

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXXII—No. 34

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

FOR SOME MONTHS NOW, the brief reports of Executive Committee meetings of the National Secular Society have contained occasional references to correspondence with the Admiralty. The time has now come to elaborate on the matter.

On May 3rd, 1962, as Secretary of the National Secular Society, I addressed a letter to the Rt. Hon. The Lord Carrington, KCMG, MC, First Lord of the Admiralty, in which I cited the Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions for the Government of Her Majesty's Naval Service, 1953, Section 1827, Paragraph 3, where we read that, "All officers and men . . . are at all times to exert their influence against all that tends to the disparagement of religion and the encouragement of vice and immorality". I asked to be informed if this had been subsequently amended. If not (and it became clear that it had not), the National Secular Society urged that the First Lord should use his influence to have it amended.

## Religion and Morality

In the first place, I suggested, it was no part of an officer's or a seaman's job to exert influence either for or against religion. The Royal Navy accepts and contains men of different religions and none, and each should have the same right, when off duty, to discuss or argue for or against any faith. The second objection that I raised, was the implied relationship between the disparagement of religion and the encouragement of vice and immorality.

"Religious people," I wrote, "often identify religion with morality, but this is quite invalid, as we are sure you will agree—there are good and bad religious people as there are good and bad irreligious people. On the whole the criminal records, where available (as they are not in this country, though we have repeatedly asked for them) show that at least certain religious denominations (notably the Roman Catholic) are less law-abiding and more prone to 'vice and immorality' than non-religious (we have newspaper cuttings quoting Roman Catholic officials admitting this)." However, in this instance it was sufficient to point the lack of any automatic correlation between religious belief and good behaviour.

## The Admiralty

The Admiralty reply, dated June 1st, 1962, read as follows:—

Sir,—I am commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to refer to your letter of May 3rd and to inform that they have noted the views which you express.

2. My Lords do not, however, feel justified on this account in changing the Article of the Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions to which you take exception, and which does not in practice lead to interference with the private opinions of individual officers and ratings.

I can't say with certainty who was "commanded" so to reply, and who described himself traditionally and absurdly as, "Sir, Your obedient Servant", as the signature is not clear. Were it not a letter from such a venerable institu-

tion, I might have read the name as Cliff Cards or Cardo, but I can hardly think an obedient Servant would sign so familiarly. Perhaps it is C. G. H. Cardo. Anyway, the letter was from the Secretary of the Admiralty and bore the reference, N.L. 1345/62.

It was considered by the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society on June 20th, and I wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty the following day, saying that the Committee had found his reply "both unsatisfactory and inconsistent".

"You make no reply," I said, "to my suggestion that it is no part of an officer's or a seaman's job to exert influence either for or against religion. I should be pleased if you would state whether you share my view. Neither do you comment on the implied relationship I indicated between the disparagement of religion and the encouragement of vice and immorality. I should be glad if you would do so".

## Article Retained

Now, as intimated above, I have Mr. Cardo's(?) second letter, dated July 30th, and bearing the same reference, N.L. 1345/62. Once again he is "commanded by My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty" to refer to my letter—this time of June 21st. And he informs me that:

My Lords have taken note of the views of the executive committee of the National Secular Society. They have asked me to explain that they retain the article of the Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions which you have criticised because they believe it to be of continuing value as a general statement of the high standard of personal conduct required of officers and men in the corporate and disciplined life of the Royal Navy, especially in HM Ships at sea. They confirm that the Royal Navy is glad to accept and contain "men of different religions and none", and they repeat their reassurance that the private opinions of officers and ratings are respected.

This letter, I suggest, deserves a little attention. It is good that the Lords Commissioners should "confirm" that "the Royal Navy is glad to accept and contain 'men of different religions and of none' . . .". Actually it is not a confirmation, but an addition to the previous letter, but it is a useful official statement to have in case of need. Other parts of the letter are less satisfactory. The stubborn refusal to change, exhibited in the first reply, now becomes a virtual reiteration of the implied irreligion-vice and immorality relationship, to which I had objected in the Article.

## Discouraging Vice

Admittedly, it is necessary in the services, and "especially in HM Ships at sea", to discourage "vice and immorality", vague though those terms are. Had the Article read: "All officers and men . . . are at all times to exert their influence against all that tends to the encouragement of vice and immorality", there could have been no reasonable objection. But where does religion enter? What part does it play in discouraging vice? The answer is none. Individual chaplains may do something to discourage it, but it is not their main task. The "high standard of personal conduct required of officers and men in

## — VIEWS and OPINIONS —

# Religion in the Royal Navy

— By COLIN McCALL —



the corporate and disciplined life of the Royal Navy" depends in no way upon a belief in God, yet the old identification of religion and morality persists against all the evidence. The very fact that the Royal Navy is "glad to accept and contain 'men of different religions and of none'" refutes that identification. The service would hardly be glad to accept men if their opinions tended to encourage vice and immorality.

After participating in correspondence like this, one feels the futility of ever convincing some people by rational argument or by evidence. The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty will continue to believe the Article "to be of continuing value", however it may be proved otherwise. They believe not with the evidence, but against it. And this, of course, is the most difficult form of belief to contend with.

It might be argued that, since the Lords have given their "reassurance that the private opinions of officers and ratings are respected", we need not worry about one little rule, however irrational. But this would be too sanguine. The rule is not concerned with opinions privately held. Privately-held atheistic beliefs do not tend to "the dis-

paragement of religion". It is the public expression of unbelief that is endangered. The Article, in fact, identifies the atheist with the immoralist, legally as well as verbally. A sailor may hold the most vicious and immoral ideas with impunity, so long as he can keep them private. It is only the public expression of them that can be punished. The important question is: may an atheistic officer or rating openly state his views?

I realise that HM Ships can't be turned into floating Speakers' Corners, though the idea has a certain fascination. Yet they are regularly turned into floating churches. An irreligious seaman, it is true, may withdraw on such occasions, perhaps even without having to clean out the latrines; but this is not enough. The Admiralty should make it perfectly clear that all officers and men have the right, when off duty, to discuss and argue for or against religion, even though this would contravene Section 1827, Paragraph 3 of the Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions for the Government of Her Majesty's Naval Service, 1953.

For the time being, perhaps some good may come from publicising the position.

## Britain and the Common Market

By R. W. MORRELL

THE CHIEF talking point in recent months has been the Government's efforts to overcome any difficulties in the way of this country joining the Common Market. The main reasons for going in are economic, and these as such need not concern us here. But does religion enter into it? Most, if not all, supporters of our entering would give an emphatically negative answer to this, yet in doing so they would reveal how shallow their examination of the subject is.

Rome has always looked back with nostalgia to pre-Reformation days. Her aim has been to re-create the conditions which would allow her to attain to her old position as the only Church in Europe, with ultimate world domination. ("The whole world must be rebuilt from its foundations", declared Pius XII in February, 1952.) In its issue of March 24th, the news magazine *Topic* noted that not "since the end of the Holy Roman Empire has the Holy See been offered a Catholic rallying point like the Common Market. If the 'Pact of Rome' had been signed within the Vatican walls, it could not have favoured the Church more". The *Catholic Herald*, in its issue of June 8th, finished its leading article with this illuminating passage: "The Common Market may hold many economic, political and sociological dangers for the people of Britain and the Commonwealth. On the other hand, it does seem capable of providing the framework on which a new order can be built in Europe, in which we would be given the chance to re-create in the 20th century the Christian society which the political, industrial and sociological revolutions of the previous two brought down in ruins".

It would thus be short sighted to ignore the religious factor in our joining the Common Market. There are certainly forces active throughout the world which see in it a medium through which old positions can be regained and new ones seized. The sudden interest in unity manifested by Rome, without any effort on her part to give up her claims, is but another aspect of the same policy. Jesuit Cardinal Bea, close confidant of the late Pope, and a German, visiting this country to brief leading Catholic

clerics on "unity", will no doubt have covered other ground as well. His remarks will naturally remain secret, for Rome does not wish too much attention given to her plans, only issuing sufficient information to ensure that the faithful toe the correct party line. Indeed she has sought to cast doubt on the views of those who may point to her aims, as may be seen from the opening words of the article in the *Catholic Herald* already cited. "As Catholics" it said, "we can only be glad that the division of opinion on the Common Market issue has, so far at least, avoided dragging in religious red-herrings. The silly smear about L'Europe-Vatican has not gained any serious currency". This quotation suggests that the Vatican has no political aims, but the Pope's triple tiara is not worn for fun, and Dr. Lucey, Bishop of Cork, in a pastoral letter published in *Eire*, has stated that the clergy are men of great power "because they can declare what even Governments should and should not do". When necessary, as in the Maltese elections, Rome shows that she is prepared to back words with deeds.

It is doubtful if those who conduct the negotiations with the Common Market spare a thought for the religious issues. This is what the Vatican wants. The danger to the things we value, including the free play of ideas, rests not in the conversion of this country, but in a tie up between Rome and a reactionary body which could gain control of the Market. As Sir Arthur Bryant noted in *The London Illustrated News* for March 31st, once in the Common Market "we shall be in a minority in an organisation in which the decisions of the majority will have the power to bind the minority, not only for a few years but theoretically for all time". And we might well reflect on the words of Leo XIII: "To princes and other rulers of the State we have offered the protection of religion. Our present object is to make rulers understand that this protection, which is stronger than any, is again offered to them; and We earnestly exhort them in our Lord to defend religion . . . giving that liberty to the Church which cannot be taken away without injury and ruin to the commonwealth".

Of course, one victory does not win the war. Even if, as seems likely, we enter the Common Market, it does not signify defeat; it merely means that there is a stiffer fight ahead.



# What is Buddhism?

By F. A. RIDLEY

I RECENTLY attended a meeting of the British Schopenhauer Society at the Caxton Hall in London, on the subject of "Schopenhauer and Religion". In the course of the discussion, I put forward the view that anything which can be styled a genuine religion, must necessarily involve at least *some* kind of belief in a genuinely supernatural being or beings. I added that, since Schopenhauer specifically declared that any God who made this Universe must be some kind of a devil, and then went on to declare explicitly that, "religions are like glow-worms, they shine best in the dark", one could not reasonably discuss Schopenhauer's religion. In reply to which contention, I was informed that this most eloquent and subtle of German thinkers derived his basic philosophical tenets from Buddhism. One speaker even referred to him as "the Buddha of Europe", and that since Buddhism is, explicitly and by definition, a religion, so also it is perfectly accurate to describe its most distinguished European sympathiser as a "religious" man.

This above contention obviously raises the crucial question: how far at all, can Buddhism be termed a religion? For, whilst in the case of Judaism, Islam, and of course, Christianity, there is no doubt as to their generically *religious* character, in the case of Buddhism, the creed traditionally founded by Gautama Sakya-Muni (hailed by his followers as the Buddha or "Enlightened One") there is considerable room for doubt. Doubt whether the traditional founder of Buddhism himself, had any belief in the supernatural, or even whether the most ancient and authentic form of traditional Buddhism still existing, the Theraveda, or Hinayana School, the so-called "Southern Buddhism" at present current in Ceylon and Indo-China, can be fairly described as a religion at all.

Would it not be truer to state that the original Buddhist cult, as indicated in the oldest sayings ascribed to the founder or his original disciples, represented a humanistic semi-rationalistic cult not perhaps altogether dissimilar to such modern European cults as say, Positivism? A cult that, if it can even be described as a religion at all, can only be described as such in the terms used by say, Sir Julian Huxley, or Mr. J. Hutton Hynd (Secretary of the South Place Ethical Society)—a "religion without revelation", that is, not a supernatural religion at all.

The above point of view, whilst probably admitted by many modern Southern Buddhists, does not commend itself to those Buddhists who draw their inspiration from the schools of what is sometimes described as "Northern Buddhism", Tibetan Buddhism (which I have heard Ceylonese Buddhists deny to be Buddhism at all) and the various Mahayana and Zen schools in India, China and Japan. To these schools, Buddhism is essentially a *religion*: a supernatural creed, in the evolution of which, the historical Sakya-Muni Buddha (560-480 BC are his generally accepted dates) plays a very minor role, and in which the faithful are bidden to adore an entire sequence of legendary Buddhas (always referred to reverently as "Lord Buddhas") who are supposed to have visited this terrestrial world in prehistoric ages, much as some ultra-enthusiastic contemporary devotees of inter-planetary flight think up prehistoric space-ships from distant galaxies. Probably the evidence for both prehistoric Buddhas and for prehistoric space ships is about equal—viz. nil. However, when viewed as a Theosophical cult of this nature,

Buddhism is entitled to be described and discussed under the historically debatable assumption that it is a genuinely supernatural religion.

It is from the above genuinely religious point of view that two books by English-speaking Buddhist writers develop their theses: *Buddhist Thought in India*, by Edward Conze (George Allen & Unwin, 36s.) and *Buddhism for Today* by M. O. Walshe (George Allen & Unwin, 16s.). Both these writers argue their case explicitly upon the assumption that Buddhism is a genuine religion; an assumption which is actually rather surprising, in that both writers concede that the semi-rationalistic Theraveda probably represents the nearest surviving approximation to the original teachings of Buddha. However, the point of view of both writers—and of Dr. Conze (a former German Communist MP and Left-Wing expert on Fascism in his pre-Buddhistic days) in particular—is definitely that Buddhism is a religion. Conze even commences his undoubtedly extremely erudite survey with a slashing onslaught on modern mechanical progress, declaring *inter alia*, that Western man's spiritual faculties have been in a state of steady decline since the European secular Renaissance in the 15th century, and that modern technology has only succeeded in producing a new type of man to whom the spiritual truths enshrined in Buddhism (as in the other major religions) appears nowadays to convey no viable lesson.

After which forthright denunciation, our ex-Marxist proceeds to expound in great technical detail, the evolution of Indian Buddhism, culminating in an also detailed survey on the best way to attain Nirvana (non-being), the Buddhist *summum bonum* as the final cure for this suffering world; that deliverance which Buddhism promises to all men who will practise its precepts and consistently pursue the "Eight-Fold Noble Path" which leads ultimately to final cessation from the recurring treadmill of rebirth into this suffering world. For, as a religious believer in "rebirth", as subject to the basic human law of Karma, Dr. Conze perforce overlooks such obvious (at least to Freethinkers) mundane methods of shaking off this mortal coil, along with its perpetually attendant suffering, as say, taking a dose of arsenic, or the still more obvious method nowadays of trying to cross the road at rush hour on certain highways that we know! In view of the conception of "rebirth", such common sense solutions to life's ills are (in Dr. Conze's language) *verboten* to the believing Buddhist.

Mr. Walshe's shorter book, whilst less technical and erudite than Dr. Conze's highly specialised treatise on the evolution and logic of Indian Buddhist thought, is much more lucid and also much more comprehensive. It presents in fairly intelligible terminology a (so to speak) bird's eye view of Buddhism, from a religious standpoint that is broadly similar to that of Dr. Conze (Mr. Walshe is also introduced as a scholar of note). Both publications in their different ways appear to cover their respective grounds very competently, and as such form useful additions to the vast literature of Buddhism that has constantly expanded since the early studies of such pioneer specialists as Professors Max Müller and Rhys David.

From a Rationalist point of view, the original Buddhism appears to have been a semi-religious, semi-rationalistic form of Hindu philosophy that, as already noted, bore  
(Concluded on next page)



## This Believing World

Although the "Daily Express" is mostly on the side of the angels, with a weekly article on the exquisite happiness of regularly going to church, somebody let it down badly with a quotation (August 8th) from the American Atheist, Ingersoll. It is, "The hands that help are holier than the lips that pray", and represents pure Secularism. Perhaps the gentleman who chose it did not know that Ingersoll was an Atheist, or perhaps he himself isn't a Christian—even though he is on the staff of the *Daily Express*.

★

The same journal (August 3rd) gave us an account of a boy who was awakened out of a month-old coma by a hymn played by a Salvation Army band—"Jesus wants me for a sunbeam". But surely any old song might have done the same thing after a month—even the late Charles Coburn's "Come where the booze is cheaper" or "Two lovely black eyes". It was the noise not the words which "brought him back to life".

★

Whether Messiahs are still being born or not may be a problem, but we note that *The People* (August 8th) gave us particulars of the 40-year-old playwright, Mrs. Joudry, who is awaiting the birth of "the new Messiah"—her fifth baby. The second Christ is expected to be born September 5th, and with him will come "a miraculous change in the family fortunes". The birth of the new Messiah has been arranged by Bernard Shaw from the spirit world, and will be the result of "an immaculate conception"; and Mr. Joudry emphasised, "Make no mistake, this baby will be a second Christ . . .". We cannot help wondering what Bernard Shaw thinks about his part in the "immaculate conception"? Perhaps that indefatigable reporter, Hannen Swaffer, now in Summerland, will tell us.

★

On August 6th, the Church commemorated what the writer of "A Saturday Reflection" in the *London Evening News* (August 4th) calls "the mysterious event in Our Lord's life known as the Transfiguration". There is not a particle of evidence that it ever took place, and the Gospels are hopelessly confused about it. The Synoptics say that it was witnessed by Peter, James, and John, yet Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who did *not* see it, actually report it! While John who *did* see it, does *not* report it. The truth is that the Transfiguration was copied from Exodus 24, 15-17—as indeed are so many things in the Gospels from the Old Testament.

★

The Rev. M. Nicklin of St. Paul's Church, Harold Hill, has discovered—rather belatedly—that some churches are "little more than amusement arcades and social clubs" (*London Evening Standard*, July 28th); and he objects that so many churches have to organise garden parties, bazaars, and jumble sales. This leads to many clergymen "becoming like suave club proprietors". Mr. Nicklin is quite out of date. Churches have to keep going and the day has long gone by when people had to have all the fun in life suppressed when, like Jesus, the Greatest Man of Sorrows that ever lived, they were forced never to smile, never to go to a theatre or cinema, never to drink or play cards, or go dancing.

★

Can anyone imagine Jesus playing cricket on the village green, taking a hand at rounders, or, on bank holidays, enjoying the village fair with its roundabouts and freak shows? He would be much more at home with the lugubrious gents in Hyde Park and their banners blazing out an angry "Prepare to meet thy Doom". If the

churches prefer fêtes to this kind of horror, it might take them a little further away from Jesus it is true—but how much happier will the people be!

★

But not for the ITV's new Sunday school teacher—Miss E. Garnett. She is determined not to "sell religion as a sugar-coated pill to children" (*Daily Sketch*, August 3rd). She simply won't "sell religion by pop music", nor will she have "a Billy Graham approach". Even the word "religion" she insists, "always sounds so ghastly sometimes". She also does "not adore Victorian religion". Alas, we are not told what it is she is going to teach, but perhaps it is a version of either Calvinism or Roman Catholicism. If so, poor children!

## WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

(Concluded from page 267)

some affinity with modern Positivism and Agnosticism. The earliest dialogues attributed to Sakya-Muni are the most rationalistic, and depict him as an Agnostic rather than as either a Theist or an Atheist. In practice, early Buddhism seems to have been associated with a reforming Hindu movement directed primarily against the then developing caste system and in particular against the growing domination of the priestly Brahmin caste. Tradition represents the founder as a member of the rival warrior caste, traditionally jealous of the Brahmins. Originally and for centuries a purely Indian cult, there is no reason to believe that Buddha and the early Buddhists foresaw the later evolution of their local Indian cult into (as it eventually became), the first world religion in recorded human annals, any more than there is to believe that Jesus (or his impersonators), Paul or Muhammed foresaw a similar destiny for their also originally Jewish and Arabic religious cults. The subsequent evolution of Buddhism, like those of Christianity and of Islam, represents a complex chapter in world history beyond the scope of our two Buddhist authors, and one that also lies beyond the scope of this present review.

## THEATRE

### The O'Casey Festival at the Mermaid

As a Sean O'Casey and Mermaid Theatre fan, who applauds the idea of a London festival for the great Irish playwright, I am sorry to say that it got off to a bad start. *Purple Dust* has its moments, but that is all. Some critics have blamed the open stage, others the acting (which certainly could be improved), but the big fault lies with the play. It just isn't one of O'Casey's best. The Director, Peter Duguid, calls it a satire on the scale of Ben Jonson, and puts the idiotic Poges in "the gallery of great English comic creations". That is the trouble: Poges comes too late. It is hard to explain why we can accept absurd garb and behaviour in Shakespeare and Jonson, yet find it embarrassing here, particularly in a week when we have seen Mr. Macmillan grouse-shooting, but we do. Perhaps we expect more from O'Casey characters than from prime ministers.

Poges, in fact, has one lovely speech that might well be used at the Establishment Club. Wherever we English go, he says, freedom of thought always follows at our heels: in the press, in the pulpit, in parliament, and on the battlefield. But O'Casey is much more successful with the Irish workmen, the butler and maid, and the canon (with his concern over plunging necklines) than with his Oxonian Stoke and his pompous Poges.

In short, while there is poetry in *Purple Dust*, it is only a shade of *Red Roses for Me* and the great *The Plough and the Stars*, which will follow it at the Mermaid Theatre, London, on September 4th and 25th respectively.

C.M.C.

- ★ Yuri Gagarin's autobiography  
★ ROAD TO THE STARS ★  
(cloth covered, illustrated)  
5/- plus postage 9d.  
From the PIONEER PRESS  
Plus postage 6d.



# 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. L. EBURY, J. W. 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.

### INDOORS

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, August 26th, 6.45 p.m.: R. W. MORRELL, "Jesus a Myth".

## Notes and News

LAST WEEK, we printed Margaret McIlroy's review of *Odd Nun Out*, a blank verse account of convent life by Mary Clare Blakiston, Ph.D. This week we print an article, "The World Federation of Faith" by Dr. Blakiston herself. Sending it to us from Padua, where the temperature was 33° C, the author hoped we would publish "in spite of the anathemas and excommunications it is likely to draw down on me". We are pleased to do so. We also print Mr. P. de la C. Crommelin's "Further Reflections on Freedom of Thought". Our readers may not share all the views expressed by this ex-nun and ex-priest, but will, we are sure, acknowledge their sincerity.

ON ONE of the very rare occasions when Charles de Gaulle "let himself go in the presence of one or two of his assistants, he let the cat out of the bag", wrote Geoffrey Fraser (*Bolton Evening News*, 13/8/62). The French President revealed, said Mr. Fraser, "that his conception of Europe, at least in the first stage, is definitely Roman Catholic... he sees Europe as a solid Roman Catholic bastion, and that evokes in his mind memories of Charlemagne times". At present, as this paper has persistently but rather lonesomely emphasised (and does so again this week in Mr. R. W. Morrell's article) the Common Market is heavily weighted on the Catholic side, and that is the way De Gaulle wants it to stay. Hence his opposition to Britain's entry, entailing—as it probably would—that of Protestant Denmark and Norway too, and his opposition to the reunification of Germany, which would give that country a Protestant majority.

"ONE MIGHT even speak of mountains, and one should never forget these, nor delude oneself about them", said the octogenarian Cardinal Bea, President of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity, at a news conference at Heythrop College (*Daily Express*, 10/8/62). "We have only just begun to move towards each other", he added, "and cannot expect the prejudices and misunderstandings created through many very sad centuries can be overcome in a few years". The Cardinal, said the *Express* reporter, had thought out his replies carefully, and we particularly like that "misunderstandings". But the Cardinal admitted that the "fundamental issue" was the teaching of his own Church—"her nature and hierarchical constitution, her authority in matters of doctrine and discipline". If this problem was solved, he didn't think papal infallibility would present much difficulty. If . . .!

★

"DO YOU BELIEVE in life after death?" Sean O'Casey suddenly asked interviewer W. J. Weatherby (*The Guardian*, 15/8/62). "I can't," he went on. "I would like to because I have so many loved ones that are gone and I would like to meet them again. Then there's George Bernard Shaw, Shakespeare and the whole damn lot—you'd never get bored for a thousand years. But I can't believe it. I have tried but I can't. I can't see any evidence that points to it". The O'Casey Festival started at the Mermaid Theatre, London, on August 15th, with the English première of *Purple Dust*, reviewed on the opposite page.

★

IS IT part of the Roman Catholic Church's publicity policy to invite newspaper photographers to witness nuns taking their vows? The photographers could hardly be there otherwise. Anyway, on August 9th, the *Daily Sketch* middle-page spread was devoted to showing how Ethel Keegan of Dublin became Sister Mary Gabrielle Patricia, in the chapel of the St. Don Boscos Convent at Reading. We suppose the drama of the bride of Christ in white lace bridal gown changing into nun's habit might appeal to some, but it isn't our type of tragedy.

★

LONDONERS WHO, at our bidding (10/8/62), made a note of Sunday, September 30th as the date of the South Place Ethical Society's Freedom from Hunger meeting, are now requested to erase it. We learn from the SPES that the meeting has been postponed. Also postponed: the Humanist Council dinner, due to be held in the House of Commons on Saturday, November 3rd. New dates and arrangements for both functions will be given when available.

★

THE REV. Leslie Weatherhead, we read in the *Evening News* (11/8/62), would like to blue-pencil the Bible. Many of the psalms, he said, were nonsense, and he would cut out a "lot of bloody massacres and a lot of smutty little pieces that choir boys read on the quiet". The Old Testament, in fact, was "completely outmoded"; it was "immoral", for instance, to tell stories of children being bashed against walls. But Dr. Weatherhead apparently made little or no criticism of the New Testament, which contains the most immoral of all teachings—that of hell-fire.

★

THE OTHER London evening paper, the *Evening Standard*, recently had an advert from "Katrina" of Hove, Sussex. "Little Leo brings Good Luck to those who carry him", it declared, and offered "this beautifully fashioned Irish Leprechaun" and "a 1,500 word Zodiac reading" for a mere 5s. 6d.



# The World Federation of Faith

By MARY C. BLAKISTON

THERE IS MUCH TALK today of co-existence, the co-existence of ideologies, the co-existence of forms of government, the co-existence of political and commercial units. In fact, if on the one side there is a tendency, often violent, to break up established unity—each and every nation, big or small and even minute seeking an independence frequently detrimental to its own prosperity—on the other side there seems to be an equally strong trend towards uniting, forming federations of independent peoples and nations, commercial blocks and political coalitions. We might say this is the age of mosaics, each little unit conserving its identity but contributing, analytically if not synthetically, to the whole picture, that must be viewed at a certain distance of time and space in order to grasp the connected whole.

In the field of religion, too, side by side with the teeming of ever new sects, there arises from all sides a deeply felt appeal for unity, almost as though the men of this earth were rallying together in a last, desperate attempt to present themselves with a united religious front to the new worlds—possibly inhabited—that they expect to conquer in a not very far off future. But, strange to say, what is being aimed at here seems to be complete amalgamation rather than the peaceful federation of independent units that would allow the peaceful co-existence of religions in love and harmony. It does not seem likely that complete unity in faith can be achieved on any universal scale in the form of an integral amalgamation of faiths, with any already existing drawn-up creed, fixed and unalterable down to the last details, under the absolute authority of the head of such a religion, declared to be the one and only true religion—all other faiths, by inference or explicitly, being deemed false and void of truth.

Would not a form of World Federation of all religions, preserving their own characteristic identity in details, respecting and loving one another, not attempting to outrival but assist one another, be a more feasible and less Utopian systematisation? Could not all religions be held together in peaceful co-existence and love by abolishing the unsurmountable barriers created between them by imposed articles of faith, and the challenging assumption that one and only one is the true religion with which all others must blindly amalgamate, renouncing completely their own characteristic identity and individuality? Is not the Truth seen better when it is viewed from different quarters?

And instead of submitting to an absolute, inappellable authority, could not men be invited to acknowledge and live by the universal Law of Nature, implanted in the hearts of all, which may be summed up: "Do as you would be done by?" A World Federation of independent but reciprocally friendly and helpful religions, none claiming pre-eminence over the others, but acknowledging, ungrudgingly, that *all* religions are good, in as much as they all aim at honouring God and at inculcating the Law of Nature, by which men become morally better.

Christ in his last testamentary speech to his disciples on the Eve of his passion and death, repeatedly stressed two points: the necessity of Oneness in Faith and of Love for other men. Ever and again he came back to these two items of his religious programme, in the course of that evening, changing the form under which he presented them, but never altering the underlying substance of his teaching. The religion he was founding must be a re-

ligion comprehensible to all and having such a wide horizon that it could be acceptable to all. Therefore Christ defined no dogmas, he drew up no fixed set of creeds to be imposed upon his disciples and followers. He spoke only of the two pillars of his religion, Oneness in Faith and Love in action; for the temple he was about to build must be so capacious that it could shelter, console and give joy to the whole of mankind. By splitting up his doctrine into hundreds of minor articles of faith, each and every one of them proposed to the faithful as compulsory, Christ would have enriched the concept of "his religion", but reduced its all-embracing universality, its applicability and acceptability to all, just as the concept "animal" embraces all men and animals on this and other worlds but, specified by "mammal", "bird", "fish", becomes richer in content but decidedly more limited as to the number of individuals it can be applied to.

Moreover, had Christ wished his religion to be of a kind that necessitated its being later elaborated and explained (albeit by the finest intellects of this world), split up into abstruse mysteries and infallible dogmas, offered to the unlearned masses as *his* doctrine, without which salvation is impossible, how was it that he chose as his first disciples men of slow comprehension: simple, unlettered fishermen? Surely this is a clear indication that his religion was to be comprehensible to all and to present a fundamental basis for a World Faith!

Dogmas and articles of faith do not of themselves raise barriers to universality. It is only when they are imposed as a *sine qua non* to salvation and righteousness, so much so that in past ages men and women belonging to different religions have been put to death and tortured for declaring that they could not believe in this or that article of faith, that they become unsurmountable barriers to other religions, nations and peoples.

Humans are not better men and women for what they believe or disbelieve, but for what they do or omit to do. This is the ethical basis of all true religions, without which none can be genuine. Christ, too, even more than Oneness in Faith stressed Love in action, the latter being based on the former. The claim of any one religion to be the only true religion, thereby proclaiming—by inference or explicitly—that all other religions are false, fails gravely in love and respect for other groups of individuals, bound together by the common and highly laudable aim to honour God and make men better. No man taken as an individual or as a group of individuals forming a church can be condemned for the minor articles of faith he accepts or rejects, but only for deeds not conforming to the Law of Love.

Religion, true religion, more than belief, is primarily action; action imbued with universal love, from which no one is excluded.

## SPECIAL OFFER

**Rome or Reason** by R. G. Ingersoll.

**Thomas Paine**, by Chapman Cohen

**Marriage: Sacerdotal or Secular**, by C. G. L. Du Cann.

**Robert Taylor and What is the Sabbath Day?** by H. Cutner.

**From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church**

by Prosper Alfarié

**Chronology of British Secularism** by G. H. Taylor

**Lift Up Your Hearts (Anthology for Freethinkers)** by W. Kent.

Value 10/9d. for 6/- including postage.



AN EX-PRIEST

# Further Reflections on Freedom of Thought

By P. DE LA CHEROIS CROMMELIN

IN A PREVIOUS article I indicated that while I am happy to be called a Freethinker, I am not equally well disposed to the title of Atheist. All Freethinkers do in fact agree in rejecting the popular deities who receive the homage of mankind. This however could be regarded simply as the rejection of idolatry, leaving the mind free for a metaphysical conception of the universe which need not logically be atheistic in character. I have little or no doubt that metaphysical monotheism did in fact originate as the expression of a free mind meditating on the nature of existence.

The ultimate aim of all freethinking is to be found in the enrichment of our human existence, by means of a better, clearer, fuller knowledge of the nature of things. To achieve this object it may be necessary, and is in fact necessary to clear the jungle of religious beliefs which obstruct the path to clearer knowledge. Even in those gardens which appear to be highly civilised and well cultivated, fresh weeds are constantly appearing and must as constantly be removed, if the garden is to be saved from reverting to its jungle condition. THE FREETHINKER is rendering real service by continually clearing the jungle and weeding the garden of religious imagination.

As human history evolves and becomes more and more critical of its own methods of recording events and their significance, it becomes more and more evident that there is nothing in real history to suggest that anything has ever happened to justify human belief in the supernatural. Through long periods, belief in supernatural authority and vocation has been a cause of conflict between human beings, who without this belief might have been able to live peacefully and usefully and happily together. Reacting to the historical evidence available, the Freethinker feels that religious belief is a human error which ought to have been rectified ages ago.

Religion really belongs to a past, which should long ago have ceased to trouble, haunt, or impede the material progress of mankind. Religion, however, cannot be destroyed merely by vulgarly abusing popes, bishops, priests and other religious fanatics who do their best to keep alive what ought to be allowed to die a natural death. Christians under fanatical leadership are quite capable of embarking on a nuclear war in defence of Christianity, and would prefer to see the world destroyed rather than change their faith, even when it can be demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt, that their faith is devoid of any rational foundation.

I would like to suggest that militant Freethinkers can wage a perfectly rational warfare against Christianity or any other religion, without actually or positively denying the existence of God.

Atheism is certainly one way of attacking religion. If God does not even exist, then obviously any claim to have received a divine revelation must of its very nature be a false claim. If there is no God, there can be no word of God. If there is no God, there can be no Church of God; the Catholic Church cannot have received Divine and Infallible Authority to govern all mankind.

Atheism however is not the only or even the best way of attacking religion. The best way is to assume, at least for the sake of argument, that a true God does exist, and that the true God is outraged and insulted by the absurdities of religious dogma, and by the wickedness of those who exploit human weakness and credulity for

ignoble purposes quite unworthy of the true God who is Truth itself and Goodness itself.

The growth of Communism has greatly stimulated the growth of Atheism throughout the world. There can be no doubt about that. We must remember however that Communists have been people in a hurry, in a very great hurry. This hurry has been necessitated by the extremely hostile and belligerent attitude of the rest of the world, dominated by people who for entirely material reasons fear the spread of the revolutionary movement. The Communists in desperate haste to build and fortify the new social order, have not had time to work out a complete philosophy of life and liberty for the individual. The creation of a new social vision and consciousness has involved unbearable pain and hardship for many people, including some religious people who for religious reasons, have felt it necessary to resist the inevitable growth of the new system.

Christians should remember that when Christianity began, the early Christians were themselves regarded as atheists by the upholders of an earlier tradition. If Christians can be patient and refrain from leading the world to destruction through their irrational fear and hatred of the new atheism inspired by Communism, they may find that a fully mature Communism is not incompatible with religious worship, so long as this is kept within reasonable bounds and does not claim for itself any special power or privilege. Communist government cannot be expected to tolerate the re-emergence of a class of people who claim a supernatural right to govern the government in a manner completely undemocratic.

To the people who say they would sooner be dead than Red, we might well reply that there would be far more liberty for the individual in a communist world than in a divided world haunted throughout by the dread of nuclear explosion. Far more freedom of thought in a world dominated by the Kremlin than a world dominated by the Vatican!

But Freethinkers do not want to be dominated by the Kremlin or the Vatican, any more than they want to be dominated by Whitehall or the Pentagon. Freethinkers are those who want to have a mind of their own, even when there is not much else which they can call their own. Whether they are Atheists or not they certainly do not want their lives regulated and regimented by a religious dogma which they have come to regard as completely untrue.

Any human institution can become a menace to freedom if it comes to be accepted without a continual and searching questioning of the veracity of its doctrine, and the authenticity of its contribution to the betterment of human life.

Freethinkers certainly have a duty to go on resisting the Christian propaganda which tries to make people believe that the only alternative available to free people at the present time is that between orthodox Christianity and "godless Communism." There is possible a more liberal solution to our problems.

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.



## Soldiers, Sailors and Religion

WE RECENTLY read the entertaining *Passenger to London* by Gerard Fay, London Editor of *The Guardian* (published last year by Hutchinson's), and came across this story. After a bloody skirmish Mr. Fay found the "tough little Methodist" padre disconsolate in a farmhouse which the doctor had been using as an aid post. The padre had a list of the dead and said: "Seven of them, seven of them died in my arms and not one asked me to say a prayer for him". It was tough for him, says Mr. Fay, "to face the fact that a dying man would prefer a cigarette or a cup of tea to any sort of viaticum that he could offer". "They say sailors are all devout men", he continues, "because they live surrounded by vast seas and skies which speak to them of God's power. Regular soldiers—officers anyway—make much of the the forms of religious practice: but not even violent and sudden death could make our soldiers believe in anything to do with religion". We suggest, incidentally, that the devoutness of sailors is merely hearsay, vast seas and skies notwithstanding.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FROM DR. PAMPLIN

Thank you for sending me a copy of THE FREETHINKER containing Colin McCall's article on the newspaper reports of my booklet.

I am very annoyed with newspapermen in general because although the profits, if any, resulting from the sales of *A Draft for the Book of Creation* will go to "War on Want", none of them was willing to publish the address of my publisher: The Paperback, Saddler Street, Durham. They were not prepared to give me free advertisement, though they were quite prepared to misrepresent me by quoting out of context.

If sometime in the near future I were to write an article explaining my purpose in writing the booklet, would you consider it for publication? And would you allow the title and publisher of the pamphlet to be included?

Have any subsequent articles or letters appeared in your journal on this subject.

I must say in conclusion that I found Colin McCall's article quite fair considering his obvious opposition to my aims and his (frankly admitted) inadequate reading of my writings.

(Dr.) B. R. PAMPLIN.

[We have informed Dr. Pamplin that we would certainly consider his article for publication and allow the title and publisher of the pamphlet to be included.—ED.]

### SPURGEON

In her article, "The Church and the Theatre" (August 10th), Mrs. Eva Ebury refers to Spurgeon as "the great Wesleyan preacher". May I point out an error here. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a Baptist minister and preacher, the bright star of the preaching profession of that sect.

It may be of interest to readers of THE FREETHINKER, to quote the following warning to youths who played ball on a Sunday, and which is to be seen on the outer wall of the oldest Baptist church (chapel) in the West, in the village of Llanvaches, in South Monmouthshire:

Oh! all ye who come here on Sunday,  
To practise playing ball,  
Take care afore the Monday,  
The Devil won't have you all.

EDWARD PRICE.

### NO COMMENT

I am sure that many FREETHINKER readers have been interested in the article "Hunting, shooting and praying" from *The Observer* of August 5th. We read, *inter alia*, that "more murders have been committed in Texas than in any other state", and "according to the 1954 Gallup Poll, 61% of Texans read no book except the Bible". Should we comment? SYDNEY DAURAT.

### PELICAN PHILOSOPHY

- 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.  
William James, by Margaret Knight, 2s. 6d.  
Kant, by S. Körner, 3s. 6d.  
Plus postage.

## PAPERBACKS

- The Human Body** by Cyril Bibby and Ian T. Morison. (Puffin Book). Ideal for young people. 2s. 6d.  
**One Woman's Fight** by Vashti McCollum. Revised Edition, with a Postlude by Paul Blanshard, a Preface by George Axtelle and the complete text of the Supreme Court Decision on religious instruction in US public schools (the "McCollum Case"), 13s. 6d.  
**Man and His Gods** by Professor Homer W. Smith (500 pages), 12s.  
**The Lost World of the Kalahari** by Laurens van der Post, 3s. 6d. Plus postage.

### PENGUIN SPECIALS

- Britain in the Sixties—Education for Tomorrow**, by John Vaizey 2s. 6d. plus 5d. postage.  
**Britain in the Sixties—Communications** by Raymond Williams, 3s. 6d. plus 5d. postage.

### PENGUIN REFERENCE BOOKS

- Roger's Thesaurus**, 6s. plus 8d. postage.  
**The Penguin Dictionary of Quotations** by J. M. and M. J. Cohen. 10s. 6d. plus 1s. postage.

### PELICAN BOOKS

- Anatomy of Prison**, by High J. Klare, 4s. plus 5d. postage.  
**The Theory of Evolution** by John Maynard Smith, 7s. 6d., plus 6d. postage.  
**Chemistry** by Kenneth Hutton, 5s., plus 6d. postage.  
**The Dead Sea Scrolls in English**, by G. Vermes, 4s. 6d. plus 6d. postage.  
**The Dead Sea Scrolls**, by John Allegro, 3s. 6d. plus 5d. postage.  
**Psychiatry Today**, by D. Stafford-Clark, (*The BBC Psychiatrist*) 4s. plus 6d. postage.  
**Social Psychology of Industry**, by J. A. C. Brown, 4s., plus 6d. postage.

## 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.

WANTED.—2 or 3 rooms, frn. or unfurn., for man, wife, 3 children, anywhere in London, preferably West area.—Box 128.

**FREEDOM'S FOE: THE VATICAN.** By Adrian Pigott. Illustrated. Price 3/-; postage 6d.

**A SHORT HISTORY OF SEX WORSHIP.** By H. Cutner. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

**THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (11th Edition).** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 5/-; postage 8d.

**AGE OF REASON.** Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 5/-; postage 7d.

**THE THINKER'S HANDBOOK** By Hector Hawton. Price 5/-; postage 7d.

**PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.** 18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one Volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker. Price 5/6; postage 8d

**CATHOLIC ACTION.** By Adrian Pigott. Price 6d; postage 3d.

**FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW.** By Robert S. W. Pollard. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

**MATERIALISM RESTATED** (Third edition). By Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 7d.

**MEN WITHOUT GODS.** By Hector Hawton. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD.** By Grant Allen. Price 3/6; postage 8d.

**THE LIFE OF JESUS.** By Ernest Renan. Price 2/6; postage 5d

**THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION.** By Lord Raglan. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

**A LETTER TO ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS.** By Emmett McLoughlin (An Ex-Franciscan Priest). 2/6 per doz. (incl. postage).

**POPE JOHN AND THE COLD WAR.** By F. A. Ridley. Price 5/-; postage 4d.