornication, so why not the humble priest?

## Carbon-Dating and Evolution

By EDWARD ROUX

I WAS RECENTLY sent a copy of the *Christian Advocate* containing an article by J. M. Lyon entitled: "Has Radio-Carbon Dating Proved Evolution?" Mr. Lyon, as a fundamentalist, evidently is a firm disbeliever in evolution and thinks that if carbon-dating can be discredited another alleged "proof" of evolution will have gone by the board.

I can assure him and his fellow believers in the infallibility of the Bible, that the evidence for evolution was so powerful that it had convinced 99.9 per cent of professional biologists half a century ago and long before carbon-dating was ever thought of. If this method of dating the recent past could be proved utterly unreliable it could hardly affect our general view of evolution, but simply show that a new promising method of determining the age of bits of wood and old bones had proved disappointing.

Actually carbon-dating is a recently developed technique which is still being tried out and improved. It is one of a number of methods which are used to produce a time-scale for events that have happened in the past. Some of the methods such as uranium-lead dating are useful for investigating the very distant past in terms of hundreds of millions of years. Others are appropriate for studying the more recent past. Carbon-dating may be of value in investigating the period between roughly 500 and 30,000 years ago.

Radio-carbon dating depends on the fact that a very small but reasonably constant proportion of the carbon in our atmosphere is radio-active. This carbon, known as C14, exists in the air as part of the gas carbon dioxide which is breathed out by all living things, but absorbed by plants during the process of photosynthesis in sunlight. When a plant absorbs radio-active carbon, its tissues become radio-active and when an animal eats a plant it similarly acquires radio-activity. The carbon can be extracted from a piece of wood or a bone and its radio-activity measured. If it is from a recently grown piece of wood or a recently formed bone, the radio-activity should equal that of carbon collected from the atmosphere, and this has been shown to be the case.

It is characteristic of radio-active materials that their radio-activity steadily diminishes because every atom that displays activity by giving off radiation (in this case by parting with an electron) is thereby changed into another kind of atom, which is incapable of radio-activity. The rate at which this breakdown occurs has been carefully estimated and it has been found that the half-life of C14 is rather

more than 5,000 years. This means that if we start with a certain definite quantity of C14 its radio-activity will have diminished to half in 5,000 years, to one quarter in 10,000 years, to one eighth in 15,000, to one sixteenth in 20,000 years, and so on. Since the total amount of radio-activity was very small to start with it will be understood that there must be a limit to the efficacy of this method.

The use of carbon-dating method is based on an assumption, namely that the percentage of C14 in the atmosphere has remained approximately constant over the last 30,000 years or so. It is believed that C14 is produced by cosmic radiation, high-energy particles from outer space which enter our atmosphere. When these collide with a certain type of carbon in the air they convert that carbon into C14. Thus the constancy of the proportion of C14 in the atmosphere will depend on the constancy of cosmic radiation. How constant this is, is again not very well known, since cosmic radiation has only been studied comparatively recently.

There are other snags of a technical nature too involved for discussion in a popular article. However, it is not for the fundamentalists to sneer. Scientists have a habit of facing up to snags and eliminating them. We can have little doubt that the techniques of carbon-dating will be steadily improved by patient research and critical investigation, just as the other methods of dating the past have been improved.

Some of the results of carbon-dating are of interest, since they can be checked against other methods of dating. A piece of wood recently found embedded in the wall at Great Zimbabwe, and judged by its position to have been placed there by the builders, gave a date approximating to 800 AD. Now Miss Caton-Thompson, who made a very careful archaeological study of Zimbabwe, came to the conclusion that it dated from the "medieval period", i.e. between 500 AD and 1300 AD. Both methods appear rather rough and ready, but they agree in suggesting that Zimbabwe was not built by Solomon's "Queen of Sheba", 100 or so BC, as certain romanticists like to think!

The dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls was another example. These were dated by palaeographical and other evidence (such as the nature of the Roman and other coins found in the ruins of the Qumran monastery) as having been written between 200 BC and 100 AD. Since the carbon test involves burning the materials, it could not be done



on the scrolls themselves, but the cloth in which some of them were wrapped was subjected to the test and gave the rough date 50 AD plus or minus about 150 years.

These facts do not suggest that carbon-dating is a completely valueless method.

[Reprinted from *The Rationalist (South Africa)*, June 1962.]

## Points from New Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

NOW THAT some measure of internationalism is under official discussion (Common Market, etc.), could we not have a Summit Conference to arrange for America to plan and man the defence of Russia, and for Russia to man and plan the defence of the United States? This at least would show that there is some good intention behind all the lip-service which politicians tearfully pay to Peace!

Anyway, the Summer months seem a fitting time for compromise on the reading front, for catching up with certain missed recent books. For instance, although I reviewed the first three volumes of Lawrence Durrell's Alexandria Quartet for one of the literary weeklies, I missed *Clea*. I have just filled the gap by reading this volume in the paperback edition issued by Faber at five shillings. Here Pursewarden is quoted as declaring: "Religion is simply art bastardised out of all recognition". A fair enough statement in so far as some of the less harmful religions are concerned; but we all know that religion can also be a sinister racket.

Another of Durrell's characters, Balthazar, points out that Circumcision is derived from the clipping of the vine, "without which it will run to leaf and produce no fruit"; and one kneels in church "because one kneels to enter a woman". So lots of oddments can be swept into a line of salestalk and called "religion"; and most people for most of the time will accept any mystery-mongering offered as the drooling of a holy man. Sanity remains with the rationalists and cynics; and I was amused by a sentence in a recent slick thriller, Philip Purser's *Peregrination 22* (Cape, 16s.) which is intriguingly set in Spitsbergen. The hero confesses: "I'd lasted three months as a reporter, at the end of which time the news editor had said not unkindly, 'Panton, if Jesus Christ had told you there was No Story when He walked on the water, you'd have believed him'."

Religion is the opium of the people, they say; and certainly any man smoking kif can experience all the apparitions, mystic voices and other thrills of the religious ecstasies. This doped way out of phenomenological existence is illustrated in a new book of four disturbing stories by the distinguished novelist, Paul Bowles, which appear in *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard* (Scorpion Press, 10s.). When one old Arab is told by his son that the authorities are out to condemn kif smoking, he cries: "You mean the government thinks it can kill all evil spirits? . . . They should let well alone. Leave them under their stones."

The nuisance is that a man full of kif or religion will not leave peaceful citizens to their own affairs. Witness the description in Frank Milton's *More than a Crime* (Pall Mall Press, 25s.) of the trial of the Popish Plot Conspirators. The judge discovered that one of the conspirators had been offered a reward of 30,000 masses for murdering the king. He remarked: "This is a religion that quite unhinges all morality: they eat their God, they kill their king and they saint the murderer."

## CORRESPONDENCE

### PEOPLES' DEMOCRACIES

I must assure your correspondent, Mr. G. Beddoes, that my training for the Church, whilst often useful in writing articles for *THE FREETHINKER*, does not influence—as he appears to imagine—my use of current political terminology.

If I refer to the "Peoples' Democracies" of Eastern Europe, I only do so because this is the present official title of the group of Communist states. It is, of course, arguable if and how far this title is justified, a query which in turn would appear to depend upon one's own political outlook and, in particular, on one's definitions of such terms as socialism, people, and democracy.

However, it is customary and convenient to describe political societies by their official titles, without inquiring too closely into their accuracy. For example, one uses the term, the "British Commonwealth", despite the obvious fact that the "wealth" of this institution has never at any time been "common" within the area that it covers.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, MP (*The Guardian*, 13/7/62), suggested an insertion in the Public Order Act: "or speeches calculated to incite racial or religious prejudice". I imagine the insertion of "religious" was prompted by the fact that a man prosecuted for prejudicial speeches against the Jews could successfully defend himself on the ground that the Jews are not a race—and whatever the Jews say of themselves they are not a race. But I am scared at the addition of the word "religious" since I feel sure that if the legal change had been made it would not be long before a prosecution against us would be started. Dr. J. V. Duhig's article in *THE FREETHINKER* (13/7/62) would be wide open to attack if it were repeated in part in a speech. We need to oppose the change, much as we dislike Jordan and his views.

G. J. FINCH.

### JAMES H. MATSON

Councillor Arthur Francis of Dover, who conducted the secular service for James H. Matson, whose death was announced last week, adds this tribute to our own.

"The National Secular Society was but 9 years of age when James Matson was born. Both have come a long way since then. He fought against the evils of his day—the day of 'God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations'. He said 'no', when others found it easier to say 'yes'. He chose a stony, and often lonely road, not the easy path, but he knew where he was going. His aim was a world of peace and freedom, of tolerance and understanding.

"He had no use for prayers or the supernatural. Deeds and people were what counted. He set a fine example of mental bravery that he retained to the end. A week before his death he told me he was dying. There was no fear in his voice. He had fought hard. Many of his battles are yet to be won, and we fellow Freethinkers must carry on, encouraged by men like James Matson. We know he would wish us well."

### ZOLA IN PAPERBACK

*Germinal* (Penguin) 5/-      *Thérèse Raquin* (Penguin) 4/6d.  
*The Sinful Priest* (Bestseller) 3/6d.      *Nana* (Bestseller) 3/6d.  
*Zest for Life* (Bestseller) 3/6d.      *Earth* (Bestseller) 4/6d.

"And what marvellous books they are!"—H. CUTNER.

from the PIONEER PRESS plus postage 6d. per volume.

### AN ANALYSIS OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

By GEORGES ORY

(President of the Cercle Ernest Renan, Paris)

Translated by C. Bradlaugh Bonner

Price 2s. 6d., plus postage 4d.

### PHILOSOPHY IN PAPERBACK

*Berkeley*, by G. J. Warnock, 2s. 6d.  
*David Hume*, by A. H. Basson, 3s. 6d.  
*Ethics*, by P. H. Nowell-Smith, 5s.  
*Hobbes*, by R. S. Peters, 3s. 6d.  
*Kant*, by S. Körner, 3s. 6d.  
plus postage