

The Freethinker

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AS READERS OF THE FREETHINKER may possibly remember, I mentioned here some little time back, that I receive regularly the house journal of the Jesuit College at Heythrop, in Oxfordshire. No doubt the anonymous donor sends me this interesting ecclesiastical production for the good of my soul—or perhaps for the good of THE FREETHINKER. Actually, I have had in the past, some association—if only an indirect one—with this notable ecclesiastical foundation, AMDG (*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*—the historic motto of the Company of Jesus since its creation in 1540). For, during the last war, Heythrop College was temporarily shifted to Walton Well Road, Oxford City, where I also temporarily was living due to the exigences of Hitler's London blitz. Actually, I was then situated between God and the Devil, since further down the road there also resided a former Anarchist Minister in the Republican Government of Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War; certainly an unusual combination of creed and of official position.

The Delicate Mission of Cardinal Bea

In 1962, the Jesuit Seminary of Heythrop, now again domiciled in the quiet Oxfordshire countryside around Chipping Norton, is due to receive a distinguished visitor this month, none other than that eminent pillar of the Jesuit Order and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, Augustin, Cardinal Bea, at present Chairman of the Secretariat of Christian Unity, reputedly the right-hand man of Pope John XXIII in his current drive towards Christian Reunion, which, under Divine Providence (and current Papal supervision), is destined to form the principal business of the forthcoming Ecumenical Council at Rome that begins its deliberations (DV) on October 11th of this year.

As already noted in this paper, we learnt that His Eminence, Cardinal Bea SJ, was to make a courtesy call on his separated Brother in Christ, Archbishop Ramsey of Canterbury, during the course of this visit—his first, we understand—to this historical and schismatic land. We must admit that until recently, we had never heard of this no doubt eminent Jesuit: even now, all that we know about him is that he is a German from Baden; that he joined the Jesuits in 1902 (he is now 81, a year older than Pope John), and that he was formerly Confessor to His late Holiness, Eugenio Pacelli, Pope Pius XII (who spent most of his diplomatic career in Germany). The Jesuits have the reputation of being traditionally "all things to all men", and no doubt Cardinal Bea possesses this qualification in an exceptional degree, since it would certainly appear—at least to the uninitiated layman to be no mean proof of dexterity to have been successively Confessor to conservative Pacelli, and then right hand man to the Liberal, Roncalli, who was elected in 1958 to pursue a radically opposed policy to that of the late pope. Pope John is now doing this by his current strategy on behalf of Christian Reunion to be

implemented at Rome this Autumn. However, Cardinal Bea is definitely here and, or so we learn, upon "a delicate mission".

Christian Reunion

What precisely this "delicate mission" actually consists of, we learn from a very informative article recently published (24/7/62) by Mr. Paul Johnson, in the *Evening Standard*. In order the better to initiate us into the real

nature of this so "delicate mission", Mr. Johnson, so to speak, takes us behind the scenes of High Ecclesiastical Policy at Rome. In broad agreement with the line recently taken in this paper by me, Mr. Johnson, who is obviously *au fait*

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Heythrop's Distinguished Visitor

By F. A. RIDLEY

with recent internal developments at the Vatican, begins by reminding us that the election of the present Pope and the inauguration of his present (relatively) liberal regime (a kind of ecclesiastical "New Deal"), represented the dramatic climax of a stormy and unusually prolonged Papal Conclave in October 1958, which only resulted in the election of Cardinal Roncalli after a fierce internal conflict with the fundamentalist, or traditionalist, party for so long dominant at the Vatican under previous Popes. Once invested with the pontifical tiara—an election that Mr. Johnson, like this writer, describes as a definitive victory for the liberal party in the Catholic Church and as "a massive defeat for the Conservative forces within the Church", Pope John set to work energetically to promote his present scheme for eventual Christian Unity. Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Christian Unity, as also his present visit to Heythrop form sequential aspects of this basic ecclesiastical strategy. For, so Mr. Johnson informs us, Pope John's ambitious plans for Christian Reunion are still meeting with fierce opposition from the powerful traditionalist party within the Church, adding specifically that the British Catholic Hierarchy are currently lined up with the opposition; they have no desire whatsoever, to be subordinated to the Anglican See of Canterbury in any future reunited English Church which may eventually emerge from Pope John's present schemes.

Briefly, Cardinal Bea's "delicate mission", consists in bringing the at present recalcitrant British Catholics to heel, for which purpose, Mr. Johnson tells us: "At Heythrop, Bea will give a top-level briefing to representatives of the Roman Catholic clergy in Britain. Over 80 senior clergymen will be present specially appointed from each diocese and from the religious Orders". What Rome's "man on the spot" will actually say, will be kept as a top-level diplomatic secret, but Mr. Johnson is of the opinion that "the August air at Heythrop is likely to be somewhat chilly".

Cardinal Mercier and Pope John

Actually, the visit of this important representative of Rome for the purpose of "reconciling" England ("Our Lady's Dowry"), to Rome, is not entirely unprecedented in modern ecclesiastical annals. For older students of Church affairs, will, no doubt, remember that in the years

just after the First World War, a round table conference at Malines, was initiated between representatives of Rome and Canterbury under the auspices of one of the most eminent churchmen of his day, Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines, Primate of Belgium (who had previously enjoyed the dubious honour of teaching philosophy to Fr. Anthony, Joseph McCabe), who put forward plans for Christian Reunion not unlike those now advanced by Pope John. Less fortunate than Roncalli, Mercier failed to secure election as Pope (though most of the non-Italian Cardinals are said to have voted for him at the also long and stormy conclave in 1922). Then however, the traditionalist party still held a majority in the College of Cardinals who eventually elected Cardinal Ratti who, as Pius XI (1922-39), turned out to be an extreme reactionary in both the political and theological spheres; a role in which he was faithfully followed by his pupil and later successor Pacelli—Pius XII. One of the first things done by the new Pope was to ban the Malines conversations *in toto*; henceforth "The One True Church" would have no truck with heretics. Now however, Mercier's spiritual successor, Roncalli, has managed to get himself elected as Pope, hence the all-powerful and Infallible Vatican has now come down heavily upon the side of Christian Reunion. It is this sad and surprising news that Cardinal Bea, as Pope John's representative, has now to break to the Catholic Hierarchy here, a body always notorious even in the Catholic Church for, its low intellectual level since Newman, and for its reactionary sentiments in every sphere. Evidently there are going to be high ecclesiastical junketings in the quiet Oxfordshire countryside around Heythrop! However, since the Pope is officially Infallible, whilst Cardinal Godfrey and Co. are not, Cardinal Bea will no doubt come out on top—with what final results, remains to be seen—at any rate until the next Papal Conclave when the traditionalists will no doubt try again to procure the election of a more conservative Cardinal such as Ottaviani or (a likely candidate according to Mr. Johnson) the relatively young Cardinal Siri, Archbishop of Genoa. For the Pope is already 80, and cannot be expected to last indefinitely, particularly with the arduous labours of the General Council before him. Meanwhile, their Catholic (including the English Catholic bishops), critics probably think that Roncalli and Bea between them, are ruining the Church!

I shall look forward eagerly to the next number of the Heythrop journal, *To Our Friends*, but in view of the well-known sagacity of the Jesuits, whilst I expect to learn how much they enjoyed Cardinal Bea's visit, I frankly don't expect to learn much else.

It must be added that Cardinal Godfrey has published a denial of Mr. Johnson's thesis that Cardinal Bea had come to Heythrop in order to discipline the English Hierarchy. However, we are still inclined to accept Mr. Johnson's contention, since not only is he himself a Roman Catholic but also an exceptionally well-informed journalist who, unlike the Cardinal, has no axe to grind, and nothing to conceal.

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From the Cameroons

By MARK LILLINGSTON

IN WEST AFRICA there are many missionaries, among whom are: The Church Missionary Society (CMS), with hundreds of schools, bookshops and churches; The Roman Catholic Church, with a great following and many churches, schools and hospitals; The United Brethren of America (UBA), operating with schools and churches in Sierra Leone and Nigeria; The Basel Mission, operating with schools and churches in the Cameroons; Jehovah's Witnesses, as noisy as ever. At the time of writing it seems to be a revival week—or maybe they expect the Messiah any moment. They have been marching up and down with a band, singing hymns rather like I imagined a New Orleans march to be, except that this is slower tempo and poorer music.

There is quite a lot of really good medical work, but it is too widely assumed that "of course the missionaries are doing great work educating and civilising the Africans: we must admit that!" I do not admit this.

When they first came, they may have prevented and subdued savagery. But the present law and order is greatly the result of an extensive civil administration. It is amazing how many police (a little corrupt) there are. The missionaries brought with them a glimpse of western civilisation of great interest to the Africans. The unfortunate consequences are the creation of wants that cannot be easily satisfied honestly, and the belief that because the white men are so much richer, better clothed and housed, everything they do or think, say and possess must be good—except when they suppress or abuse the African.

Diseases have been fought and medical attention brought to almost everywhere. There is fortunately no overpopulation in West Africa.

Thousands of churches have been set up for services and religious instruction. The Africans seem to be converted easily, and I have found no pagans—although there are some! There are many Muslims from northern parts.

Schools have been set up and are all over the coast (with much government support), though most important people have to continue their studies in Europe or America, of course. Unfortunately, as I have indicated previously, this education is likely to create a discontented, white-collar town population—people who are no longer willing to apply themselves to manual work, and who cannot get a job in the town. This is good for the business concerns (like the one I work for at present) but not for the African, for whom there are plenty of opportunities in providing raw materials and food for the towns. Price of local food stuffs are very high here (in the Cameroons), e.g.: small chicken 7s., eggs 6d., cabbage 2s. 6d. lb., beans 1s. 6d. lb., potatoes 1s. lb., grapefruit 6d. (1d. further north), meat 3s. lb. (1s. in north). So little agriculture is done in this country that staple foodstuffs are imported.

The present type of education fostered upon natives by missionaries is a very mixed blessing. It takes them away from their previous environment, but offers no substitute. While Africa is 95 per cent agricultural, the teaching is 75 per cent geared to commerce or government. Maybe there will not be a revolution in West Africa, but a less timid people might resent bitterly and revolt against the position to which they have been brought by the white "civilisers" and "educators". Many Africans were a damned sight more enlightened and contented, and a lot less uniform before they were indoctrinated with Christianity.

A Lift to Madrid

[Translated by John A. McKay, from the well-known Swedish paper, *Folket I Bild*, July 10th, 1962.]

THIS IS AN ACCOUNT of a conversation with a long-distance lorry driver along a Spanish Road. It is also a story of distress and humiliation, about police terror and priestly oppression, of a people living in the death shadow of the Falangist Regime and the Roman Catholic Church.

The lorry chugs its way along the twenty mile road to Madrid; at the steering wheel sits the silent black-haired unshaven driver. His glance is now and then fixed momentarily on the holes in the road. The ash from the cigarette I have given him falls down on his oily trousers whenever we are shaken by one of the many holes he has not managed to avoid.

"These bloody roads" he mutters half to himself, half in the direction of myself—the unknown foreigner to whom he is giving a lift from Almuradiel.

"But they are just newly made" . . . I attempt to begin the conversation again. "Yes the roads are new", he replies taking up the thread of the conversation, apparently relieved to have someone to chat with. "But that" he continues "does not prevent *them* having to start rebuilding every new road before they have even finished it". He deliberately heavily emphasises the word "them". My long-distance driver is obviously no friend of the Fascists.

The die is cast, and the careful skirmishing begins. Both parties wish to know where they stand with each other. In the meantime the lorry packed with giant olive oil drums has reached a point one mile distant from the Spanish Plateau.

This road-building is a good starting-off point for testing each other's attitude towards the Franco regime.

"The Americans are giving huge sums of money for new roads" I point out. "Why are they therefore not better than this?" "Because," he retorts, "the money disappears on the road to the roads". A smile hovers over his face for a second as he relishes his own pun. "How long have you been in Spain?" "I have been three years in Andalucia and the Canary Islands". "Well" he asked "I suppose you have seen all these luxury cars with the Madrid plates? That's where the money goes which should be spent on roads, industries, water systems and decent dwellings for the ordinary people."

"I'll eat here" says the driver without warning and nods towards a restaurant for wayfarers a little bit ahead. The engine changes down and we gradually draw up in front of the restaurant.

"We'll have about half an hour's delay" he says pulling on the hand-brake. There's a kind of query in his remark. Does he want to get rid of me? Does he think perhaps that he has already said too much?

"A cup of coffee with something to eat won't come amiss if you'd care to join me" I say. In the restaurant there are two waiters and a few other drivers. The talk is all about the weather, football and the loads they carry. Never a word about politics. The subject is taboo in all public places—enemy ears may be listening.

The driver's meal costs 3 kronor (about 4s.). This is the only warm meal he has in the day, I learn afterwards. I pay for both of us. This is normal custom in Spain when one is given a lift.

Without a word we speed on our way again. The only sound is the chug-chug of the hard-worked engine. The driver occasionally casts a glance in my direction. He seems to wish to say something but does not know how

to start. At last he commences hesitantly: "I don't know who you are, but I have a feeling you are interested in the truth. Are you a tourist?" "No," I reply, "I am a Swedish journalist". "Well then," he declares, "tell them for whom you write that Spain is not a good country to be in for those who have to work for a living and to retain their honour". "Why?" I ask.

"The police of course, they are everywhere, and where they are not there are the priests. Before I can even begin to look for a job I must have a certificate from the priest saying I am reliable and a good Catholic". "If this is not on my papers," he adds, "I have small prospects, if any, of ever getting a job." "Are you a good Catholic?" I ask. "No," he replies, "I do not pay into the funeral fund of the Church". He continues: "When a person like me sits all day at the wheel he has time to think. And I think that there must be something radically wrong with a religion which only goes out to make poor people poorer still. A good religion—or more exactly put, a real and true religion—should be able to exist without a lot of greedy priests who spring up all over the place and take money for everything. *God* needs no money. The priests tell us indeed that he is Almighty, while in the same breath they refuse to bury a poor soul who cannot afford to pay the priest for his trouble. You know, it's expensive even to die in this country."

By now the words came gushing forth from the driver's mouth. Whereas before I had almost to drag each word out of him, his speech has now become that of a man with honest convictions, who is at last freeing himself of a spiritual burden by telling somebody whose written words may eventually be read, about his and his comrades' conditions in Spain. He hopes that those people in the outside world will understand why despair and hate are growing from day to day in this unhappy land.

"My family is not well thought of by priests," he declares, and this seems to furnish him with more than a grain of comfort. "The Church has a funeral fund into which we must pay as soon as each of our children reaches the age of three years. The priests of course reckon that, once past the three years, the child will survive. The Church, of course, pockets the cash. But I refuse to pay."

"For myself," he continues, "they can dump me onto the refuse heap when I snuff it, but for my little boy, I myself am responsible for any expenses should he die before he grows up." To speak about death and burial for oneself and for one's nearest and dearest seems to be quite a normal phenomenon to this man. He's a Spaniard, and death is a very near concept. "Here in Spain," he declares, "death goes around with us like a very old comrade". "My brother is a Socialist," he continues, almost imperceptibly changing the subject, "He has spent most of his adult life in prison. Political prisoners are treated worse than animals. The last time he came out of prison I scarcely recognised my brother. His clothing had grown together with his sores. He came to me in the night and he stank like a sewer. He was never allowed to wash himself in prison. Each time he came out he said we must finish once and for all with the oppression of priest and Fascist. Somebody always squealed on him and back he went again to the lock-up."

(Concluded on page 260)

This Believing World

Although the Church of England has millions of pounds invested in property and capitalistic shares, humble vicars and rectors appear always to be scrounging for money to repair their old churches—and of course, getting it. Some years ago, six churches at Hemel Hempstead brought in a “professional fund raising firm” (*Daily Sketch*, July 18th) and got in £42,000 in four weeks—a glorious, if not exactly a pious result which immediately made the Church as a whole want “to borrow its technique”. The result, it is hoped, will enable the Church “to switch back to saving souls”, something which infidels like ourselves find infinitely amusing; for of course “saving souls” doesn’t mean a thing. It never did, but it sounds so inspiring.

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Is church-going a “status symbol”? This is what Dr. Hight, a lecturer in sociology at Glasgow University, maintained—and he added that “England was not becoming a classless society” (*The Guardian*, July 27th) for “social distinctions remained”. We have an idea that some of the novelists who have been “converted” during the past twenty years or so to Roman Catholicism were more concerned for the “social status” it gave them, than for its doctrinal content, or having their souls saved. But one never knows. Anybody who can really believe and proudly accept the “Assumption” of Mary can believe anything.

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How many “working-class” people believe in the doctrines of any Church. *The Guardian* (July 27th), printed some of the conclusions reached by Mr. P. R. Caim-Caudle of Durham University, and certainly these are interesting. He took Billingham-on-Tees as the “guinea pig”, and found out that in it there were (over the age 15) out of a population of about 29,000, “3,500 Roman Catholics”, and “16,300 members of other or no denominations”. About half the Roman Catholic population on Easter Sunday last went to church, but only 13 per cent of the non-Catholics attended. In general, over half of the Roman Catholics would go to church but only 13 per cent or less of the other Christians.

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All the same, Mr. Caim-Caudle considered that “however inadequate” these and even worse figures “may appear to people with strong religious views”, the impact of religion was “still greater than that of any other activity”. Only about 300 people were members of the two major political parties, and only about 500 attended evening classes. Nearly all the people of Billingham went to church to be baptised or buried, and three quarters of all couples were married in church. The truth appears to be that fear of some kind still dominates people who try to ignore religion—and it would not surprise us to learn that most, if not all, the people of Billingham have not only never heard of Freethought, but have never even seen a copy of THE FREETHINKER.

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That terrible disease scrofula, also known as the “King’s Evil”, which attacked the badly-fed seamen of 200 years ago or so, and was supposed to be cured by “the touch of a royal hand”, and which still attacks some Scottish islanders, can now, these victims claim, be cured by the seventh sons of their communities (*Sunday Express*, July 22nd). Mr. K. Munro, who reports this remarkable fact, says he has met one of the seventh sons who has found that he has such a wonderful healing gift. The islanders won’t touch drugs and prefer “the lukewarm water in which the healer washes his hands” to be applied. Need-

less to say, medical experts laugh at the lukewarm water cures; but “magic” among more or less primitive people can never be laughed out of existence, and particularly that of “a royal touch”.

A LIFT TO MADRID

(Concluded from page 259)

“Are you a Socialist?” I asked. “Perhaps,” he replied, “Socialism is the only way out of our misery.” “Do you think there will be a revolution in Spain?” “The revolution won’t start in Spain, it will start in Portugal. Immediately after the rising in Portugal we shall strike a blow against our Oppressors. The freedom movements of Spain and Portugal are working together.” “How long will it take?” “We can wait.” “Are there sufficient people to stake their lives for freedom in Spain?” “Do not count us in thousands,” he replied, “that is silly kid’s stuff. There are hundreds of thousands of us only awaiting the ‘All clear’ from the right leaders for the clash to begin and to last as long as we have warm blood in our veins. When the blow comes it will shake the world . . . unless Franco and the priests realise in time that the game is up.”

The road winds up towards the Spanish plateau. It is not so far now to Madrid. The driver is bracing himself for a declaration about the impossibility of continuing life under present conditions and why it is better and worth while dying in an attempt to secure a better life. “Just take me,” he declares. “And I am one of the favoured few. My boy goes to school. He is gifted, especially at maths. But he hasn’t a chance of continuing his studies. I earn only enough for food and rent, with barely enough over for clothing. My wife goes out charring with a wealthy family to help eke our pittance. She really is not fit enough to manage looking after the home and going out to work. She is a sick woman. Poor children can obtain help for studies if they are gifted, but my boy would not be assisted even if he were a genius. My brother is a Socialist, and I do not contribute to the Church funeral fund. That is enough for both my son and myself to be placed on the Black List. Now perhaps you will realise why I am not afraid to die so that my wife need not have to kill herself in order to augment my pay to cover our bare living expenses. Now you will perhaps understand why I would be prepared to die so that my son may have a better life than I.”

He halts his lorry at a bus-stop inside Madrid. We separate without even knowing each other’s names. Before leaving, he leans out of his cabin and shouts, “Adios y suerte” (“Good-bye and good luck”). Should not this have been my reply and not his?

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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Notes and News

THE LATEST Russian achievements in space (at the time of writing Vostok 3 and Vostok 4 are orbiting and communicating) must thrill all. Even the Pope, we note, has expressed his enthusiasm, though he believes in some unexplained way that if the flights were "to assume a significance of homage due to God", they would become "an expression of the true, peaceful and solidly founded progress of human brotherhood" (*The Guardian*, 13/8/62). More significant, we feel, is the congratulatory message of President Kennedy to the Russian astronauts. His remark that, "The American people, I know, wish them a safe return", offers a firmer basis for human brotherhood. We hope that both the USA and USSR will build upon it.

"AFTER YEARS of apparent quiescence, born of exhaustion, Spain is on the move", said *The Observer* (12/8/62), introducing an article, "Ferment in Spain", by Hugh Thomas, author of *The Spanish Civil War*. On page 259, we print a translation of a conversation with a Spanish lorry driver which first appeared in the Swedish paper, *Folket i Bild*, and which admirably illustrates that "apparent quiescence", as well as the "revolutionary yearnings" also referred to by Mr. Thomas.

WE OURSELVES have just returned from another largely Catholic country, Austria. And assuredly there were many outward signs of the religion. The old central part of Vienna must surely "boast" as many churches for its size as any city in Europe, not excluding Rome, and we dutifully did the rounds of them. It was quite an ordeal at times, not only on the feet but on the eyes, for the interiors are mostly Baroque of the heaviest, most oppres-

sive kind. (Ironically, the Franciscan Church was among the most ornate of all.) But there seemed comparatively few worshippers, as perhaps should be expected in a socialist city. And, in contrast to Rome, there was an absence of priests from the streets: no "black beetles" to be seen, in fact.

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BUT THEN, we visited the famous monastery at Melk, strikingly situated above the "arm" of the Danube, and there was still not a priest or monk in sight. Maybe they were all stored away in cells, though this was hard to imagine in such a luxurious establishment. Outwardly beautiful, inwardly the building is in the most magnificent bad taste. If it is, as claimed, the only completed Baroque building of its style, one should be thankful. In one way, though, it is assuredly far from unique: it has a piece of the true cross!

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IN THE country parts of Lower Austria there are hosts of little wayside shrines, but these again seem to be very largely relics of the past rather than features of the present. No doubt some pious people faithfully renew the flowers once a week, but for others they are almost a part of the landscape. From our admittedly limited experience, then, we should think that the Austrians, like other historically Roman Catholic peoples, are not immune to the general historical trend which, despite all the Church's claims of conversions and increases, is away from Catholicism—and indeed, Christianity.

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THIS IS NOT to say that the battle for Freethought is won, in Austria or elsewhere. Far from it. Ceasing to be religious is not necessarily synonymous with becoming a Freethinker, though it is a step in the right direction. And the influence of the Churches, especially the Roman Catholic, is still immense. A feature of our times, in fact, is the increase in influence of the Roman Church in formerly Protestant countries, concurrent with its numerical decline in traditionally Catholic lands. In these circumstances, British and other English-speaking Freethinkers can learn much from their Continental colleagues, who know what clericalism really means and know that it has to be fought fiercely and continuously.

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THE World Union of Freethinkers has never been under any delusion on this point. It knows that the only harmless religion is a dead one; that, only when Christianity is crushed can men's minds be freed. Behind the smile of Cardinal Augustin Bea (the "distinguished visitor" of Mr. Ridley's front-page article this week) it sees the most systematic perversion of the human mind in the world today. Behind the priestly jargon about "natural law", it sees the human, and particularly feminine, suffering: love dreaded and lives shattered by a celibate ban on birth control. And now, when the horror of the thalidomide babies moves all reasonable people to advocate medical abortion and euthanasia, the priests are shouting "Murder!" It would, as Mr. John W. Telfer says in a letter this week, make us laugh—if it didn't raise our fury.

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MEETING IN VIENNA at the invitation of the Austrian Federation, the General Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers agreed that next year's Congress should be held in Germany. Details remain to be settled, but the principal subject is to be the defence of the Secular State against ecclesiastical encroachments. After the Committee meetings in Vienna, a most successful public meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the WU of F President, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner.

That Mythical Theory Again

By H. CUTNER

LET ME BEGIN by reiterating what I have said so often before—that for Freethought and Freethinkers in general, it really does not matter two hoots whether there was or not an “historical” Jesus. No Freethinker I know or have heard about believes that Jesus was the “Son of God”, though I am sure that at least 80 per cent are quite prepared to believe that there was a Jesus of some kind who really existed; and many of these are quite sure that this Jesus—a man—went about “doing good”.

The only quarrel I have with this 80 per cent is that here we are in 1962 still fighting the story of Jesus the Son of God with millions of Christians who, even if many of them are quite apathetic, are always stout believers in “Christ Jesus”. They may discount some of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, but in the main they are quite content to believe with parsons and priests that, if these Gospels are not literally true in every detail, they are true enough for all practical purposes. Our “Unitarian” Freethinkers, that is, those who believe in a man Jesus, believe almost the same. Jesus *must* have lived for did not even John Stuart Mill declare in one of his essays,

Who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul . . . still less the early Christian writers . . . and so on.

G. W. Foote in one of his brilliantly written pamphlets—*What Was Christ?*—demolished Mill’s case as far back as 1887; but we can go still further, indeed as far back as 1795, to *The Origin of all Worships* by C. F. Dupuis. So great was his contempt for those who think that Jesus was a man, that he wrote,

We shall not enter upon the question, whether the Christian religion is a revealed religion or not . . . We shall not even at present examine into the question of the actual existence of a philosopher, or imposter, named Christ, the founder of the religion known by the name of Christianity. For even if we were to concede this point, Christians would not be satisfied unless we were to acknowledge Christ to be an inspired man, a Son of God, nay, himself a God crucified for our sins . . . Now we are far from granting so much as this . . . but we invite all who are content to regard him as a human philosopher, to enter upon this question, when we have analysed the religion of Christians, independently of its founder or founders . . .

And so far I have not found even one believer in Jesus the man, who has carefully examined this great work by Dupuis and—*answered* him.

My own position has been that, so long as Freethinkers are content to admit a Jesus—even of sorts—so long will Christians hope to convert them one day. You have only to take the case of the Jews during the last 1900 years. They have, except on rare occasions, always admitted that there was a Jew called Jesus who was merely a man; and Christians have never ceased hoping that one day they will believe that, going so far, they will eventually admit that this great Jew was really their God El or Jehovah. Even though, so far, the hope has failed, no true Christian has ever given it up.

But in the meantime, though Christians are certainly not the believers they once were, they dominate nearly all our national journals, the radio, and TV everywhere, with the Divine Message of Jesus—indeed, they have as far as I have been able to assess them, become as truculent and as aggressive as ever; and none of them wastes a moment on the “absurd” theory that “our blessed Lord” is—horror of horrors!—a myth. If Christians or their

journals are *forced* to deal with this problem, they have had since 1914 a simple answer. They blandly tell any enquirer that Rationalists themselves have given up the Mythical Theory since 1914. Go, they say, to Dr. F. C. Conybeare’s *The Historical Christ* which was published by the RPA then and has never been answered. And the problem is thus given its death blow.

The books by Dupuis, Robert Taylor, and J. M. Robertson these days are almost unobtainable even at second-hand. Thus Christians are almost without any opposition, and can assert what they like.

But what is it that they do assert? Their Jesus is the *only one* known in their history. He is not *really* a man, but Almighty God in the form of a Man who came to earth to save mankind. He performed miracles, healed the sick, was Virgin-born, was crucified, rose from the dead alive, and flew straight up to heaven to sit with God or himself—I have never been clear on this point. All we mythicists ask of Christians is to produce the *evidence* for all these claims and all we get is that about 1900 years ago some people wrote about these things in documents which nobody appears to have seen but which, over 100 years later, were copied so very badly that hardly any one of them agrees with another one. We don’t know *anything whatever* about the origin of a single *copy* of the Gospels let alone the originals, and the documents which survive are packed with marvels and miracles like those described so graphically in *The Arabian Nights*.

To put this in a nutshell again—there is no evidence whatever that the God Jesus Christ of the Christians had an historical existence. This is admitted by all our “Unitarian” Freethinkers.

But what about the *man* Jesus—not the God? What evidence have we that *he* lived? The answer is quite plain—none whatever. Where can we find such evidence, that is, does anybody mention any of his goings about just “doing good”? There isn’t a contemporary line anywhere.

Naturally, the man-Jesus supporters have an easy answer to this damning fact. It is that it would have been so damaging to the Christian Church that it took good care to destroy every trace of such a man. In fact, my friend, F. A. Ridley—whose brilliant articles on the theological and political sides of Roman Catholicism are such a popular feature of this journal—claims that “any such reference from non-Christian (Pagan or Jewish) sources would *unquestionably* have been consigned to the flames”. (My italics.)

But there is no contemporary evidence of Jesus, God or man, at all—not a scrap of evidence from his own times. No Jewish historian mentions him, neither Philo nor Josephus; and they belonged to the first century. But much worse than this is that one of the most quoted and respected of the early Church writers, Justin Martyr (c. 155 AD) actually does report that one Jew of his period (the middle of the second century when we are told the Gospels had been published for nearly 100 years) utterly denied the existence of Jesus. He said,

But Christ—if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere—is unknown and does not even know himself, and has no power until Elias come to anoint him and make him manifest to all. And you, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for yourselves, and for his sake are inconsiderately perishing

If, as Mr. Ridley declared in his article (June 8th) the Church destroyed “every hostile reference to Christ”, how

Odd Nun Out

By MARGARET McILROY

MARY CLARE BLAKISTON was sent, aged three, to a convent boarding-school. Unwanted by her family, and totally without experience of the world, she applied at the age of twenty for admission to the Order, and in due course became a nun in an Austrian convent. In *Odd Nun Out* (6s. from Leslie Weston, 100 Beaconsfield Road, Leicester), Miss Blakiston describes a number of incidents of convent life, and, by a remarkable avoidance of self-pity, contrives to make amusing, happenings which could be regarded as tragic. There is nothing here very new or startling to anyone familiar with convent literature. Life at her convent was not particularly austere. The food, in peacetime, was good, the beds were comfortable, and the nuns enjoyed an annual holiday at a mountain villa, where they did their stint of praying in a pine forest, and, says Miss Blakiston,

... used our time between
 The scheduled prayers just as we liked and walked
 Or clomb, or ran or romped, or read our books
 In shady boweries. There built we, deft,
 With rustic bark and carpets green of moss
 Our little altars to our chosen saints,
 And kept them daily bright with flowers, fresh
 And fragrant.

This would seem a foretaste of Paradise to an enclosed Carmelite.

Nevertheless the life had a grim enough side, with five hours of monotonous prayer daily, painful penances, long periods of silence and 5 a.m. rising in icy cells. The regular use of the "discipline"—a bunch of chains used for flagellation—shows the essential unwholesomeness of the monastic mind. "This chain," her superior tells her,

Of many a nun has made a saint . . . It disciplines
 Our thoughts and acts and words, directing them
 To love of God by punishment.

The "thorny leglet", a spiked metal band to be clasped round the leg on Fridays, set a tricky problem for the nun fastening it on herself.

... If too near the knee, a risk
 The wearer ran of losing it in face
 Of all, and if too far above 'twas clasped
 In many hours of prayer her leg grew numb,
 Endangering circulation . . .

Worst of all is the frightful, humourless inhumanity of the system, shown when, on the first morning after her clothing, Miss Blakiston did not know how to put on the

... complicated head-gear such
 As worldly dames, in vainest circumstance,
 Had never been confronted with.

No one was allowed to help her, for the oppressive discipline of the place left no room for simple kindness, and the new nun, inexpressibly humiliated, arrived late for prayers!

She discovered in the First World War how superficial is the boasted internationalism of the Church, as the Austrian nuns gloated over British defeats, and she was greatly shocked by the discovery that when the desperate food shortage left little to eat but turnips,

... Secretely
 The more important nuns were given food
 We minor nuns ne'er smelt, far less might eat.

Gradually Miss Blakiston became disillusioned. She found the futility and restriction of convent life intolerable, and bitterly regretted her decision to become a nun. Yet, she says, she

... would not to the pledged word I gave
 My god unfaithful be. And thus for long
 And grievous years I fought and struggled, mind
 And soul in agony of doubt and fear.
 I would not faithless be, yet lacked the strength
 To keep my faith.

is it that this passage from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* has come down to us? For here, Trypho claims that the Christians of his day invented the beautiful story of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, which is exactly what they did. No Jew would have said that later if he valued his life; and as our present day Jews look upon Jesus as a Jew, they are delighted that one of them should be turned into a God for 500 millions of Christians to adore and worship.

Moreover, our learned rabbis don't like either the theory advanced by Dupuis, that all religions are merely a rehash of Sun worship in some form or other. For that is exactly what can be said of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Modern research, it is true, has found other sources for both Judaism and Christianity; but Sun worship is predominant in both.

Let me put the problem very simply again. There is no contemporary reference whatever to any Jesus, whether he is considered a God or a Man. If the Gospel story requires several Jesuses to make up either the Gospel Jesus or—Mr. Ridley's own preference—to make up the "man" Jesus, he is still a "myth". Neither the God nor the man nor the several Jesuses give us the Gospel Jesus who, after all, is *the* "myth". Paul's Jesus appears to be—to me at least—up in the sky somewhere, and to make him a man, three of the Gospels (the Synoptics) have had to bring him down to earth. The Jesus of John is like the Jesus of Paul, mostly quite unintelligible to Christians. It is the considered opinion of many critics that both "Paul" and "John" are second century inventions. Just as we cannot find any contemporary evidence of either Paul or John as men until the second century when a flood of writings appeared under their names, so we cannot find anything about Jesus, God or man, until about the same time.

Of course, there were "prophets" and "hermits" and "monks" of a kind. There were certainly uprisings against the Romans by a number of Jewish rebels, and it is not therefore surprising that some of the incidents recorded about Jesus and Paul should have come from the life stories of such "heroes" or "rebels". Why not? Many of the stories found in the Old Testament have something of the same source inasmuch as it also utilised all kinds of legends and myths as well as actual historical events found in the stories of other nations.

But let me finish as I began. This is a free world (I hope) for all kinds of beliefs; and if any Freethinker, after duly weighing the pros and cons, feels obliged to believe in the existence of a real Jesus, even if he is made up of several Jesuses, that is his affair.

For me and for many who think about Jesus in the same way, I am convinced that the strongest attack on Christianity is not from the "humanist" or even the "social" point of view, but from the mythical one. To tell a true Christian that "our Lord" is a myth just like Jupiter almost makes him faint in horror. To tell him that Jesus was a man merely makes him break out in an indulgent smile.

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

- The *Children's Dictionary* by S. Johnson, D.Sc.
- Look and Learn* by S. Johnson, D.Sc.
- Both at 6s. each, plus 10d. postage.
- The *Human Body* by Cyril Bibby and Ian T. Morison, 2s. 6d., plus 4d. postage.
- Blackie Easy to Read Books*. (Hard backs) at 1s. 6d. each, plus 4d. postage.
- Blackie "Join up the Dots"* (Hard backs) at 2s. 6d. each, plus 6d. postage.
- Blackie "Picture Puzzles"* at 2s. 6d. each, plus 6d. postage.
- Very large stock of *Ladybird Picture Books for Children*, 2s. 6d. each, plus 4d. postage.

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The manner of her escape is perhaps the most surprising feature of this story. Considering her vows binding, she might have been enduring that hateful life to this day, but, happily, she discovered that an essential formality had been omitted at the time of her admission to the Order—she had not produced a Certificate of Baptism. Her vows, therefore, were invalid, and technically she was not a nun at all! The Bride of Christ realised with joy that she was not irrevocably bound to her Divine Spouse. She writes,

So there I was once more, in self-same plight
As eighteen years ago: no family
That cared for me, no money, no estate.
But now I prized right well the priceless gem
Of liberty that once in ignorance
I spurned . . . And out I flew . . .

This raises a most serious question. How many nuns are there today who are not as fortunate as Miss Blakiston; who bitterly regret as she did a decision taken in adolescence, without any real understanding either of the life they were giving up or the life they were entering? How many ardent young girls give their lives to Christ and find too late that they have thrown their lives away? To present this book to any young girl thinking of taking the veil would be a real act of humanity.

The book is delightfully illustrated with drawings by Helen Lawrie, which blend perfectly with Miss Blakiston's own humour. The blank verse, in which the book is written, cannot be called inspired, but it is pleasant and readable, and one senses a most attractive personality behind it. However, it is not as poetry that Miss Blakiston's book is memorable. It is good to see that a fuller prose narrative is in preparation, for one feels that Miss Blakiston must have many interesting things still to tell us.

By the Way

MUCH as Sir Oswald Mosley's activities and opinions are disliked, even hated, he and his supporters must never be denied the right of free speech. If so denied by suggested amendments to existing legislation, who is not in danger?

The following is an example which justifies the fears of liberal-minded men:—

The official Secrets Act of 1920, which amended the Act of 1911, was piloted through the Commons by the Attorney-General, then Sir Gordon Hewart. The amending Bill was strongly criticised and, in commenting upon one of his critics, the Attorney-General said—"He actually permitted himself to say that the real intention of the Government is to deal, not with spies, but with the opinions of men in this Country". Later in the Debate, Sir Gordon said of the Bill, "It is aimed at spying and the acts of spies and their accomplices and assistants". He further said, "We are dealing with the topic of spying and what is done by and for spies".

Eighteen years later a journalist was convicted by Magistrates for an offence under the Acts. His paper had published his paragraph concerning an individual who was "wanted" by the Police, under the heading "Frauds on workless alleged". Having obtained an "official secret" he refused to disclose the source of his information to the Police, and this was the offence of which he was convicted.

He appealed to a Divisional Court of the King's Bench Division. The appeal failed, and the presiding Judge concluded his judgement by saying, "In my opinion, this case is really too plain for argument and this appeal must be dismissed". So that the parliamentary critic who said

that "the real intention of the Government is to deal not with spies" was not, in the result, wide of the mark.

By the way; the presiding Judge was Lord Hewart, then Lord Chief Justice of England! ANTHONY JAMES.

CORRESPONDENCE

CORRECTION

As a regular reader of your paper, and because I am a first cousin of the late Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, I must ask you please to insert this letter in your next issue.

Miss Katharine Trevelyan, author of the recently published book *Fool in Love*, is not the daughter of the late Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, but of his eldest brother, the late Sir Charles Trevelyan.

Your mistake is an unfortunate one. When this book was published, Dr. Trevelyan was so ill that, fortunately, it was most unlikely that he knew anything about it. W. R. PRICE.

TV NON-CONVERSION

"I have never had a letter from anyone saying they had been converted, or started going to Church as a result of a TV programme." Mr. Michael Redington of ITV admitted this in a lecture in Oxford last week (*Church of England Newspaper*, 27/7/62). This frank admission should further our efforts for a fair hearing on radio and television. T. C. OWEN.

THOMISM

To Mr. Crommelin's quaint display of Thomism (p. 248) I should like to reply that the causal chain may with equal chance be infinite or closed, thus eliminating a first cause. Logical probability would therefore not point to a first cause but the odds against it would be 2 to 1.

To call a first cause "God" is entirely unjustified since it does not warrant its possession of the attributes which the definition of God implies. Furthermore the survival, i.e. present existence of the first cause would by no means be proved.

G. WAPPENHANS

EUTHANASIA

It is really pathetic to read about the maimed babies born due to their mothers having been given the drug thalidomide, but it is even more pathetic to read that, even in this age of science, religious organisations are opposing the humane doctors who suggest applying euthanasia to the worse cases.

Most opposition is coming, as expected, from the British-based witch doctors of the Church of Rome, whose hypocritical statements calling euthanasia "legalised murder" make one laugh.

Euthanasia in the case of deformed children, with absolutely no hope of ever leaving hospital, is not "legalised murder" as the Cardinals or Bishops would term it but plain common sense. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, of course, has never committed murder, that is providing mankind forgets all about the Inquisition, the St. Bartholomew massacre, the Smithfield burnings, the wars of religion, and the mass of present day iniquities they commit.

Freethinkers should support Commander Kerans in his attempt to have legislation introduced to have euthanasia made legal for cases like this; and if I were in Parliament, I would attempt to have a Bill passed suggesting that all representatives of the Roman Church be deported back to the Vatican because we have enough bigoted ecclesiastical nincompoops here already!

JOHN W. TELFER.

OBITUARY

ALBERT EDWARD HASSELL

It is with deepest regret that we record the passing of our valued friend, Albert Edward Hassell, who died peacefully on August 8th, aged 62 years, after a long and trying illness borne with courage and good humour. Albert, who was well known in the Freethought movement, has been an active member of the Leicester Secular Society for many years, as were his brothers Harry and George. He will be sadly missed by the LSS committee, whose meetings he attended regularly, and by all his many friends in the movement in Leicester and elsewhere. To his wife Edith, and all his relatives we extend our deepest sympathy.

A Secular service and cremation was held at Gilroes on Friday, August 10th. C.H.H.

NEW PENGUIN AFRICAN LIBRARY

- 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.