

The Freethinker

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A NEW BOOK by Paul Blanshard is an event, for he has established himself as the most perceptive—and therefore telling—critic of Catholicism in the English-speaking world. A few weeks ago (July 20th) I had the pleasure of introducing readers to a remarkable philosophical work, *Reason and Analysis* (George Allen & Unwin, 55s.) by his brother, Professor Brand Blanshard of Yale. Paul Blanshard's *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal*

(Beacon Press, Boston, \$3.95) is, of course, very different, but it shows the same notable combination of extreme fairness to opponents and searching analysis. Yes, Blanshard is as fair as he can be to Franco, Salazar and the Roman Catholic Church. He doesn't, like some of their critics, present merely the case for the prosecution—a policy which, as a lawyer, he knows will only satisfy an already biased judge—but allows for subtleties and complexities. He knows that interests must sometimes clash, even in Spain, where the mutual services of Franco to the Church and the Church to Franco may be considered about equal. And Franco, an expert in playing factions against one another might well relish a protracted struggle between the Jesuits and Opus Dei. Mr. Blanshard has, of course, considerable background experience from eight periods of residence and study in Europe, including a visit to Spain in 1933, and again in 1959, when he and his wife "trundled to almost every corner of Spain and Portugal, spending four months in the most intensive interviewing I have ever attempted in my life".

Behind Closed Doors

He found that the people of both countries "talked quite freely—behind closed doors". Thanks to "impeccable credentials", he was able to reach the most secret sources of the anti-Franco and anti-Salazar opposition, and Protestant and Jewish minorities; he spoke to high Jesuits and important Catholic laymen; to "people of every class, priests, Catholic editors, Protestant clergymen, industrial leaders, Falange and Union Party leaders, librarians, university professors, American diplomats, Socialists, government officials" everybody except the Communists. They had to live too far underground to risk conversation with a non-Communist. Mr. Blanshard is a non-Communist, but he sees the struggle between East and West as "not only a struggle of intercontinental ballistic missiles but a struggle of ideas in which our moral prestige still has incalculable worth". And in terms of moral prestige, he maintains, "we have paid too high a price already for our alliance with Franco".

The Iberian peninsular [says Mr. Blanshard] is not, as some people might suppose, a minor backwater in the critical struggle between Communism and democracy. It is, rather, a crucial testing ground for the West's philosophy of freedom. In this southwestern corner of Europe, partially cut off from the rest of the Continent by the Pyrenees, are two of the most fascist nations in the world, which claim also that they are the two most Catholic nations in the world. They are ruled by Catholic and fascist dictators who have the official blessing of their Church.

End Alliance

America proved her belief in a free world when her United Nations representatives denounced Salazar's African imperialism last year. Mr. Blanshard wants her to end the alliance with Franco at the first possible moment consistent with her treaty obligations.

"Curtain of Incense"

Unfortunately, the US State Department shows very little likelihood of doing this. The Voice of America radio regularly condemns Communist totalitarianism, but never that of Franco or Salazar. These regimes are protected from criticism by what one writer has aptly called a "curtain of incense", for, while a few American Catholic journals, like *Commonweal* and *The Criterion* are caustically critical, the great diocesan weeklies, which are directly controlled by the bishops—and which altogether claim a circulation of almost 25 million—"continuously manufacture a prettified image of Franco's Spain". And, last December, Dean Rusk paid a friendly visit to Franco in Madrid, staggering Spanish—and for that matter, all—liberals by his praise for the dictator. (A photograph of the two men shaking hands appeared in the American, and presumably the Spanish, press.) This is particularly distressing at a time when Franco's regime is beginning to show signs of wear.

Catholic Opposition

In fact, the "most inspiring discovery" of Mr. Blanshard's 1959 visit to Spain was the terrific Catholic opposition to Franco, and "to their own bishops' collaboration with Franco". This was particularly so among the younger Catholics. When Mr. Blanshard "challenged them to name a single prominent clerical leader in Spain who had come out openly against the regime there was often silent embarrassment". One bishop, Dr. Antonio Pildain, was occasionally mentioned as attacking the Falange syndicates in 1951, but he had been assigned to the Canary Islands. "He was not wanted on the mainland".

No bishop within Spain could be discovered who had been aggressive or open in basic criticism. A few, very few, bishops had made public complaints about the poverty and suffering of the people, but they were careful not to couple such questioning with any fundamental challenge to the policy of dictatorship, or with a demand for any genuine democracy. The Abbot of Montserrat, Aureli Maria Escarre, was most frequently mentioned as anti-Franco, but he was banished by the Vatican at Franco's request. Angel Herrera, Bishop of Malaga, was also mentioned frequently. There is no doubt that he has tried to awaken the social conscience of the nation, but he is not by American standards a champion either of democracy or freedom.

Portugal

In Portugal, while the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon—once a room-mate of Salazar in his student days—has always been a loyal supporter, the Bishop of Oporto, Antonio Ferreira Gomes, wrote a letter of protest against the regime in 1958, and was deported. Mr. Blanshard obtained a copy of the notorious letter and found it for the most part "a mild moral censure", not the kind that

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Spain and Portugal

By COLIN McCALL

"would have created any great stir in a democratic country". And the Bishop was "careful to say that he was writing not as a representative of the Church but simply as an individual". Still, it was enough to infuriate Salazar. I remember that my good friend Nan Flanagan, then living in Lisbon, told me at the time that people were asking what had happened to the Bishop. The answer is that he had been sent on a vacation to South America, Rome, and various other places.

Too Late

There has, in fact, been an "eleventh-hour drift of some Church leaders towards social justice" in Portugal, though no real objection to dictatorship as such, nor any support for a democratic regime. And Mr. Blanshard thinks that the drift has come too late to save either the Church's future or its reputation.

The people have starved under a Catholic-approved dictatorship for too many years. Also, a great deal of the alleged Catholic opposition to the present regime appears to be mere anti-statism, based on institutional jealousy more than readiness for freedom.

It is true that Protestantism has enjoyed much more freedom in Portugal than in Spain, partly perhaps because of British influence, but more because there had been no bloody civil war in which Protestantism and Masonry had been identified with the enemy. Portugal, too, was an anti-clerical republic for sixteen years from 1910, and much of its relative tolerance stems from then, as does the weakness of the Portuguese Church. "The outward manifestations of success are all there", says Mr. Blanshard, but "many Portuguese critics assured me that the Church actually commands the loyalty of only the least literate quarter of the population. They dismiss the so-called loyalty of officialdom and the dependent professional classes as purchased loyalty which could easily be transformed into indifference or hostility if a revolution came. They believe that the south of Portugal has been quite de-Christianized through neglect and poverty". In a 1956 radio broadcast, a Catholic leader declared: "We would flatter ourselves if we found 30 per cent of the people within the life of the Church"; while a former Minnesota Protestant told Mr. Blanshard that he didn't think Lisbon was as Catholic as St. Paul. Nan Flanagan has also testified to the widespread unbelief and anti-clericalism.

Fatima

As for Fatima: Mr. Blanshard reminds us that the original "message" of the Virgin to Lucia on October 13th, 1917, had nothing to do with Communism or Russia, but wrongly prophesied that the war would end "today". It was not until twenty-four years later that Lucia "remembered" the Virgin's warning about Russia! Mr. Blanshard is aware that it is unfashionable—"somehow beneath the dignity of serious literature"—in America to expose religious fraud, but:

In the case of Fatima and Portugal reticence does not seem justifiable because the total scheme of exploitation which centers in Fatima is being used to promote Portuguese clerical fascism in the United States as well as in Portugal. Fatima is a political racket and political rackets should not be allowed to hide behind a cloak of religious sentimentalism.

Mr. Blanshard also reminds us that on June 9th, 1960, Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York received from the Franco government its highest political decoration, the Grand Cross of the Order of Isabella the Catholic, and on November 30th, 1961, he received the highest award of the Portuguese government, the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Christ, "for outstanding services rendered in defense of the sacred principles of Christian civilization". Among those services is control of that curtain of incense which Paul Blanshard's book will do much to disperse.

Credulity Unlimited

By JOHN W. TELFER

THE OTHER FRIDAY (August 17th to be exact), I read my evening newspaper and thrilled to the account of the latest Russian space achievements. Man was another step nearer his attempt to conquer the hazards of interplanetary travel—the future was exciting. But, within ten minutes of perusing another newspaper, I found myself being whirled from the age of science and technology back to the age of superstition and thaumaturgy. It was the Roman Catholic weekly *The Universe*.

No stories here about scientific wonders, but plenty about heavenly wonders. The first article that caught my eye, was devoted to the centenary of the arrival in Glasgow of the Little Sisters of the Poor (September 26th, 1862). According to the *Universe*, the Little Sisters underwent great hardship during those early days, but, fortunately, for them they had a good friend in Heaven—St. Joseph.

During a bad financial spell, eleven nuns all found themselves one morning with worn-out shoes. But not for long. They "confided their embarrassment to St. Joseph and judge their surprise when, a few days later, a man approached with a big parcel". Inside that "big parcel" were eleven pairs of new shoes. Incredible, is it not?

On another occasion the baker, who supplied the home with bread, could not continue with the required quantity. Again the Little Sisters turned to St. Joseph, "who answered immediately by bringing to the home an unknown baker with a great quantity of fresh bread which he had been unable to sell because the loaves were slightly deformed". Obviously, St. Joseph was not very particular as regards the shape of the goods so long as he delivered them!

Then, after a fatiguing day "on the quest", the nuns were making for home with very little money, when, "following an inspiration they knocked at an unknown door". They got the surprise of their unusual lives when they found a gentleman who gave them "an envelope containing £100". To my disappointment though, this "gentleman" was not St. Joseph. But it remains amazing that, in the year 1962, such rubbish can be printed and circulated throughout the world.

That people are ignorant enough to believe this sort of stuff is proved by the personal column of the *Universe* which carries the following insertions:

Grateful thanks: Our Lady, Forty Martyrs for favour received.

Delayed: Grateful thanks to Our Blessed Lady for favour received.

Most grateful thanks to SS. Martin, Jude for favour received.

Thanksgiving Lancashire Martyr, Ven. Fr. Edward Osbaldeston, and St. Martin, health improved.

Of course, the hierarchy knows only too well, that, in order to survive, it must perpetuate this credulity. Miracles, miracles and more miracles—stories about Lourdes and its illiterate founder, Bernadette Soubirous, or about La Salette and those mentally retarded children Melange Calvat and Maximin Giraud. This is the Roman Catholic religious diet. Heaven, the average Catholic believes, is a place inhabited not only by an almighty God and a miraculous Scarlet Woman, but by hundreds of other apotheosised soothsayers, ready to come to his aid simply on the asking. A mind nurtured on insanity like this is impotent until set free.

WITHOUT COMMENT

The unpleasant fact is that church-going is not at present 'the thing' amongst working men.—Canon Bevis Copley, Vicar of Holy Spirit, Southsea (*Evening News*, 12/9/62)

“By Law Established”

By F. A. RIDLEY

AS MR. IVOR BULMER-THOMAS reminds us in a most informative booklet just published, *By Law Established*: “In one sense everyone in the country is a member of the Church of England, unless he deliberately places himself outside it”. For, as he goes on to point out, ever since St. Augustine (of Canterbury) was first installed as Archbishop in 601, Christianity has been officially established in England. Prior to the Reformation in communion with Rome and under the supreme jurisdiction of the pope, and since then in the form of the Church of England by Law Established, as initially established by Henry VIII and re-established by Elizabeth I with only two brief intervals—the Catholic Restoration under Mary (1553-8) and the Puritan (Calvinist) interregnum under the Commonwealth and Protectorate (1649-60).

Mr. Bulmer-Thomas, an Oxford man and a former Labour minister, gives us many facts about the current membership, organisation and administrative system of the present-day Church of England. He does not—perhaps on account of lack of space—deal with the somewhat involved question of the theology of Anglicanism. (Perhaps the several theologies would be more accurate.) Nor, rather to our regret, does he touch upon the current schemes of “Christian Reunion”, soon to be discussed at Rome. If, however, one wants a factual précis, this short but heavily documented pamphlet will provide most of the relevant demographical economic and administrative facts about official English Christianity in 1962.

To begin with Mr. Bulmer-Thomas’s last section, which adherents to the Secularist philosophy will probably regard as the most important—the paragraph that deals with the current relationship between church and state. Our author refers to a number of separate headings under which this historic relationship can be considered. “The relations of Church and State in England are a complex affair with their roots in Anglo-Saxon times”, he says. “Among elements in the situation are (a) the title of the sovereign to be supreme Governor of the Church [a jurisdiction first assumed by Henry VIII in 1533], (b) the right of the Archbishop of Canterbury to anoint and crown the sovereign, (c) the appointment of bishops and other officials by the Crown on the advice of the Prime Minister, (d) the right of the two Archbishops and 24 other bishops to sit in the House of Lords, (e) the right of Parliament to make laws for the Church (though normally exercised now by the approval of measures drawn up by the Church Assembly, and (f) inasmuch as the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 was a schedule to the Act of Uniformity [which restored the Anglican Church to the official position of which the Puritan revolution had deprived it], the right to control the Worship of the Church. Collectively, these relationships are said to be the Establishment. To them may be added in modern times, (g) the existence of a system of Church schools alongside the State system and, (h) the divergence between the State’s law of marriage and that of the Church.”

Mr. Bulmer-Thomas concludes this section of his narrative with the somewhat controversial remark that whilst “there are abundant possibilities of friction between Church and State in these complicated relationships, the demand for disestablishment is now heard less than it used to be—and is heard more *within* the Church than without” (author’s italics). However, he explicitly admits that “In

the middle ages, Church and State were two aspects of one society”. He does not add—though the fact is extremely relevant—that this was only so because under the existing laws against heresy (*De haeretico comburendo*—1401, etc.) dissenting heresies such as the Lollards, Albigenses, etc., were systematically exterminated!

When, however, he points to the divergence of current political opinion in the Church of England as effectively refuting the old gibe that the Church of England is “the Tory Party at prayer”, he is on firmer ground, though there was no doubt much truth in the gibe of another Anglican churchman, the late Dean Inge, that the rise of Christian socialism in his Church, would have been more convincing if it had come before the workers got the vote which gave them potential political power.

However, *By Law Established* is neither a theoretical, nor a theological treatise. Obviously its author has little room for theory or theology: the bulk of his pamphlet is taken up with data. For example, we learn that the Church of England is governed by two archbishops and 43 diocesan bishops; that there are 14,491 parishes and 18,051 parochial churches. Staffing these 43 dioceses and looking after the immortal souls of their inhabitants, are, or were (including 3,575 who have retired) 18,969 ordained clergymen. Ordained—as the author who appears to be an Anglo-Catholic, explains—only by the laying on of hands of bishops themselves similarly ordained since Apostolic times. Whilst the following figures represent the membership, actual or nominal of the Church in 1962: “Of 40,574,000 persons born in England alone, 27,005,000 have been baptised and 9,748,000 confirmed in the Church of England. Of every 1,000 marriages, 496 take place at Church of England altars”. But surely a significant admission is that “the number of persons registered on the electoral role of the parishes is only 2,877,000 and the number of communicants at Easter [when every *bona fide* Christian is supposed to attend F.A.R.] is 2,248,229”. That is around 9% of the total (nominal) membership of the Church of England and about 6% (of our author’s own figures) of the total population of England. In other words, we have an established Church to which only some 6% of our population effectively belong.

Unlike the Church of Rome, the Church of England is not an autocracy. Its ecclesiastical chief, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is not personally infallible (like the Pope) and legally, is subordinate (since Henry VIII) to the Crown as supreme head of the Church. At the same time, neither is the Church of England a “Peoples’ Democracy” like say, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland (that “democratic theocracy” as a Scottish historian once aptly termed it) or in England, the Congregational Church. In its government, as well as in its theology, Anglicanism represents the *via media*, the middle way, as it has always done since Tudor times. Actually, the effective government of the established Church is shared by the Crown (represented by the government of the day), the archbishops and bishops, the clergy and the laity, the last three being represented respectively in the Upper and Lower Houses in the Convocations of Canterbury and York, and more recently, on the national level in the Church Assembly. The current tendency appears to be in the direction of more autonomy for the Church in its relations with the

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

That popular member of the government, Lord Hailsham, never loses an opportunity of stoutly maintaining his unbounded faith in Christianity on TV and radio. Recently, however, he was asked by Malcolm Muggeridge if he ever had any "doubts"—and promptly admitted that he had. This is quite intriguing, and it was a pity that Lord Hailsham did not clearly specify what it was that he doubted!

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Does he believe in the Holy Trinity, in the Virgin Birth, in the adventures of Jesus with the Devil, in the Resurrection, in the wholesale Resurrection of the Saints after Jesus came out of the grave, and many more similar specimens from Holy Writ? For that matter, it would be rather interesting to learn if Mr. Muggeridge himself believes in all these?

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It looks as if another dear old relic of Victorianism is on the way out. We refer to "parish magazines"—that once "must" in every Christian home, dealing with the activities—mostly of the parish's nobodies—with pious tittle-tattle, with sales of work, and so on. Generally, the vicar (or his curate) would use a few pages for some Christian reproof of parishioners and, of course, the visit of a real live bishop would be happily recorded. To the *Kentish Mercury*, "it all seems very sad that institutions which once seemed rock secure should now find themselves in troubled waters". But what if Christianity itself shares one day the same fate?

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Certainly there will be something of the sort for churches, particularly for those with few members. For example, St. Luke's of Downham has only 40 members and many of these do not attend on Sundays. And the Rev. N. Stacey, Rector of Woolwich, recently declared, "No church that is inefficient can be spiritual"—and plumped for fewer churches. Mostly, it is not so much a question of being "spiritual" as the lack of that material necessity—money. Mr. Stacey wants at least £7,500 a year to run *his* church. And frankly—is *any* church worth having at £7,500 a year?

★

Our sympathy sometimes goes out to the difficulties of parsons. The other week, *The Observer* recorded the Rev. C. Wansey's decision to ban the banns of a young couple who wished to be married in church. And why? Simply because the bridegroom "told him that he did not believe in God" and therefore "he would be committing perjury to the church wedding service". What can a poor parson do in such a case? Our comment would be that the bridegroom should come to his senses and get married in a register office.

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Alas, it is true you cannot mock God Almighty twice. Mrs. Steele, the pious lady who let the world know that she was going to give birth to the Messiah, managed a *girl* only, and all the world knows, a Messiah must be a *male*. The father of the would-be Messiah was actually an Angel. And we believe this is the first time an Angel has made a mistake. It only goes to show . . .!

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Theists will solemnly tell you that God's ways are not our ways, and therefore we must not expect any calamity, any horror, which happens to us, to be explained. For example, a cripple who went to Lourdes to be cured—some hope!—heard that his three children lost their lives in a fire. Canon Quilligan did his best to comfort him by saying that their deaths "are part of the price he has to

pay for a cure", and the father himself, like a good Catholic, said, "God gave me my children, now he has taken them away". The dreadful thing about this is, not that the children were practically tortured to death in a fire, but that everybody pats the Lord on the back for doing it.

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"I believe God has made me desirable to the opposite sex to make it easier for me to spread the good Word" (*The People*, 16/9/62). And to make it still easier, Mrs. Beatrice Smith of Peterborough was in the habit of posing for "sexy pin-up photographs lying on a studio couch wearing only a pair of black nylon briefs". The idea, it seems, was to lure men into the Baha'i Faith. "I have dozens of men call at my home, from all walks of life", she said. "I have a beautiful body, so why shouldn't I make use of the gifts God has given me?" Whether the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i Faith answered Mrs. Smith's question was not reported, but orders went out for her to burn the pin-up photographs. They were "hardly in accordance with the ethics of the Faith."

"BY LAW ESTABLISHED"

(Concluded from page 307)

state, which the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Ramsey, is said to favour.

Mr. Bulmer-Thomas concludes his booklet by informing us that the Church of England is to be regarded primarily as a spiritual society. However, upon the economic figures which he supplies to us, this "spiritual society" has a very solid material basis. The spirit that inspires it is evidently of a very substantial sort. For we learn that the net income of the Church for the year ending March 31st, 1961) was £15,765,157 while the Ecclesiastical Commissioners hold property of a book value of £231,869,785. A sum, it may be relevantly added, considerably in excess of that ever possessed by its titular founder "who had nowhere to lay his head". We further learn "the average yield on all Stock investments at the end of the year was £6 9s. 4d. %". Evidently the Church of England does not agree with its founder that "you cannot serve both God and Mammon". And was it not another eminent Jew, the founder of the economic interpretation of history to which the Church evidently nowadays subscribes—none other than Karl Marx himself—who remarked that "the Church of England would rather lose the whole of the Thirty Nine Articles than one thirty-ninth of its income". On Mr. Bulmer-Thomas's showing, that one thirty-ninth would represent quite a tidy sum!

When a couple of years ago I visited that community of Christian communists, the *Bruderhof*—those spiritual offspring of the Anabaptists, in Shropshire—one of them informed me that the Christian Church in this country was "nothing but a capitalist racket". Be that as it may, the useful figures so carefully compiled in this booklet, certainly indicate that the evangelical precepts which enjoin Christians to sell all that they have and give to the poor, has been honoured by the Church of England by Law Established far more in the breach than in the observance. Two hundred and thirty one millions in the bank and "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God".

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—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.

INDOOR

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 2nd, 7.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE, "A Humanist Looks at the Common Market".

Iford Humanist Group (Unitarian Hall, High Road), Tuesday, October 2nd, 7.45 p.m.: DR. COOK, "Mental Health Research and the Problem of Suicide".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, September 28th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, September 30th, 3 p.m. onwards: ANNUAL REUNION (Guest of Honour, Dr. Maurice Burton).

Notes and News

AT ITS Annual Conference in London at Whitsuntide 1961, the National Secular Society congratulated Mr. Kenneth Robinson, Labour MP for St. Pancras North, on promoting a bill for the legalisation of abortion under medical supervision, and hoped he would have more success with a similar bill in the future. We are gratified to note that, on September 11th, 1962, the joint conference of the Ethical Union and the Rationalist Press Association deplored that Mr. Robinson's bill had been talked out in the House of Commons and urged the Government to introduce similar legislation. The recent thalidomide tragedies had "focused attention upon the inhumanity of the laws governing abortion", said the EU-RPA conference, which asserted "the right of a woman to have her pregnancy terminated for psychological and social reasons".

REPORTERS CONVERGED on St. Paul's Church, Romford, Essex, recently, when it was rumoured that teenagers were flirting during the service—as if there was something new in that! It was, not quite clear whether the vicar himself "found the youngsters . . . weren't following the services"

(as the *Daily Herald*, 14/9/62, suggested) or was told about it (*Daily Express*, 14/9/62). Probably the latter, since the *Herald* switched to that line three days later. But on the earlier date, both papers had definitely conveyed an impression of high teenage attendance at services. According to the *Express* there were "many boys and girls"; according to the *Herald*, "crowds" of them. This hardly fitted in with the remark of the deputy warden Mr. William Smith (*Daily Herald*, 17/9/62) that: "There are rarely more than half a dozen young people here, and I have never seen any misbehaviour".

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ANOTHER Church of England upset occurred, perhaps more understandably, at St. Margaret's Parish School, Liverpool, where the headmaster, Mr. John Ellison, pursues what he calls a "liberal" religious policy. This includes keeping a statue of the Virgin and a photograph of the Pope in his office, the teaching of prayers with a rosary, and "Hail Mary" before lessons every day (*Sunday Express*, 16/9/62). "We have friendly relations with all the Churches", says Mr. Ellison. "Often Roman Catholic priests, who are friends of mine, visit me here. This may not be liked by everyone, but parents can have their children withdrawn from religious instruction. Precious few do, whatever their creed". Some children have, however been removed from the school, although Mr. Ellison insists that it "supports the Church of England". In his view, "breaking away from the Church of Rome was a mistake", and in his "own small way" he is "working for the day when Christians will be one".

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ON SEPTEMBER 16TH, *The Sunday Times* had a front-page photograph of a remarkable man, Dr. Marugappa Channaveerappa Modi, who, twenty years ago turned down proposals to set up a lucrative practice in Bombay and devoted his life to the treatment of India's impoverished blind, of whom there are 2,000,000 totally and 6,000,000 partially afflicted. With a mobile van and a team of assistants, Dr. Modi works over a huge area in Southern India, financed by local committees and governments. There is no nonsense about faith healing. He sets up his operating theatre in village schools and works at high speed. Dr. Modi has, said *The Sunday Times*, "been known to do 500 operations in one day", and the photograph showed him standing among the prostrate bodies of dozens of Indians who had just been operated on for cataract.

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THE 1962-63 series of Sunday evening meetings to be held under the auspices of Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society in the Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1, will commence on October 7th, 7.30 p.m., when the NSS President, F. A. Ridley, will speak on "The Vatican and Christian Unity". The season of 24 meetings (the longest ever organised by the branch) will continue until March 31st, 1963, and other speakers during the first half will include Lady Virginia Flemming, Richard Clements, OBE, L. Ebury, F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, MA, and Adrian Pigott. The President of Marble Arch Branch, F. A. Hornibrook, will be chairman, and copies of the programme may be had from the Hon. Secretary, W. J. McIlroy, 140a Hornsey Lane, London, N.6.

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NO RESPONSE has been received from the *Daily Sketch* to our questions in connection with the alleged Lourdes miracle cure of John de Borse (*THE FREETHINKER*, 7/9/62). Nor has Mr. de Borse replied to Colin McCall's letter of July 16th.

Tracts and Trash

By H. CUTNER

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY was the great one for tracts. For the most part "evangelistic", they used to pour in from all over the English-speaking world. Hundreds came into our letter box when I was a boy, and were read as avidly by me as the adventures of Deadwood Dick, Jack Harkaway and, later Sexton Blake. The stories of converted drunks, wife beaters and child torturers I found thrilling, though I confess I thought Deadwood Dick's revolver was more efficient than the power and grace of Christ Jesus.

It was not till many years later that I began to see how pitiful these tracts really were. Their infantile style and the appalling ignorance with which they were filled staggered me, for I can remember how people I knew would talk about them as if, like the Bible, they were a revelation dictated by God himself. In these days of radio and TV, to say nothing of the science modern children are obliged to learn at school, the fairy stories of Genesis have been pulverised, and it astonishes me that there are people who still imagine that a tract will lead sinful and erring man back into the Christian fold. The vast majority of the population don't care two hoots what Jesus or Paul said, yet the tract service for Jesus flourishes or, at least, is far from dead. From time to time I put aside my Dickens or Byron or a more modern writer to see if the tract-writers have grown up. Not in the least. The same old infantile style, the same crass ignorance, and the same solemn, sacred tosh pervades them all.

One before me at the moment is entitled *The Impossibility of Agnosticism* by Keith Samuel, and it has been "reprinted" about a dozen times. Mr. Samuel quotes T. H. Huxley who first coined the word, and adds that it "has also suffered at the hands of its users". The fact is that Huxley, like Spencer, would not make a positive statement as Christians do on, for example, "the problem of existence", but preferred to say that the problem was "insoluble"; and the term, or name "Agnostic", began to be applied to people who, when asked whether they believed in God, preferred to be a little cautious and say, "they didn't know". They did not like the positive statement made by Atheists that, as the word "God" has no meaning for them, they do not "deny" God, but would like to have a definition of the word. This was the position of Bradlaugh who, however, when given the Christian definition (found in all theological text books) denied it. Christians "deny" ninety-nine other Gods, but believe in the one of their own creation. Bradlaugh and all Atheists deny the whole hundred.

To put the matter in other words: there is practically no difference between an Atheist and an Agnostic as both Ingersoll (who more often than not called himself an Agnostic) and G. W. Foote (who always preferred the word Atheist) admitted in their writings.

But Mr. Samuel would not be a Christian if he wrote logically. For example, there are the "infidel" deathbeds without which no old tract would have had a chance of being read. All tract-writers gloated over the fact that both Voltaire and Thomas Paine "recanted" when dying, and as both were out-and-out "infidels", this proves how absolutely true is Christianity and the Bible.

Voltaire, according to this particular lie yelled on his deathbed for Jesus to save him; while Thomas Paine (according to "Mary Roscoe" who, as a good Christian, is always introduced as being with Paine when he was

dying) also yelled for God and Jesus to have mercy on him. It need hardly be said that both stories are particularly fine specimens of Christian lies with seven league boots on them.

Rarely are Atheists added to Paine and Voltaire by tract writers, for the simple reason that both "infidels" were the chief stock-in-trade of the early tract writers who obviously couldn't know of later ones. But I find every now and then Bradlaugh is added, though so hopelessly ignorant are the tract writers, that he is more often than not introduced (as by Mr. Samuel) as "one of the leading lecturers in agnosticism of the last century". Bradlaugh of course never lectured as an Agnostic, for he was an outspoken Atheist. But Mr. Samuel must be congratulated on not alleging any "deathbed recantation".

He does however mention "Thomas Didymus" as "one of the earliest sceptics", but he really should have explained to his readers that "Didymus" means "twin", and that some of the early Christians were quite sure that Thomas was a twin of Jesus himself. This extraordinary fact is carefully hidden by most if not all Christian writers. But the best place for such rubbish as *The Impossibility of Agnosticism* is the waste-paper basket.

Not all tract writers of course follow the very early ones. For I have another one before me entitled *Next Stop the Moon*, illustrated with a kind of needle-holder representing a jet plane shooting up to a part of the moon. This tract comes from Michigan, and it appears that the author is "intensely interested" in space travel "from the standpoint of God's programme rather than the plans of man". He examines what the Bible says about space travel for, like so many descendants of Bible believers from Europe, he is far and away *plus royaliste que le roi*. I have seen many tracts packed with Bible quotations but this beats them all.

For example, he asks us to look how carefully God wrote the word "heaven" in the very first verse in the Bible. This heaven "is very evidently the planetary heavens". It refers "to the astronomical heavens, the sun, moon, stars, and other heavenly bodies". This surely is delicious. The "other heavenly bodies" reminds me of "He made the stars also". It is so easy to dismiss the millions of galaxies in the Universe in a single phrase—though it has to be done to impress the simple-minded. But one must go through the 32 pages of this tract packed with biblical quotations—all brought up to date—to prove how God knew everything about our "atomic age". In fact, the tract writer is literally convinced that when Jesus comes again "with the trump of God", "the dead in Christ shall rise first (I Thess. 4, 16)"; there "will be fought the greatest atomic warfare, the greatest nuclear battles that man can imagine until two-thirds of the population of the world will be destroyed, and the rest will be gnawing their tongues, and hiding in rocks, and begging God to kill them". But even worse than atom bombs will come. "Gigantic hailstones weighing 120 pounds will fall from heaven upon man (Rev. 9, 8)", and still worse.

This proves how up to date is the Bible. If you still obstinately refuse to accept Jesus as your Saviour, and refuse to read your Bible, you will know what to expect. Nothing in the way of modern atomic warfare could possibly equal the horrors which will engulf you and other unbelievers, when Jesus returns in "great tribulation" as Matthew warns us (24, 21).

Incidentally, we are also informed from Holy Writ of

"the first successful interplanetary trip", that of Enoch—and he actually did it "without any jet propulsion, without any rocket". Could that be done without God Almighty? The second successful trip to heaven is of course the

famous one by Elijah in his fiery chariot, and if these two space flights do not prove the Bible is true in every word, then the unbeliever must be prepared for the unhappy fate of frizzling for eternity in Hell just as Jesus foretold.

From Rome to Freethought

By A. T. BROWNE

I WAS EDUCATED at a Roman Catholic school from the age of five, and accepted the curriculum easily enough, but I think I was always a little distressed by the religious instruction. We were told by the teaching nuns that God's mercy was endless and inexhaustible, yet hell was the punishment for those who died after committing trivial offences: eating meat on Friday, missing mass on Sunday and so on. The whole tone of religious instruction was morbid; death, sin and hell, being the main points. Indeed, we were actually told that we were being trained to die. The endless prayers to saints were only a variation of the theme; mass, we were told, was the original atonement of Christ—it was a sacrifice. The host was in fact, Christ in body, blood, soul and divinity. Now this miracle could be brought about for the princely sum of 5s. and could be offered for the repose of the soul of one or more persons. It was always stressed what marvellous value for money this was; though a mass was not, could not, be bought—the cash was simply for the priest's trouble. Having left the Church sixteen years ago, I cannot say how much the priestly fee is today. I can only say that now, as then, the idea of buying someone out of Purgatory, is repugnant to me.

The confessional, in which the accent seemed to be on sex, I also found unpleasant. Confession, we were told, was our only way to Heaven. To die after it meant Heaven: to die before it meant Hell. So one's destiny was really a question of timing or accident. This rigid ruling seemed to me ridiculous, but that was the doctrine and who was I to question it?

Well, consciously or not, I did question it. I began to have doubts, and then matters, came to a head. I read a child's book called *Whirlaway*, in which a little girl fell asleep in a lift. Instead of going upwards or downwards, the lift went backwards in time. And the book traced in simple form, the origin of life as we know it.

The following day, during religious instruction, we were told again about our first parents, Adam and Eve—and the apple. I stood up and asked how it was that men were descended from Adam and Eve when my library book said they were descended from apes. There was a terrible silence, and Oliver Twist asking for more must have felt much as I did. My offence was too much for the nun to handle, and the priest was brought in. Subsequent events defy description. My parents were summoned to the school, and they were told to reprove me, as I was an agitator, a bad influence. I had no right to read sinful books. I was victimised and almost expelled: the fact that I had less than a year to go, saved me. As far as the Church was concerned, this was the end of the road for me. And my question remained unanswered.

Since I left school, I have never had any reason to doubt that I did right in leaving the Church. All I have learned subsequently about it, only adds to my conviction that the Roman Catholic Church is the enemy of truth and decency. It hates knowledge and honesty; it can only thrive on ignorance and fear. And although it was an emotional strain to leave the Church, I have no regrets. My mind is free.

CORRESPONDENCE

NSS AND ALDERMASTON

Did Mr. G. I. Bennett, Mrs. Kathleen Tacchi-Morris, and others who criticise our banner actually walk with the National Secular Society contingent during any part of the Aldermaston March? I doubt it!

As one who helped to carry the banner for two days, I state emphatically that the friendly interest shown by fellow-marchers, including members of Christian groups far outweighed any criticism or resentment. We had discussions with many of them including Roman Catholics, and there were numerous requests for information about the work and history of the NSS. Many people expressed satisfaction at seeing an atheist group and I am sure that Canon Collins was quite sincere when he welcomed us at the Embankment, reading over the microphone the name of the Society and quoting the words on our banner.

As another correspondent pointed out, the words "Secularism, Atheism, Freethought", are informative, whereas a slogan such as "The National Secular Society Stands for Survival" would have conveyed little or nothing to the scores of thousands who witnessed the Aldermaston March. The Christian groups did not attempt to conceal their identity.

Christians who participate in such events as the Aldermaston March are generally more independent and courageous types than the majority of their brethren. I feel that they have greater respect for people who do not conceal their views than for those individuals in the Freethought movement who throw up their hands in horror at the mention of that naughty word—"Atheism".

W. J. McILROY.

[Mr. McIlroy has been active in CND since 1948, and is a founder member of one of the largest branches in the country.—Ed.]

MOSLEY

May I assure Mr. Nicholson that I have heard Sir Oswald Mosley speak on more than one occasion and I have also read a good deal of his propaganda? Nobody could doubt that his political theory is grounded in strong racist roots, or that it has a past history of anti-semitism of a virulent type. Perhaps I may commend to your readers *Fascism in Britain* by Colin Cross, which appeared last year and which has much to say of the history of Mosleyism in pre-war days.

My view of his legal liabilities was founded upon press reports. Sir Oswald Mosley's movement had a disturbed meeting in Trafalgar Square. It is absurd to talk of organised opposition. The opposition arose from the fact that a London which recalls the war years will not tolerate the preaching of Fascist ideologies. Mosley then announced that he was going to hold a march in Manchester under conditions which might reasonably be foreseen to lead to disorder. In Manchester, he announced that he proposed to speak two evenings later at Ridley Road, Dalston, a notorious flash point. My contention is that this line of conduct brought Sir Oswald Mosley within the limits of *Wise v Denning*, which is probably of general application, and thus opened the way to his being bound over to keep the peace. If he advocated in his speeches the substitution of a Fascist dictatorship for the democratic constitution by some element of unconstitutional violence, it would bring him within the provisions of *R. v. Burns*. The stirring up of violent antagonism against an identifiable group of people within the Queen's peace may be conspiracy to effect a public mischief (*R. v. Whitehead and Leese*) or it may be a seditious libel as was seen in *R. v. Caunt*. The defendant was acquitted in the latter case but this result was on fact and not because the indictment was bad in itself.

The existing law, with its concern for incitement, conspiracy and public mischief certainly does meet the threats present in the rise of neo-Fascism. Once again, I would stress that the real issue is not one of an abstract freedom of speech for certain people. It is one centering in the fact that the Fascists insist upon using methods of propaganda which lead inevitably to breaches of the peace and that their provocative demeanour may well bring them within the law.

Once again, may I make the point made in the House of Commons by Mr. David Weitzman, QC, that there is not an absolute right in this country to freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is conditioned by various legal factors of which the keeping of the peace is one of the more important.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

[This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

I cannot agree with your assertion (in "What Should Children Learn at School?", September 14th) that "teachers, however devout, find religion the hardest subject to teach". That the teaching may be "highly coloured by the teacher's own beliefs" does not necessarily make it hard. Indeed, many teachers find RI a relatively easy subject, the devout treating it with fervour and the sceptical with indifference. In the latter case, your remark that religion is taught "as if it had the same validity as mathematics or French" is not true.

I also think you stretch things a little when referring to "a large and rapidly growing proportion of scholars and ordinary people" considering the claims of Christianity to be "as authentic as those of astrology, black magic, or teacup reading". The largest proportion are surely indifferent or slightly sentimentally attached to religion. Those who treat it on a par with astrology, etc., are still only a minority. Anyway, the statement tends towards exaggeration, which is undesirable when intended to be "factual", no matter how "simple".

J. G. GOODWIN.

ATHEISM

G. Wappenhans introduced an entirely irrelevant distinction within atheists, namely, those who uphold atheism (THE FREETHINKER, May 11th, 1962).

First, Mr. Wappenhans apparently does not know that atheism is a set of factually and logically true statements. Whether one upholds a true statement because of confidence in those who teach it, or whether one is satisfied with upholding it, is entirely irrelevant. The only relevant point is the factual and logical truth of atheism, in violent opposition to the *factual* falsehood of Christian Yahwism and to the *logical* falsehood of philosophical theism, i.e. the illusionary belief in the god, "God"—arisen originally out of the article-less Latin translation of the New Testament Greek standard usage "*ho theos*" (*the god*) in such passages as Romans 3, 29, where the New English Bible shamelessly feigns its paper-and-ink creature "the god, God".

Secondly, I cannot imagine what could have been Mr. Wappenhans's motive in introducing such an idle irrelevancy founded on a muddle. All freethinkers and rationalists are, by definition, atheists, i.e. people who deny that there exists a referent (object) to the pseudo-labels, "the god, Yahweh", and "the god, God".

To call an atheist "irrational" may mean: 1, that atheism is contrary to logic, or 2, the upholding of atheism is foolish. (1) is manifestly a false statement, and (2) is itself a foolish statement since the upholding of truth is morally not foolish behaviour.

People like Mr. Wappenhans must at last learn that atheism has acquired an unimpeachable definiteness and conclusiveness since the introduction of linguistic criticism of "God" by Fritz Mauthner in his monumental 4-vol *Atheism and its History in the Western World* (Berlin, 1923), and they must cease lagging behind our times of increased language-consciousness, of "a considerable quickening of interest in semantics" (Professor Ullman, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning*, Oxford, 1962).

GREGORY S. SMELTERS
(N.S.W., Australia).

I should like to make a few comments on the above, belated letter, without in any way prejudicing Mr. G. Wappenhan's reply.

While it is important to be language-conscious, it is, I suggest, dangerous to be—or to try to be—exclusively so. We live in a world of things; language is an attempt to describe and explain those things, but the things come first, historically and logically. Atheism and theism are not merely words, they are words used to express attitudes, and when we argue for one or the other we are not just arguing about the words, but about the attitudes.

I haven't read Mauthner's "monumental" 4-volume work, but I insist that any purely linguistic criticism of God is insufficient. Whether articles have been dropped or added, whatever category mistakes may have been made, the fact still remains that the word "God" means *something* to some people. It unquestionably means different things to different people; ideas of God are invariably vague and muddled; that is why Bradlaugh was essentially sound in demanding a definition of the term before discussing it. But, given a definition, one has a referent which may—and should—be discussed in relation to the world of things. COLIN MCCALL.

MEDICAL OR MORAL?

A report in *The Times* of 6/9/62 quotes Dr. Claude Nicoll, a consultant at two London teaching hospitals, at Washington speaking to a World Forum on Syphilis, that a breakdown in moral standards is responsible for the alarming increase in sexually transmitted diseases.

He went on to say that it was not primarily a medical matter. "It was the problem of a change in our moral values which has encouraged sexual promiscuity". "The trend began early in this

century when many people turned away from religious faith to find a new gospel in the teaching of Freud and other psychologists".

Not only is Dr. Nicoll trying to revert to Victorian false prudery and sexual ignorance, but he is ignoring the official figures which show that syphilis in 1960 is one third of the 1950 total for all cases, acquired or congenital. Apart from this, what affect has Freud had on the working classes?

Does not Dr. Nicoll realise that the sexual urge is always strong in man, whether it is glossed over with religious unctious or displayed openly by Freud?

DENIS COBELL

CATHOLICS "FLOOD" US CONGRESS

The following letter is reprinted in full from The Advocate, the official publication of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, USA, and the Diocese of Paterson, N.J. (9/8/62).

In view of the Supreme Court's recent decision which declared that the New York State school prayer was unconstitutional, and fearing that this may be the precedent for the complete banishment of God, either by name or acknowledgement, in all schools, interested citizens have joined in a campaign in the San Diego area to counteract this decision.

They are flooding Congress with postcards upon which they have pasted pictures of their child or children and under which the children themselves have written a simple plea or question (i.e., "Please let us pray in our school", or "Isn't God at school as well as at home?" or "Our country was founded with the help of God, won't you please let us acknowledge Him in our schools?").

The parents are requesting that a Constitutional amendment be enacted to clarify the First Amendment of the Constitution so that it will guarantee freedom of religion and not be interpreted to mean freedom from religion.

Will your readers join us in this campaign?

MRS. MARY PESSLY (La Mesa, Cal.)

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, 1962. Present: Mr. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Mrs. Ebury, Mrs. Venton, Messrs. Barker, Borsman, Cleaver, Ebury, Hornbrook, McIlroy, Miller, Mills, Shannon, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apology from Mr. Tribe. A letter from *The Observer* stated that the subject of adoption might be re-opened at a later date. Letter of protest to the Queen regarding RN regulations had been passed on to the Admiralty. Leaflets, "What is the Catholic Church?", "What is the Establishment?" and "Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?" were available for distribution. It was decided that the President should represent the Society at the World Union of Freethinkers Congress in Duisberg next year. It was agreed to support a National Council for Civil Liberties petition on the public incitement of race hatred. The BBC was considering a "What's the Idea?" programme on Atheism. A new pocket calendar was suggested and would be adopted. Text of a new leaflet "Looking and Listening" by D. H. Tribe, was approved with a few additions. The President reported a good meeting when he addressed the Shoreditch Young Socialists. It was agreed to approach the NCCL for support in the selling of literature at Hyde Park. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, October 17th, 1962.

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("I would call him Alexander the Greatest.")—Adrian Pigott)

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